

SEPTEMBER 2025

# HEALTH COMMUNICATION

NCA Division Newsletter

## Nominate yourself (or others) today!



I am honored to serve as the Vice Chair-Elect of our esteemed Health Communication Division, a vibrant community distinguished by its pioneering research, impactful teaching, and dedicated service. In keeping with my role and responsibilities for the year, I am pleased to invite nominations for various positions on the Executive and Awards Committees:

- Vice Chair-Elect (4-year term)
- DEI Vice Chair (2-year term)
- Two Legislative Assembly Representatives (1-year term)
- One Graduate Student Representative (2-year term; candidates must be ABD)
- Six or more Awards Reviewers (1-year term)

Nominations are open to any current member of the NCA Health Communication Division (please verify with your nominee that they are willing to serve if elected). Self-nominations are not only welcomed but encouraged. Nominees should provide a concise academic biography (75-100 words) along with a brief statement outlining their qualifications for serving our Division effectively. Please submit nominations to me at Shamshad.khan@utsa.edu by **Friday, Sept. 19** at 11:59 PM PST.

For award reviewers, all nominees must possess a Ph.D.; however, the Dale E. Brashers Distinguished Mentor Award Committee must include at least one current graduate student (not necessarily ABD). For these nominations, only the nominee's name is required, and please specify if the nominee is a graduate student.

The Executive and DEI Committees are committed to engaging with colleagues who may have faced challenges in finding equitable spaces or participating actively within our Division. We encourage you to nominate individuals whom you believe embody these values and to cast your vote to ensure that your voice is represented.

Thank you for your active participation in this vital process. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

**-Dr. Shamshad Khan, Division Vice Chair-Elect**

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## Sept. 25 VLO: Networking

What's the point of networking and how do you do it effectively? Join our Virtual Learning Opportunity Thursday, **Sept. 25, at 5 p.m.**

**Central.** This time, we will focus on professional networking and touch back on the previous conversation about navigating the job market.

Use this Zoom link to join:

<https://utexas.zoom.us/j/2804268253?omn=86096700959>

(Meeting ID: 280 426 8253).

Questions? Contact Dr. Sean Upshaw, Division DE&I Director, at [sean.upshaw@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:sean.upshaw@austin.utexas.edu).

## Student travel grants open

Being a graduate student – and living on a graduate student’s budget – can be tough. To help support our Division’s students and encourage academic engagement, we are offering \$200 travel scholarships. Doctoral candidates, doctoral students and master’s students in the Health Communication Division can apply. Scholarships are mainly intended to support travel to the upcoming NCA convention (Nov. 20-23 in Denver), but students can use the funds on whatever expenses they deem most pressing. [Click here to download](#) an application form, which should be completed and **returned before Oct. 10, 2025.**



## Students and mentors: Join us at an NCA networking session

Your Health Communication Graduate Student Representatives (Susan Wood and Liesl Broadbridge) are organizing a networking session for undergraduate and graduate students at the upcoming NCA conference. The purpose of this session, scheduled for **Saturday, Nov. 22 at 4 p.m.**, is to provide students with opportunities to share their research interests, receive advice to help advance their academics, develop relationships with others to inspire collaborations and/or research support groups, and more. Additionally, our goal is to build a supportive and inclusive community for all students.

Several faculty members have already generously signed up to serve as informal mentors at this session, but **we’re seeking even more!** If you are a faculty member who is interested in sharing your experience and expertise (example topics: DEI, publishing, job marketing, global connections, scholarships) through casual conversation and semi-structured networking, please contact Susan ([hpkdc@iup.edu](mailto:hpkdc@iup.edu)) or Liesl ([liesl.broadbridge@rutgers.edu](mailto:liesl.broadbridge@rutgers.edu)) soon.

## Division by-laws to be updated – review and prepare to vote

In 2023, the Executive Committee began revising the bylaws, starting with Committee members’ roles and responsibilities. We also reviewed our bylaws for division awards; an ad-hoc committee recommended several changes that are available [here](#). Over the past year, the Executive Committee has incorporated these suggestions, improved consistency across award descriptions, and approved a new award for service. All division members will soon receive a ballot with side-by-side comparisons of current and proposed language along with rationales for each change. Please take time to review and vote. Questions can be directed to Division Chair Charee Thompson ([charee@illinois.edu](mailto:charee@illinois.edu)) or any Executive Committee member.

## Meet your fellow members

In an effort to support networking and make our large division feel more welcoming, we will be featuring **randomly-selected Health Communication Division** members in these monthly newsletters. These individuals were chosen at random from our current membership list, and agreed to share some details about themselves and their work. Watch your email: you might be chosen next!

### Dr. Sarah Aghazadeh

Assistant Professor, American University



**Degree:** Ph.D. from University of Maryland, College Park

**Research Areas:** advocacy, activism, and health PR for stigmatized and taboo health issues

#### What are you currently working on?

I'm starting a project to unpack partisan rhetoric about mental illness. It is in the early stages, but my co-author and I hope to uncover important takeaways about if/how communication norms related to mental health and illness are changing.

**What project or part of your career are you particularly proud of?** This project about pregnancy loss awareness advocacy and taboo recently won an inaugural award from a journal (*Public Relations Inquiry*). I'm so honored to have learned from the advocates and share the care, vision, and empathy that they offer to their communities and to society. ([Click here to read the journal article.](#))

**Where can you be found on a typical Saturday afternoon?** Hanging at home with my family and our two cats, Selena and Bruce, sipping coffee!

### Dr. Kamran Afary

Associate Professor, California State University Los Angeles



**Degree:** Ph.D. from Northwestern University (Performance Studies)

**Research Areas:** I've written extensively and published articles and books on Expressive Arts and Narrative as forms of healing. My work is taught both on campus and in prison education settings, in health communication classes.

#### What are you currently working on?

I am a registered Drama Therapist and board certified trainer. I'm currently studying the impact of incorporating Drama Therapy and theater adaptation experiential exercises in health communication classes, in particular related to trauma and recovery. I've published articles and presented at conferences on this topic.

**What project or part of your career are you particularly proud of?** I co-edited a book titled "Communication Research on Expressive Arts and Narrative as Forms of Healing: More Than Words." [Click here for information.](#)

#### What advice would you give our members?

In health communication, never forget that facts alone don't heal—stories do. If you want to change behavior, build trust, or dismantle stigma, learn to listen for the story beneath the surface. Honor lived experience, not just data points.

# Job Calls

## Assistant Professor in Strategic Communication, Augusta University

Augusta (GA) University's [Department of Communication](#) is hiring an Assistant Professor in Integrated Strategic Communication. This is a tenure-track position anticipated to begin August 1, 2026. The preferred candidate will be expected to have a PhD in communication, mass communication, communication studies, or media studies, or a closely related discipline. The candidate may be expected to teach communication courses in the areas of Health Communication, Campaigns, Social Media, as well as Public Speaking. The candidate is expected to maintain a robust record of research, serve on department and college committees, and work well with both colleagues and students.

Successful candidates will have a Ph.D. in communication, mass communication, communication studies, or media studies, or a closely related discipline. Preferred qualifications include knowledge of and ability to teach media analytics, and expertise in research methods. To apply, visit [www.augusta.edu/hr/jobs/#job-portals](http://www.augusta.edu/hr/jobs/#job-portals) (Job ID 286873, Position # 20014471). Review of applications began Sept. 1 and will continue on a rolling basis. Reach out to Dr. Jessica D. Freeman at [jesfreeman@augusta.edu](mailto:jesfreeman@augusta.edu) with questions.

## Assistant Professor in A Social Media and Strategic Communication, Cal Poly SLO

The Communication Studies Department of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, is seeking applications for a full-time, academic-year, tenure-track Assistant Professor to begin August 17, 2026. Area of Specialization include social media strategy and analytics, particularly in one or more of the following contexts: crisis and risk communication, health communication, and human-machine communication (particularly Artificial Intelligence). Candidates whose research, teaching, or professional experience engages with contexts outside the U.S. are strongly encouraged to apply. Preference is for social science methodologies (quantitative and/or qualitative methods).

Among other qualifications, successful candidates will have a Ph.D. in Communication Studies or a related field, demonstrated success in undergraduate teaching, and a record of scholarship in social media and/or strategic communication using social science methodologies. For more information and to apply, [click here](#). For questions about the position please contact Dr. David Askay, search committee chair, at [daskay@calpoly.edu](mailto:daskay@calpoly.edu).

## Eastern Comm. Association welcomes conference submissions

The Eastern Communication Association welcomes submissions to its 117th annual convention, April 9-12, 2026, in Pittsburgh, PA. The 2026 convention theme is "Emergence," which invites reflection on the emergence of new perspectives, enlightenment, or awakening; the rise of cultural or societal trends, movements, or norms; and the emergence of creative ideas, movements, or transformative works. Submissions of individual papers, panel discussions, and roundtables will be accepted until midnight Oct. 19, 2025. [Visit the ECA's website](#) to view the full call and submit your work.

Have something to share in the next newsletter?

E-mail your announcement to Heather Voorhees (Division Secretary) at [heather.voorhees@umt.edu](mailto:heather.voorhees@umt.edu).