NCA Policy on Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination

2017 Review Committee: Justin Boren, chair of the Affirmative Action and Intercaucus Committee, on behalf of the Affirmative Action and Intercaucus Committee


The National Communication Association—an organization dedicated to promoting the study, criticism, research, teaching and application of the artistic, humanistic, and scientific principles of communication—values equal opportunity, diversity and excellence.

In a society and an organization, achieving diversity requires equal opportunity. NCA and our discipline exist within and reflect a culture that does not provide equal opportunity for all individuals. Like the larger culture, NCA has not succeeded in achieving our goal of equal opportunity. Earlier affirmative action programs have not yet achieved their goals and should cease only when clear and convincing evidence demonstrates that all people have gained fair and equal opportunities in education, employment, and civic life. NCA supports continued efforts to eliminate discriminatory practices generally and in higher education specifically against persons from marginalized groups. NCA is determined to provide access to programs and services to all members without discrimination particularly to the historically marginalized populations listed below.

Therefore, NCA commits itself to acting affirmatively to become an organization and profession in which all persons may fully participate, regardless of age, color, ethnicity, gender identity, HIV status, health status, ideology, national origin, physical disability, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. In this effort, NCA will: encourage research of communication both from diverse perspectives and about groups that historically have been marginalized; develop and implement plans to achieve a diverse membership; re-examine regularly NCA’s organizational structure, policies and procedures to identify and remove barriers to full participation by all members in the positions, leadership, and activities of the association; and, with full representation of the membership, formulate policies, procedures, criteria, and standards designed to achieve diversity within both the association and related professions.

NCA believes that no persons should be hired for positions or given promotions they do not merit, or admitted to educational institutions unless they are able to succeed there. Affirming such principles, however, does not relieve NCA or institutions within the discipline of the responsibility of ensuring equal opportunity and of working affirmatively to achieve greater inclusion within the discipline and the association.

NCA opposes efforts to eliminate or restrict policies or actions that are designed to foster the goals of affirmative action and nondiscrimination.

Proposed Revised Statement (May 2017, edits in red)

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Rational and Supporting Material

As part of the regular review of NCA policies, the Affirmative Action and Intercaucus Committee has evaluated NCA’s Policy on Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination. Based on our review of the policy, we recommend that the policy be retained with minor changes. Beyond some minor grammatical changes, there are two larger changes that we recommend:

A. Add “Immigration Status” to the listing of protected classes.
B. Modify “physical disability” to read “ability.”

The first change to include “Immigration Status” reflects a need for NCA’s policy to respond to a growing negative social environment for immigrants in the United States. Students and faculty members should be able to thrive in their academic environments, regardless of their immigration status. Including this class in the Association’s affirmative action and nondiscrimination policy
reflects the Association’s commitment to developing an inclusive and diverse scholarly society where all members are able fully to participate in the study and critique of communication.

The second change is to modify the language from “physical disability” to “ability.” The presence of physical is not inclusive to all disabilities, and definitely not representative of the identities present within our discipline. Where this might not be apparent is that ability and disability are not binaries, rather they are ascribed and constructed identities belonging on the same spectrum.

The Association’s Affirmative Action Policy continues to establish the ways that our association affirmatively ensures and protects diversity in the association. Therefore, we strongly encourage the Legislative Assembly to retain this policy, as amended.

**Policy History**
The original Affirmative Action Policy was originally adopted by in 1981, revised in 1989 and then underwent a major revision in 1995. In 2012, the Affirmative Action and Intercaucus Committee conducted a major revision of this policy, which was approved by the Legislative Assembly.

This policy has been useful in justifying the establishment of programs in the association such as the caucus student travel grants and the recent task force on diversity.

**Action by External Parties and the Association**
This revision does not call for any new action to be taken by either external parties or the association. The expectation is that the association will continue to develop its practices associated with affirmative action and nondiscrimination.

**Resources**
This policy does not explicitly require any resources for implementation. However, in keeping with the association’s affirmative commitment to inclusion, diversity, and nondiscrimination, there is an expectation that certain programs may require a financial commitment. For instance, the association has increased funding for caucus student travel grants and such increases may be necessary to continue to serve underrepresented student populations for convention travel.