

# The Alabama Communicator

Newsletter of The Alabama Communication Association

Fall 2022

## Fall Roundtable to Focus on Employment Interviews

Faculty from four Alabama colleges to offer advice on Virtual Panel Set for Nov. 1

In a practice that started during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Alabama Communication Association is proud to sponsor another virtual forum designed to support the students at all institutions across our state.

On Tuesday, Nov. 1, from 4 to 5 p.m. the ACA Fall Roundtable will offer students tips on “Acing the Employment Interview.” A panel of communication experts will be on hand to lend advice on preparing for and executing a great interview.

ACA Secretary Lindsey Sherrill leads the line-up of panelists. Dr. Sherrill is assistant professor of business communication at the University of North Alabama. She teaches courses in managerial communication and conflict resolution at the school in Florence, Ala.

Amanda Gilliland is an instructor of communications at the University of West Ala-

bama in Livingston, Ala. She’s the author of *Essentially Speaking: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Best Practices of Public Speaking*.

Crystal Roskam Stillwell, who teaches at Jefferson State Community College, has served in a number of positions at Jeff State. She’s helped dozens of students as a career coach.

Dr. Adam Sharples Brooks is a nationally renowned public speaker. As an associate professor in communication studies, Brooks directs the Public Speaking Program at The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

The 4 p.m. forum can be accessed by using the following Zoom meeting information:

Zoom Meeting ID: 946 1515 7766  
Passcode: 240255



Amanda Gilliland



Lindsey Sherrill



Crystal Roskam Stillwell



Adam Brooks

### ACA PROFILE

By Lindsey Sherrill  
ACA Secretary

As the University of North Alabama continues to rank as the fastest growing university in the state, Dr. Pat Sanders, Chair and Professor in the Department of Communication, has had, as she puts it, “a number of irons in the fire.”

When Sanders (who is also an UNA alumna) was appointed Interim Chair of the department, she became the first woman and the first person of color to hold that position. Since, her department has continued to grow, including hiring two new instructors in Communication Studies and Mass Communication, launching a Public Relations Agency course, establishing an Alumni Networking Group and faculty have participated in collaborative learning programs in Mexico and France. Other notable departmental achievements include a new \$50,000 scholarship from the Alabama Broadcasters Association and



### Pat Sanders Leads UNA Communication Unit

the re-awarding of a \$25,000 scholarship from the Country Radio Seminar Group, as well as the establishment of an endowed scholarship by recently retired faculty member, Dr. Janet McMullen. “We are moving forward in a great direction and plan to contin-

ue growing the department,” Sanders said.

In addition to her administrative role, Sanders has continued to excel in her professional and creative pursuits. Using skills gleaned from her years as a radio broadcaster, news direc-

See Sanders on page 7

### Wang Elected As ACA’s Vice President-Elect

During the business meeting at the 2022 ACA Convention in July, Dr. Tiffany Wang, associate professor of communication studies at The University Montevallo, was elected vice president-elect.

Wang was the first winner of ACA’s Teaching Award in 2021. Under ACA by-laws, Wang will move up to vice president next year and then become ACA President in 2024-2025.



Tiffany Wang

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## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear ACA Colleagues,

I am still remembering making the drive from Tuscaloosa over to U.S. 231 to Troy University for my first Alabama Communication Association Convention. A graduate student and I had co-authored a paper that we were pleased to present to our colleagues from across the state. That trip in 2014 was the only time I've been on the Troy University campus.

Thanks to ACA, I've recently made a new friend from the Troy faculty, Stefanie Hicks East, who presented twice during our 2022 Annual Convention this summer. Professor East is a fellow broadcast journalist and taught me a lot about Tik Tok in her research presentation. I also met Neal Reid at Auburn University, who is going to collaborate with me on a panel presentation later this month. That panel will include two other presenters from this year's ACA conference.

I can truly say my professional network is so much larger because of the connections made through the Alabama Communication Association. While setting up for our most recent convention in Mobile, I discovered a common teaching area with another colleague in North Alabama. This semester my students will be

reading some of his work. So, ACA is helping me improve and enhance my teaching too.

I am grateful to those ACA members who elected me as the association's vice president-elect in 2019. This meant I have had the pleasure of learning the roles of ACA leadership by watching Sally Hardig with whom I've served in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic. She and Immediate Past Executive Director Ray Ozley have prepared me well. I hope I don't disappoint them.

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***"my professional network is so much larger because of connections made through the Alabama Communication Association."***

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In this issue of the *Alabama Communicator*, you will see (on p. 4) that our attendance at our most recent convention was back to pre-Pandemic levels. In fact, the participation exceeded the number of participants the last time we met in the southern part of the state.

We have much to do as we continue to expand the level of participation not only in our annual convention, but also other events



**Dr. George L. Daniels**

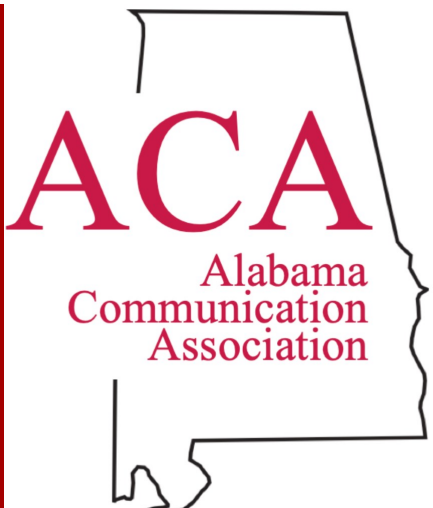
such as our virtual forums. Most recently, ACA Executive Director Jeff Walker and I met with one institution considering hosting our convention for the first time in the next few years.

We are also preparing for the transition of the leadership of our journal, *The Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*.

Please plan to join me online as we kick off the month of November with our ACA Fall Roundtable on Nov. 1.

### *Alabama Communication Association 2022-2023 Executive Board*

President– George L. Daniels, The University of Alabama  
Vice President - Niya Pickett Miller, Samford University  
Vice President-Elect - Tiffany Wang, University of Montevallo  
Secretary - Lindsey Sherrill, University of North Alabama  
Immediate Past President- Sally Hardig, University of Montevallo  
Executive Director- Jeff Walker, University of Montevallo





## *From the Vice President*

As vice president of Alabama Communication Association, I am primarily tasked with supporting the president and organizing the upcoming conference—that will be held for the first time at Samford University, my work institution, in 2023!

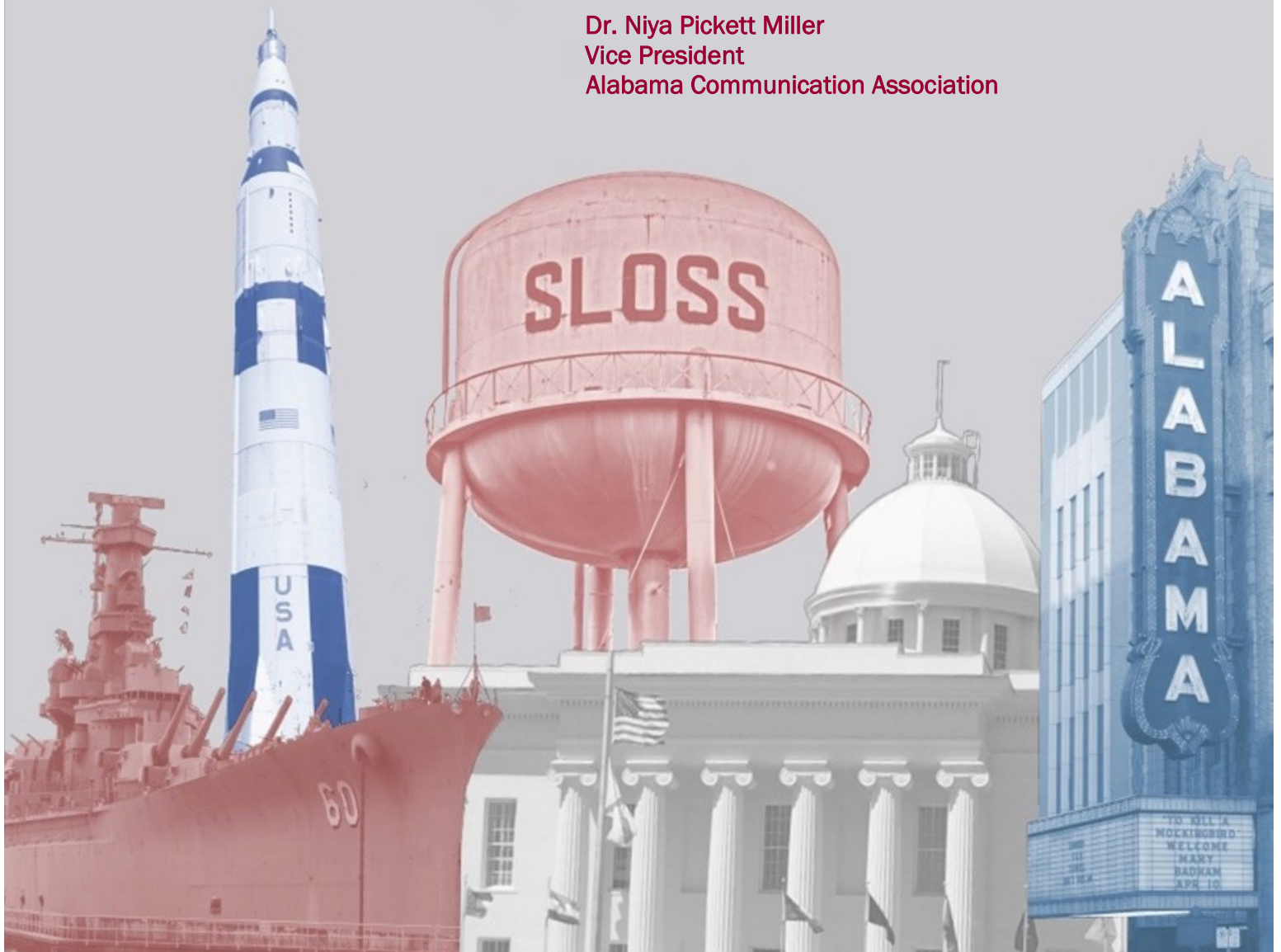
This (of course) has be a top-notch event that showcases Samford’s Department of Communication and Media as a premier department. Notwithstanding, we will be highlighting the value of ACA to all communication departments and practitioners in our state.

I would like to see an increase in conference attendance and participation, especially from programs that have not or do not routinely demonstrate participation with ACA. I also want to boost our visibility via social media and highlight more disparate faculty members and departments. This includes, but is not limited to HBCUs and two-year colleges in our state.

Increasing our minority engagement and bolstering ACA’s initiatives in matters related to equity and inclusion is top of mind for me.



Dr. Niya Pickett Miller  
Vice President  
Alabama Communication Association





## 2022 ACA CONVENTION IN REVUE



MOBILE, Ala. — A special thanks to ACA Past Presidents Gyro Newman and Jeremy Padgett for hosting the 2022 Alabama Communication Association Convention on their campus at the University of Mobile.

Our final registration for the 12th Annual ACA Convention was 65 overall. That included 31 faculty/professionals, 23 students, and 11 visitors. Attendees represented 10 schools in Alabama and 10 outside of the state. More than three dozen research papers were presented.

The first John H. Saunders Service Award was presented to Brad Bailey of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College while Caroline Parsons of The University of Alabama was the second recipient of the ACA Teaching Award, which was first established in 2021.

One CORRECTION to the ACA Convention Line-up— a co-author of one of the papers presented “Artificial Intelligence, Human Creativity and Copyright,” was omitted from the program. Both J. Patrick McGrail and Ewa McGrail (see above) produced that paper.



On top row (center), Will Nevin (Alabama A&M) served as a respondent and presented a Great Idea for Teaching. Top right, Lorrie Ozley managed the ACA Convention registration table. Reginald Bell (left) presented two papers during the conference. In the center, Jake Paul (U. of Alabama) won Top Graduate Student Paper while Joseph Honeycutt (Montevallo) was one of the two Top Undergraduate Student paper winners. Above, ACA President Sally Hardig gave her presidential address; And, to the right, Dr. John H. Saunders presented the first Saunders Service Award to Brad Bailey of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.





The Department of Communication at Jacksonville State University upgraded studios in Self Hall while moving into new offices in Merrill Hall in 2021.

# Jacksonville State Faculty Update Curriculum, Upgrade Facilities, Begin Second Year in New Business Building

By George L. Daniels  
ACA President



When an EF-3 tornado destroyed Jacksonville State University's (JSU) Merrill Hall in April 2018, Christopher McCullough was not even in Alabama. He was still in Georgia where he taught at Columbus State University for several years after completing his Ph.D. in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University.

In January 2021, McCullough joined the faculty at JSU and three months later became chair just as his department was not only preparing for re-accreditation, but also gearing up for a move of part of his unit to a 105,000-square foot building -- the new Merrill Hall.

"It's certainly a comfortable set of office spaces," said McCullough. "It's wonderful to have up-to-date technology to support instruction."

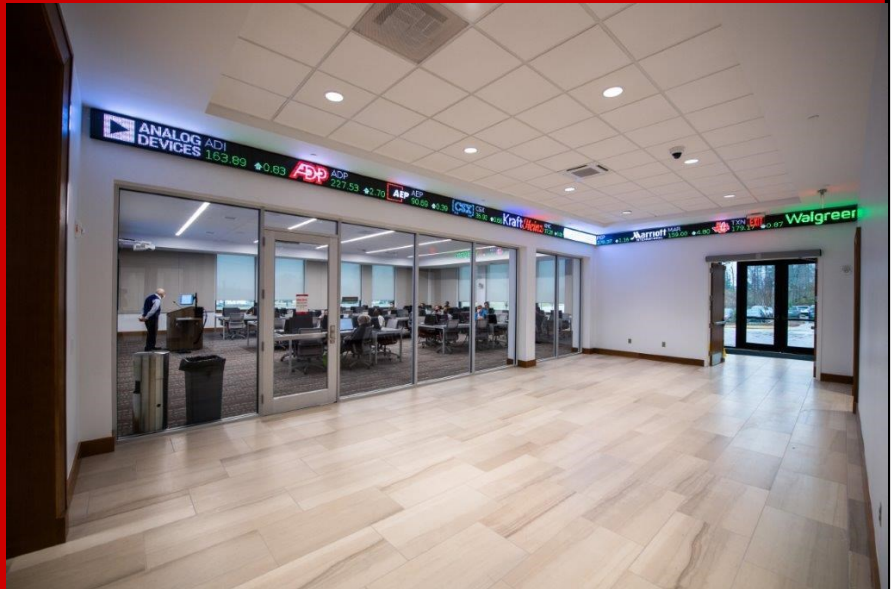
Located in the University's College of Business and Industry (CBI), the JSU Department of Communication is largely focused on mass communication.

Currently, students can pursue concentrations in digital journalism, public relations and advertising or digital media production.

"We have modernized our curriculum and our facilities to reflect the 21st century in each of the subfields," McCullough said.

While McCullough and the other five members of the Communication faculty have offices in Merrill Hall and hold classes there, they are still using Self Hall, their original home, to house radio and television facilities.

And thanks to a \$350,000 investment, JSU's main studio on the second floor of Self Hall has been upgrad-



Home of the JSU College of Business and Industry, Merrill Hall includes a 300-seat auditorium and 12 classrooms like the one above. Below, Dr. Christopher McCullough is now in his second year as chair of the Department of Communication.

ed to a 4K Facility. Funds have also been allocated to provide students DSL cameras that shoot video and still photography as well new LED light kits and tripods.

"The idea is to facilitate both versatility and access," McCullough said.

This fall JSU was expecting its 170 communication majors to balloon to nearly 200.

And, to adjust for the growth, McCullough was hiring for two new faculty positions.





# Meet Our New ACA Executive Director

*Editor's note: After spending a year as our Executive Director-Elect, having been elected at our 2021 ACA Convention, Jeff Walker officially took over the duties of the position in August, succeeding Ray Ozley, who completed his term. Walker was interviewed by ACA President George Daniels about his plans.*



**1. What are your teaching and research areas?**

My research and teaching interests are in the areas of rhetoric, public memory, civic engagement, and professional development.

**2. You've been in leadership in Alabama Communication Association for a while. What other positions have you held?**

I've held just about every office in the association! I started as secretary and then did the track from VP-Elect to President. After having a couple of years off the executive committee, I'm excited to be back as Executive Director.

**3. What is the difference between the work of the executive director and the president?**

I see the President and Vice President as the faces of the organization, while the Executive Director is more of a behind-the-scenes role. The Vice President takes on a lot of the work of planning the annual conference. The President oversees some more of the big picture items. The Executive Director helps implement their agenda, while also looking out for the long-term stability of the organization.

**4. What are some goals that you have for the next two years (2022-2024)?**

My primary goal is to help ACA expand as a resource for all communication programs in the state. That means recruiting folks from institutions that haven't been as heavily involved in ACA in the past, while continuing to engage with those who have become our core supporters.

**5. What are some areas that you think the association can stand to improve?**

Outreach is the biggest area of improvement—and there are big things and small things that the association can do to work on that. One thing that we're working on immediately is increasing our social media presence. That will allow us to draw in a larger

audience for our conferences and virtual events, while also helping us put a spotlight on the awesome work of communication faculty, students, and professionals across the state.

**6. What do you view as the state of our field of communication/communication studies?**

The shift to virtual school and work during the pandemic made it clear that the field of communication is as relevant as ever. Folks need the ability to adapt their message to a variety of audiences and channels (e.g., Zoom). As my own students have returned to the classroom, I have also noticed an increasingly large number with anxieties related to interpersonal and public communication. It's clear that the communication discipline is important and it's equally clear that we've got work to do.

# Sanders Leads UNA Communication

Sanders continued from p. 1

tor and voice over artist, Sanders began her podcast, This Prof Life: Women of Color in Higher Education in June 2020, and in April 2021, the podcast received the Best Long-Form Audio Production award from the Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts.

Sanders calls working with diversity, equity, and inclusion “a professional and personal passion,” and has put that passion to work—conducting workplace certification sessions in inclusive leadership, working toward a DEI certification through Cornell University and earning a Professional Development Certificate from the Black Women Education Leaders organization. In February 2022, Sanders was the featured speaker for UNA’s Women of Action series, sponsored by the Mitchell-West Center for Social Inclusion.

Sanders’s passion for both DEI and media literacy come through in how she talks about pressing issues facing Alabama educators. “Social and digital media have altered the landscape in some very good but also challenging ways. Information moves across the globe, and even into space, at lightning speed. This could mean something going viral and bringing either fame or severe shame in a matter of seconds, not minutes.



Along with chairing University of North Alabama’s Department of Communication, Pat Sanders hosts a podcast, This Prof Life.

***“Teaching during the pandemic really tested my academic mettle. Students seemed to be disconnected and disengaged with their work and each other...It has been a cultural shift and challenge. I don’t know if we will ever see it go back, even though we returned to face-to-face teaching. People who don’t teach likely did not see the impact the pandemic had on those who do.”***

- Pat Sanders  
Interim Chairperson  
Department of Communication  
University of North Alabama

# Comm. leaders take over at Alabama, Ala. State



W. Russell Robinson



Darrin J. Griffin

With the start of the new academic year, the communication units at two Alabama institutions are under new leadership.

Dr. W. Russell Robinson was named chair of the Department of Communications at Alabama State University in Montgomery.

ASU offers six areas of study including journalism, public relations, radio and television, communication studies, recording industry and recording technology.

Before joining the faculty at Alabama State, Robinson was a media instructor in the Department of Mass Communication at North Carolina Central University in Durham, NC.

Meanwhile at the University of Alabama, Dr. Darrin J. Griffin was named interim chair of the Department of Communication Studies.

Griffin is an associate professor in the department. He succeeds Dr. Margaret D’Silva who had served as chair since 2020.



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