

Candidates for Second Vice President

One will be elected with a term beginning in January 2019

- David McMahan, Missouri Western State University
- Brad Mello, Saint Xavier University

David McMahan, Missouri Western State University

I am honored to be nominated for the office of Second Vice-President of the National Communication Association (NCA). I received my Associate's degree from Vincennes University, Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Indiana State University, and Doctoral degree from the University of Iowa. I am currently a Professor of Communication at Missouri Western State University.



Service and Experience

Sharing NCA's commitment to the support of scholarship, the advancement of communication instruction, and the promotion of communication in the betterment of personal life and society, I have been actively engaged in service to the discipline and NCA throughout my career. This commitment to our Association includes serving as a member of the Legislative Assembly, Wallace A. Bacon Lifetime Teaching Excellence Award Committee, Taskforce for Online Communication Courses, Taskforce for Community College Connections, *Communication Teacher* editorial board, along with numerous other service roles.

Additional related service and experience include the following:

- President of the Central States Communication Association (CSCA)
- Primary Planner for the 2015 CSCA conference, breaking participation and attendance records through outreach and through innovative, challenging, and creative programming
- Founding Chair of the CSCA Committee on Diversity and Inclusion
- Editor of the *Iowa Journal of Communication* and Consulting Editor for the *Journal of Communication Pedagogy*
- Member of the CSCA and the Iowa Communication Association Executive Committees
- The son of a former high school speech teacher and having taught/studied at a community college, four-year school, masters program, and doctoral program, I have been provided a unique and expansive view of the discipline.
- My published work includes multiple books—*The Basics of Communication: A Relational Perspective*, *Communication in Everyday Life*, *Communication in Everyday Life with Public Speaking*, *Internet Communication*, *Introduction to Communication Criticism*, and *Relational Communication* (forthcoming)—in addition to numerous articles and chapters.

My experience, service, and leadership at state, regional, and national levels have enhanced my understanding of the entire discipline, along with honing my abilities to connect scholars from multiple backgrounds and perspectives. I will bring tireless efforts to my role as an officer for NCA, and my experiences have fully prepared me for the duties of this office.

Goals and Vision

As Second Vice President, I will work with the entire membership to continue developing, strengthening, and transforming the discipline and Association. My goals and vision specifically focus on the following:

- **We must welcome, support, and unite scholars from multiple types of academic institutions.** Doing so requires offering necessary support for the distinct professional concerns and needs of academics from different types of academic institutions—high school, community college, bachelors, masters, and doctoral. It also involves recognizing that each type of academic institution assists in the development of the discipline in interlinking and mutually beneficial ways.

Scholars specializing in the study of communication share an unwavering commitment to its exploration and are among the most dedicated instructors of any discipline. Although this commitment and dedication to the study and instruction of communication are shared, professional concerns and needs of scholars from different types of institutions are not necessarily the same. Consequently, **rather than uniform models for professional support and development, scholars from all types of institutions must be provided with unique development opportunities that address their needs.** Including larger numbers and more diverse groups of communication scholars will strengthen the association and provide even greater opportunities for professional growth and assistance.

- **We must encourage and provide opportunities for the connection of scholarship.** In doing so, we may provide opportunities for scholars to benefit from an awareness of what is taking place in the discipline outside their areas of expertise and to benefit from the points of overlap in their respective areas of study.

Our discipline is multifaceted and impacts many realms of society. However, communication scholars often focus solely on their own area of study at the expense of other areas. While specialization and expertise are necessary to a point, **the interconnected nature of communication necessitates that attention be paid to other areas in order to fully understand one's primary area of study.** There have been previous calls within the discipline to connect its disparate areas of study. However, transformations in communication along with transformations of academic, social, and global worlds have moved such calls from options with potential benefits to essential requirements for the advancement and continued relevance of the discipline. Providing opportunities for connecting our areas of study will advance our scholarship and teaching, and it is necessary for the continued vitality of the discipline and Association.

- **We must promote diversity and inclusivity within the discipline and the Association.** Doing so entails broadening research to include the communication of less-privileged members of societies and entails encouraging the full participation and inclusion of members from groups historically less involved in the Association and the discipline. It further entails ensuring that issues of diversity, inclusion, and advocacy remain at the forefront of the philosophy, policy, and administration of the Association.

If we as a discipline profess to study communication, **we must study all communication and not just that of a privileged few within society.** Furthermore, **we must encourage and respect the voices of**

everyone in the discipline. This encouragement should not be provided *regardless* of cultural diversity but *because* of cultural diversity. A diverse community of scholars provides multiple perspectives and positions which will broaden our research while strengthening the discipline. In order to remain relevant in the lives of our students and in a global society, the discipline of communication and the Association must recognize and promote diversity in its scholarship and among its members. **We must never cease our focus on these goals and must never let ourselves be content. Rather, we must always be vigilant, always be progressing forward, and always be working with conviction.**

Together, we can continue to develop, strengthen, and transform our discipline and our Association in meaningful ways and contribute toward a magnificent future.

Please feel free to contact me (mcmahan@missouriwestern.edu) with any questions, comments, or suggestions you may have. I look forward to hearing from you and would greatly appreciate your support.

Brad Mello, Saint Xavier University

NCA has been my professional home since I began my graduate education at Penn State University in the fall of 1985. The association has provided me countless professional development opportunities, from sharing my research ideas with colleagues, attending topic-specific conferences focused on sub-fields in the discipline, to participating in conferences focused on teaching and learning like the HOPE conference for Faculty Development. NCA has been instrumental to my success throughout my career. My goals and vision for the association are to ensure that the association continues to provide the same support and opportunities to current and future generations of scholars and teachers.



NCA is a vibrant scholarly organization entering its second century positioned well to lead the discipline. My vision for contributing to NCA involves three specific areas:

- Public visibility of the discipline
- Social Justice and Diversity
- Teaching and Learning

I explore each below.

Public visibility of the discipline

Previous association officers and NCA national office staff have produced excellent public programming over the past few years that created much positive national visibility for the discipline. I envision continuing to increase the prominence of the excellent communication teaching and research by NCA members through public programming in conjunction with the NCA national office.

It is important to further develop the public face of the discipline through dynamic public programs. The discipline is uniquely positioned to contribute to the public debate on many issues in education, media and politics, organizational and corporate culture, and in our interpersonal lives in both personal and professional settings.

It is also important to further develop relationships with various scholarly associations and funding agencies in DC and elsewhere. Building vibrant relationships with such organizations allows the discipline to actively contribute to ongoing conversations about issues in higher education and to provide our discipline's expertise and insight, when appropriate, and to identify avenues for funding for our research and teaching efforts. For example, being a part of the American Association of Colleges and Universities initiatives to demonstrate the value of liberal arts education will aid the discipline in supporting the importance of higher education.

We need to stand up against the barrage of attacks on the academy. We need to join in the fight against funding cuts and the like where appropriate and where we can and use our inherent rhetorical skills as a discipline to contribute to the case for the importance of higher education; in particular, a liberal arts education such as a major in communication.

Social Justice and Diversity

As the association moves forward, I think it is crucial to build upon the good work of previous officers regarding issues of social justice. Previous officers have focused on specific issues such as bullying, higher education funding and access, and civic engagement. Part of my vision would be to ensure those efforts are maintained as previous officers rotate out of leadership.

Our association must build on previous efforts to diversify by encouraging underrepresented groups to attend graduate school. We need to be working with all our undergraduate programs across the nation to identify and encourage students to pursue a career in academe. Grants to diverse graduate students to attend our annual conference continue to be important, but I think it is also critical to engage with members of the various caucuses and with leaders in our divisions focused on undergraduate education to begin a dialogue about how to encourage a more diverse group of students to pursue graduate education. I firmly believe that if we are going to continue to diversify the communication professoriate and NCA membership, we need to start with our talented undergraduate students.

Teaching and Learning

I envision building on the foundational work extending from the grant I spearheaded while on staff at NCA that supported the Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC) project. The project brought together 30 faculty members from community colleges, liberal arts colleges, regional universities and research-focused universities to collaborate and identify what undergraduate students in communication should know and be able to do upon graduation. I have spent my career focused on issues of teaching and learning, and one final vision for the LOC project would be to build a bank of resources highlighting best practices in assessing how well our students are achieving the learning outcomes identified in the project.

During my time in leadership, if elected, I would use my presidential initiative funds to survey departments to determine how the learning outcomes have been implemented and assessed, and how they have been used to guide curriculum development. I hope to continue the faculty-driven nature of this project and bring together faculty to review the data collected on how the LOCs are functioning and use that information to keep the LOCs current.

Teaching and learning issues in undergraduate education are difficult, but they are even more difficult to tackle in graduate education. Graduate education is specialized and outcomes are often specific to particular MA and Doctoral programs. However, I think it would be beneficial to bring together a group of MA and Doctoral program faculty to initiate a conversation regarding what graduate students at the MA and PhD level should know and be able to do upon receiving their degree. I do not envision a comprehensive statement of learning outcomes like the LOCs, but I do believe a conversation about graduate education in communication is worthwhile to begin.

Conclusion

My vision for NCA is outlined above. Most importantly, however, I believe that my role as a leader must be guided first by listening to the membership and then by working to ensure that NCA meets their needs. It is my hope to help all members achieve career success, and I aim to focus on student success because, ultimately, our undergraduate and graduate students are the future of our discipline.