

2026 NCA Doctoral Honors Seminar



Call for Host Proposals

NCA's Doctoral Honors Seminar, under the auspices of NCA's Research Council, has a long-standing tradition of bringing together Communication doctoral students and several of the discipline's distinguished scholars to discuss theory and research in the Communication arts/sciences. The seminar allows students to interact with and learn from senior scholars, receive daily individualized coaching on research and dissertations, and network with other doctoral students. Seminars are normally held annually at a selected host institution. About 30 doctoral students are chosen to participate based on submitted papers and advisor recommendations. Participants must be NCA members. Students must assume that they will pay for their own travel (including ground transportation) to the Seminar; all accommodations and other expenses should be provided by the host institution. (If not, participants must be clearly informed, well in advance, about on-site expenses not provided by the host institution.

Proposals are being accepted for a host institution for the 2026 DHS. Hosts typically do it once; however, repeat and multi-year proposals are considered. Hosts receive a \$22,000 NCA grant (subject to 2025 Legislative Assembly approval) to cover event costs; hosts must return any unused funds.

Proposal Components

Institutions interested in hosting the NCA Doctoral Honors Seminar must complete a proposal for the NCA-DHS Review Committee. Proposal deadlines are at the end of this document. Proposals must contain:

1. A cover letter with the name of the college/university, name of proposal submitter, and contact information for submitter.

2. A narrative of no more than 5 pages that addresses the following:
 - a. Rationale, aligned with NCA's strategic plan, for hosting the Doctoral Honors Seminar.
 - b. Resources currently available for hosting the NCA Doctoral Honors Seminar (e.g., campus housing; cafeteria/nearby dining; transportation between housing, sessions, and meals if necessary; staff availability).
 - c. Tentative list of topics covered by session facilitators, including learning outcomes. Facilitators' presentations should be IDEA-informed and consistent with NCA's strategic plan.
 - d. Tentative list of 20 diverse possible session facilitators (generally, nine will be chosen) with affiliations and email addresses.
 - e. Principal organizer and abbreviated CV that includes affiliation, phone number, and email address.
 - f. List of any co-organizers and/or key staff involved in the planning, organization, or management of the event, along with their roles in the event, affiliations, phone numbers, and email addresses.
 - g. Expected number of participants.
 - h. Marketing plan (website, flyers, emails, targeted messaging, etc.) with deadlines, ensuring that an optimally diverse audience is reached with Seminar information.
 - i. Plan for developing a registration site and promotion of registration with deadlines.
3. A detailed budget explaining how NCA funds will be used, any participant costs expected (other than transportation), and any matching funds available (if applicable).

Criteria by which CFPs will be evaluated:

- Completeness of proposal
- Realistic numbers for participants, revenues, and expenses; likelihood that the event will break even or lose as little money as possible
- Alignment with NCA strategic plan
- IDEA-orientation (see IDEA Task Force report and IDEA strategic plan)
- Extent to which plan executes/achieves the goals of the event, including having enough volunteers from on- and off-campus to achieve all goals
- Extent to which proposal balances keeping successful elements of past years' summer program with eliminating elements that didn't work and trying new approaches (incremental improvement, not innovation for its own sake)
- Strength of marketing plan, including evidence that it can be executed
- Extra consideration: proposals to host the event twice or even three times

Event Description and Host Expectations

The NCA Doctoral Honors Seminar is typically formatted as a three-day event, with sessions beginning on Wednesday and ending on Friday. (To accommodate attendees on either the semester system or quarter system, the Seminar cannot start before Monday, June 15, 2026; must finish by July 31, 2026; and cannot overlap with any other NCA event.) Some previous hosts have chosen to open check-in and hold an Opening Session on Tuesday evening. Wednesday through Friday, participants are expected to attend sessions—a mixture of breakout sessions with cohort mentors (such as social science; cultural/critical; rhetoric; history; law; performance) and plenary sessions for all attendees. Mentoring sessions have lasted 2-2½ hours each—one morning, one afternoon—but attendees suggest longer ones. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and breaks should be planned for the group, and optional social events may be held in evenings.

Hosts will need to engage with the NCA National Office and NCA Research Council throughout the planning process. Processes/expectations are explained in detail during a host-NCA planning meeting. Host expectations include, but are not limited to, the following plan and follow-up steps:

1. Locating on-campus or off-campus housing for the event.
2. Creating a meal plan for the duration of the event (to include breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks).
3. Using a new or existing university account for the event's income and expenses.
4. Identifying plenary topics and diverse speakers and faculty mentors (usually nine), consistent with NCA's IDEA goals and strategic plan.
5. Creating an event program to further learning outcomes and deliverables.
6. IDEA-oriented marketing/promotion, in collaboration with NCA National Office.
7. Developing a registration site and check-in procedures.
8. Providing the names, current addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, and W-9 forms (if applicable) to NCA for payment of faculty mentors.
9. Designing, disseminating, and analyzing a participant feedback survey.
10. Providing a final report within two weeks of the event's close that lists names, locations, and affiliations of participants; goals, objectives, and tactics; outcomes; opportunities for improvement; feedback survey results; and final budget figures. (The NCA National Office follows up with participants over subsequent years after the Seminar regarding its benefits and results.)

Proposal Deadlines

NCA will accept proposals for one-, two-, and three-year hosts. Deadlines are:

For hosting the Summer 2026 Doctoral Honors Seminar: January 16, 2026

For hosting the Summer 2027 Doctoral Honors Seminar: November 1, 2026

For hosting the Summer 2028 Doctoral Honors Seminar: November 1, 2027

Applicants wishing to submit a multi-year funding proposal need to submit only one proposal.

Contact Information

To submit an application to host NCA's Doctoral Honors Seminar, or for questions about hosting the event, please email academic@natcom.org.