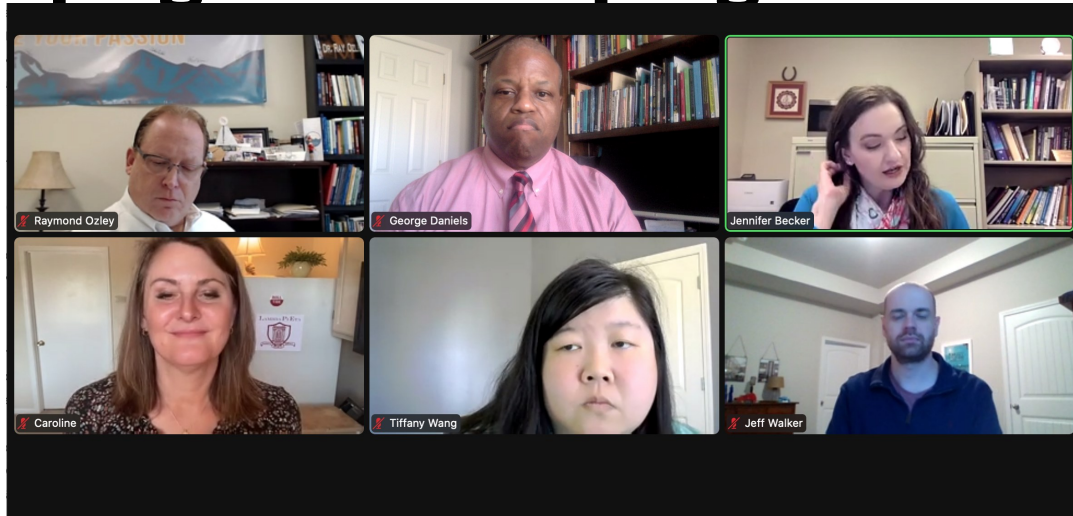


# The Alabama Communicator

Newsletter of The Alabama Communication Association

Spring 2022

## Spring ACA Forum Spotlights UA Faculty Members



A new book birthed during a hallway conversation at an Alabama Communication Association conference is now in print—and the two University of Alabama professors behind it shared their story at the most recent ACA Roundtable in April.

Drs. Caroline Parsons and Jennifer Becker, both in UA's Department of Communication Studies, were the featured presenters for the ACA Spring Roundtable held April 19 via Zoom.

Their book, *Honors Communication: Contextual Issues and Lessons Learned in Teaching, Advising and Mentoring the Undergraduate Honors Student in Communication* was recently released by Peter Lang Publishing.

Caroline Parsons and Jennifer Becker addressed expectations of students in honors programs.

### Undergraduate Students Gain Career Guidance, Job Searching Tips From Fall Roundtable

By Niya Miller  
Vice President-Elect

ACA's Fall Roundtable, held November 9, 2021, focused on career preparation for new or upcoming graduates.

The virtual event was moderated by Dr. Sally Hardig (Communication Studies at University of Montevallo), and featured faculty from communication departments across the state, including Drs. Jay Hunt (Mitchell College of Business at The University of South Alabama), Jeff Walker (Communication Studies at University of Montevallo), and Lindsey Sherrill (College of Business and Technology at the Univer-

sity of North Alabama). Each offered their perspectives and knowledge about transitioning from communication degree programs to the work force.

Regarding job searching during the COVID-19 pandemic, Walker explained that "applying for jobs can still feel like a full-time job." He noted that job searching was overwhelming before the pandemic, and it still is. But Walker emphasized how the perception of a communication degree has improved in the job market.

"Employers are valuing flexibility and adaptability," said Walker. "A [person with a] communication degree can be pushed as having those skills."

Hardig questioned how new graduates may compete with more experienced candidates in today's market. In response, Hunt cautioned students to avoid making claims about their soft skills (e.g., detail oriented, excellent communicator) without evidence. He urged students to answer interview questions using the STAR method. Hunt went on to explain the acronym and approach by saying, "in this strategy, you describe a situation or task you face— 'S' T', the actions you took to tackle the matter— 'A,' and the result—

See Fall Roundtable on page 9

### 12TH ANNUAL ACA CONVENTION JULY 30, 2022 University of Mobile



### ANDRE JOHNSON TO GIVE KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The incoming editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, will give the keynote address at the luncheon during the Alabama Communication Association's 12th Annual Convention on Saturday, July 30, 2022. This year's convention will be hosted by University of Mobile. See Call for Papers on page 5. Stay tuned for more details in the Pre-Convention edition of *The Alabama Communicator* to be published in July.

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## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear ACA Colleagues,

Our discipline is as important now as it's ever been in helping maintain democracy and freedom of speech in our state and beyond. I write this letter after more than two years of shared uncertainty and exhaustion. I hope I'm not alone in admitting that I have struggled to maintain motivation and the required mental "bandwidth" needed to respond and to manage it all.

Discussions with colleagues reveal many of us are particularly frustrated and depressed by what seems to be an increase in acceptance of unethical modes of persuasion at every level of interaction. As teachers we see the impacts social isolation and negative rhetoric have on our students. The problem always comes back to communication.

I am a true believer in the positive power and impact our discipline can have in addressing these issues. As professors and practitioners of communication we have the tools and skills to begin to address and attempt to solve many of these problems. I was reminded of this in March when my class attended the Equal Justice Initiative Memorial and Museum in Montgomery.

The students expressed feeling a strong desire to "do something"

after sharing the deeply moving experience. These students are eager to apply the skills from our classes to real life situations.

I decided to throw out my original plan for the semester and to shift to a student designed deliberative communication class project that will invite students from across campus to participate in shared dialogues about their experiences regarding race at our university.

Although the project is more work for me and for the students, we all agree the potential benefits will far out-

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***"As teachers we see the impacts social isolation and negative rhetoric have on our students. The problem always comes back to communication."***

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weigh the effort. I can't speak for the students but my own passion for communication was reignited.

I share this to remind us all to "practice what we teach" and to be willing to listen and adapt to the changing world and needs of our students. Our discipline teaches the value of open discussion, dialogue, and debate. It's our job to ensure our students leave our programs confident and prepared to practice these skills in their relationships, careers and communities. I en-



courage us to embody these skills and stay engaged in our own communities.

Looking forward to seeing you all in person in July!

Dr. Sally Hardig,  
President, Alabama  
Communication Association

### ***Alabama Communication Association 2021-2022 Executive Board***

President - Sally Hardig, University of Montevallo  
Vice President - George L. Daniels, The University of Alabama  
Vice President-Elect - Niya Pickett Miller, Samford University  
Secretary - Lindsey Sherrill, University of North Alabama  
Immediate Past President - Jeremy Padgett, Univ. of Mobile  
Executive Director - Ray Ozley, University of Montevallo  
Executive Director-Elect - Jeff Walker, University of Montevallo



## ***A Call for Issues, Ideas, and Research***

In just a couple of months, we'll be gathering again as a state association for our 12th annual convention. This is your cue to DREAM BIG — THINK DEEPLY about what you want our gathering to be. If you're reading this column, that probably means you're already committed to the organization. We thank you. Now, I want you to think of the perfect panel that you would like to see take place at the conference. If you've been doing research this year, we want to know about it. Even if not's quite ready for publication, share an early draft of a paper you've been working on so that we can offer you some tips, strategies and suggestions as you get it ready for an academic journal or even a book.

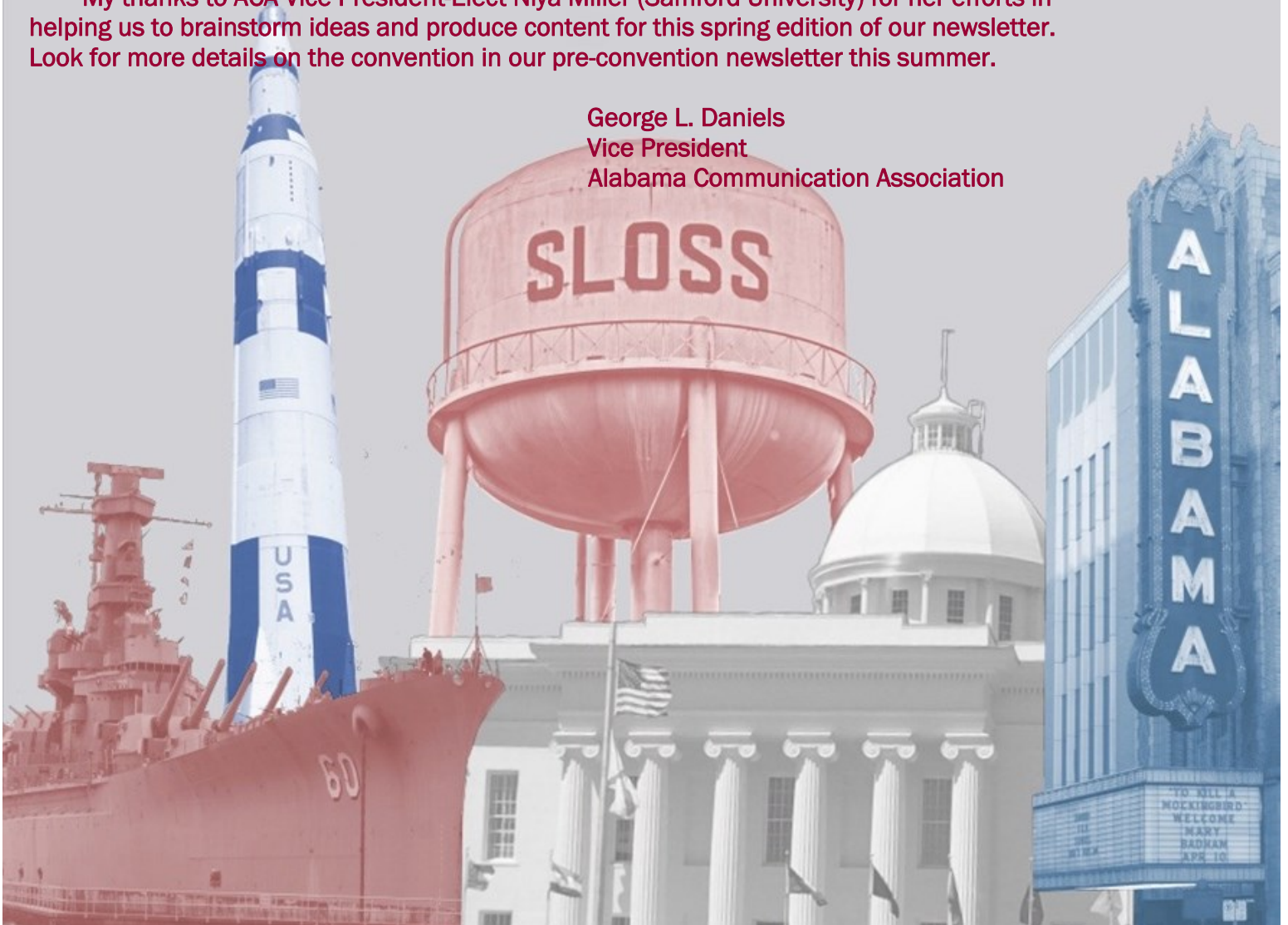
In this edition of *The Alabama Communicator*, you will find the full Call for Papers on page 5. This year we are really making an extra push to encourage our faculty colleagues to see ACA as a place for their research and teaching ideas. Of course, we also emphasize undergraduate and graduate student involvement in our annual convention. In fact, this conference is often the place our undergraduate students see what can be in their future as they ponder going on for a master's degree.

Traditionally, our ACA Conventions at the extremes of the state are less attended by those at the other extreme. Now that we've all been through COVID-19 and we know how to do virtual conferencing, we know how to put on a hybrid event. So, if you aren't sure if you can make the trek South to Mobile, you can always present virtually. The main thing is SUBMIT YOUR WORK! And, encourage students to submit theirs too.

My thanks to ACA Vice President-Elect Niya Miller (Samford University) for her efforts in helping us to brainstorm ideas and produce content for this spring edition of our newsletter. Look for more details on the convention in our pre-convention newsletter this summer.



George L. Daniels  
Vice President  
Alabama Communication Association



# Nominations Now Open For New Service Award

*First Award Recipients to be honored at 12th ACA Convention in July*

After more than two years of development, the John H. Saunders Service Award, honoring one of the founders of the Alabama Communication Association, will be given for the first time at our upcoming 12th Annual ACA Convention in Mobile.

The **John H. Saunders Service Award** honors those who have actively created opportunities for others to use their voice. This could include those who have made a significant contribution to growing the ACA, faculty who have encouraged their students to present, faculty who have driven their students to conferences, faculty who create assignments meant for students to engage people beyond their classroom, and those who have created opportunities for faculty, students, and professionals to engage others outside of their own environments.

Last year, the ACA membership voted to amend the association's bylaws expanding the scope of its awards committee to include oversight of this new award that helps to continue the legacy of Saunders, who helped start ACA more than a decade ago (See interview with Dr. Saunders on pgs. 6-7).

"We want to remain true to John's request that the award honor those who help students' and junior faculty's voices be heard," said Ray Ozley, ACA executive director. "It was also important to John that this not be limited to those who funnel through leadership positions. In other words, it is really more for those who help others get engaged and less for leaders and others with high visibility."

Eligible nominees must be employed full-time teaching courses in communication within the state of Alabama.

Eligible nominees may teach at any level (e.g., K-12, community college, university). In order to encourage nominations and recognize excellence in service at all types of institutions, the award committee may present awards to individuals at different academic levels.



**Dr. John H. Saunders is a lecturer in Communication Arts at University of Alabama in Huntsville. See his interview on pages 6-7.**

Nominations, including self-nominations, require the following materials:

- 1) a single letter of nomination,
- 2) the nominee's curriculum vitae, and
- 3) a statement outlining specific activities related to service such as supporting the growth of ACA, supporting students or creating opportunities for students to engage with those outside of their own environment. The statement SHOULD NOT exceed 500 words.

Nomination materials should be submitted by **NO LATER THAN June 8, 2022** to Sally Hardig, ACA President and chair of the ACA Awards Committee at [hardigsb@montevallo.edu](mailto:hardigsb@montevallo.edu)



## CALL FOR PAPERS

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention  
Mobile, Ala.  
July 30, 2022

The Alabama Communication Association invites submissions of scholarly papers, practitioner and student projects, and panel presentations for its 12th Annual Convention, which will be hosted by the University of Mobile on Saturday, July 30, 2022. **Presentations may be given in-person OR virtually through video conferencing platforms.** We especially welcome original research by undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty/professional members and practitioners from Alabama and the surrounding area. We invite individuals to submit a variety of projects from the Communication Studies discipline, and from other intersecting disciplines such as journalism, media studies, advertising, public relations, mass communication, and English, etc.). This conference is committed to focusing on the following submission types:

**Completed Papers:** Research papers (no more than 25 pages including tables, figures, and other material, but not including references) will be competitively evaluated. Papers that exceed this page limit will not be reviewed. We will recognize the Top faculty/professional paper, Top graduate student paper, and Top undergraduate paper.

**Research-in-Progress:** Faculty and student authors are encouraged to submit 500 to 700-word abstracts of research that will not be completed before the conference. Participants in Research-in-Progress panel will not give a paper presentation, but an overview of the work in progress and receive feedback from attendees. Research-in-Progress abstracts should include a clear purpose statement, an overview of the literature driving the research and the method or approach being taken. Research-in-Progress submissions are not eligible for ACA Awards.

**Great Ideas for Teaching Students (G.I.F.T.S) panel:** Instructors may submit teacher and student tested ideas for effectively teaching a wide variety of communication concepts and contexts (e.g., health communication, research methods, theory, gender, organizational communication, PR). We encourage presenters to bring handouts of the activity for the audience.

**Project Panels:** Creative panel ideas that explore applied and scholarly experiences are encouraged from multiple perspectives. Topical roundtable discussions from scholars and/or practitioners who have collaborated and applied communication practices in communities or the classroom are ideal. Individuals from a variety of institutions and backgrounds may submit ideas. We also encourage students to submit capstone course work and other class projects.

**Submissions:** Papers and panel submissions should be prepared for blind review; please remove all identifying information with only the title on the title page. Put title, name, and complete contact information in the body of the email. In addition to indicating whether you are FACULTY, GRADUATE STUDENT or UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, please note whether you are likely to present in-person or virtually. Panel submissions should include a brief abstract of the activity and up to two pages of supporting materials that articulate the goal, rationale, directions, and explanation of how the activity connects to/with communication concepts, theories, and/or various skills. **Please limit paper submissions to two per individual.** Send all submissions to [alabamacomassociation@gmail.com](mailto:alabamacomassociation@gmail.com)

**Respondents, Chairs, and Reviewers:** We invite faculty members who would like to serve as respondents and graduate students who would like to serve as chairs to contact George L. Daniels, ACA vice president and 2022 conference planner with their areas of interest and expertise. Faculty who are willing to serve as paper reviewers should also contact the conference planner at the following email address:

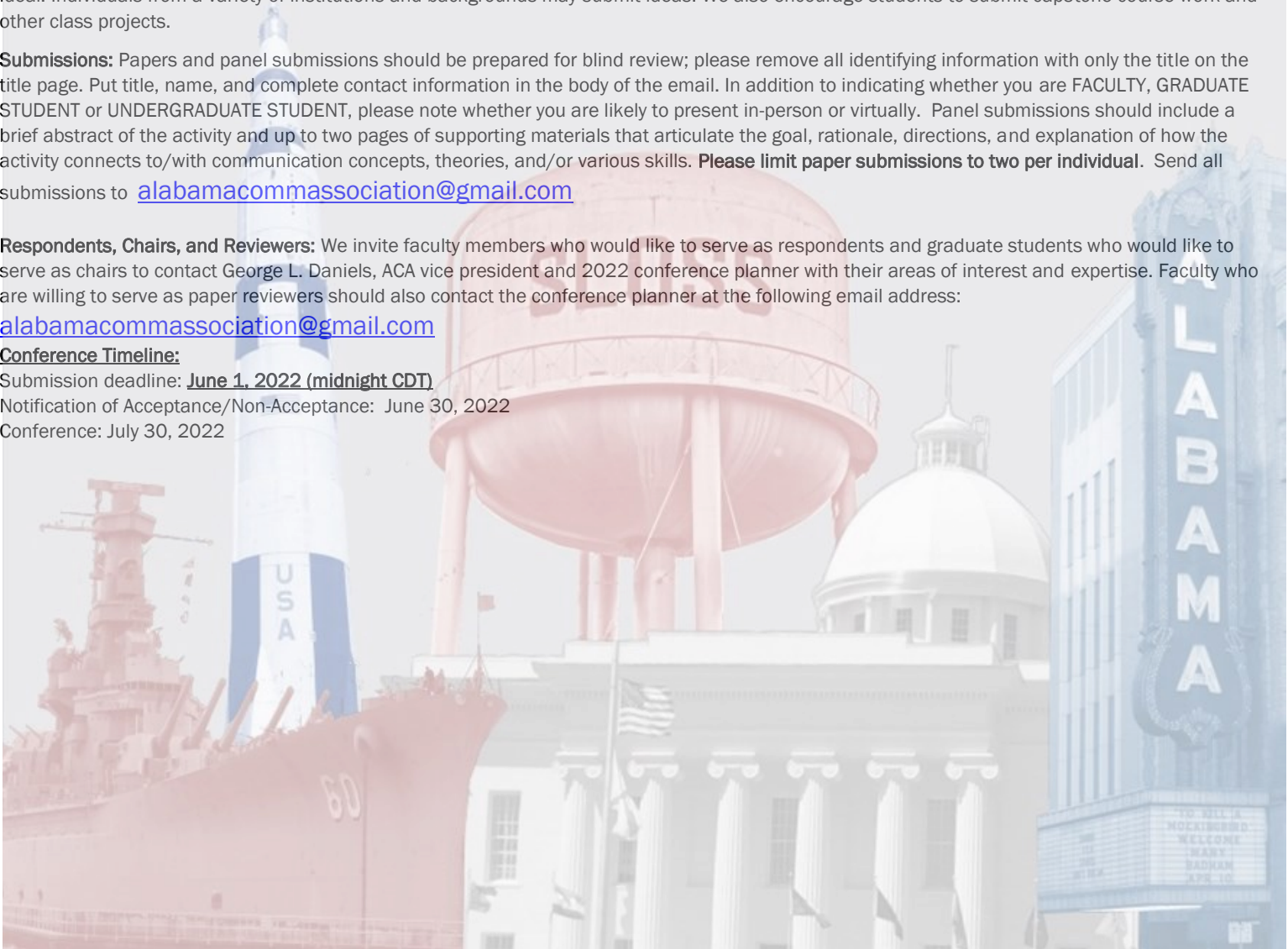
[alabamacomassociation@gmail.com](mailto:alabamacomassociation@gmail.com)

### **Conference Timeline:**

Submission deadline: **June 1, 2022 (midnight CDT)**

Notification of Acceptance/Non-Acceptance: June 30, 2022

Conference: July 30, 2022



# A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN SAUNDERS

*Editor's note: Last year, ACA members voted to create the John Saunders Service Award. As part of ACA's one-year delayed 10th anniversary celebration, Saunders was recognized as one of the association's founders. He spoke with ACA Vice President George Daniels about the award and his work.*

**Daniels:** What prompted you and others to start the Alabama Communication Association?

**Saunders:** It was around 2009, I was at the Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) conference in Norfolk, VA and was talking to Sherry Ford. I was about to move to Alabama to start my new job at Huntingdon College, and she started telling me about an idea she had to make a state association since Alabama did not have one, even though every surrounding state did. Our conversation slowly evolved and we started talking about the idea to a few other people, like Brett Lunceford and Jason Edward Black. It started out as just an idea, and we agreed that someone should start something like that. Since no one else was actively pursuing the idea, we figured that we should do it. So after many face-to-face conversations, and many, many more emails, we started to put this thing together.



ACA FOUNDERS— Jason Edward Black (now at UNC-Charlotte), Saunders and Sherry Ford took this photo during the 2021 ACA Convention at University of Montevallo where Ford chairs the Department of Communication .

**Daniels:** What do you remember about the very first ACA convention – where was it and what are some highlights?

**Saunders:** The first conference was in Montgomery at Huntingdon College, where I taught at the time. I remember three things that stood out most. First, Jim McCrosky attended our conference and gave Brett and I some advice on running an association from his experience doing so on a much larger level. Second,

we were making mistakes left and right, but we worked together to fix them in the moment. The biggest mistake was having a dinner instead of a lunch for a one day conference. I took home a LOT of fried chicken. Third, after it was over, I had a moment with Brett after everyone had left where we looked at each other thinking we had pulled it off. We had created something, and those who attended liked what we had created. That was a special moment for me, and one that I feel after every conference we have. But that first one was special.

**Daniels:** We don't typically think of academic associations as a place for service, but more for our research and teaching. Why should one devote time to service in state association?

**Saunders:** I see the ACA being all about scholarship for students, and then scholarship, teaching, and service for faculty. State associations are great places for young faculty to both network and get in service to the discipline in a way they may not be connected to regional or national conferences yet. But the ultimate reason why service can be unique at state associations is that there tends to be more opportunities for leadership at this level, and there is more opportunity to build at this level. A couple years ago we had a panel on short films. Several state associations have student film festivals, so that is an opportunity for someone who specializes in that area to build something for the ACA and shape how it is run. The ACA has also expanded its scope beyond traditional paper presentations and GIFTS to PR presentations. We still have a lot of potential areas that we don't cover yet. So when I think of service and the ACA, I think of a frontier that we haven't explored yet just waiting for someone with those interests to build something with us.

**Daniels:** Tell us what you do/teach at UA-Huntsville? How long have you been there and where were you before UAH?

**Saunders:** I was at Huntingdon College from 2009-2014, the University of Central Arkansas 2014-2017, and have been at The University of Alabama in Huntsville since 2017. At UAH, I teach Rhetorical Criticism, Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, Persuasion, Legal Arguments, Public Speaking, and Business and Professional Communication. I am also developing a class I taught as a special topics course titled Public Memory and Race in the South.

**Daniels:** What advice do you have for junior faculty who are deciding which groups/association to get involved with as they develop their academic careers?

**Saunders:** For junior faculty, getting involved in a state association is an incredible opportunity to get involved in leadership roles on a more workable level than the regional and national conferences offer. The scope is smaller, making the work involved more manageable. State associations also give junior



AT HOME IN HUNTSVILLE— Saunders showed off his ACA T-shirt in this 2022 photo.

faculty an incredible opportunity to network within their state. I now know people at institutions I had not even heard of when we started this association. The state associations also offer, like I mentioned above, opportunities for faculty to build something that doesn't currently exist. So why should junior faculty get involved? There are so many opportunities available to them here, and it is a great way to build up a vita.

**Daniels:** What is the biggest reward of rendering service to one's academic discipline?

**Saunders:** My answer is really at the heart of the award that is named after me. My biggest reward is hearing students giving presentations and engaging other students and faculty from all over Alabama and beyond with their ideas. My award is all about those who create opportunities for others to use their voices. There are so many students, and faculty, who might not get the opportunity to share their ideas with others from different schools and with different perspectives. Yes, all of this does help build a vita when looking at service inwardly. But I see the rewards for service all really coming from what is being done outwardly to build those opportunities for others.

## Kennedy Balances UAB Recruiting, ASU Teaching While Working on UA Ph.D. Degree

By George L. Daniels  
ACA Vice President

There are not many people who can say they're affiliated with three Alabama colleges and universities simultaneously. But, that's exactly the story for Caran (pronounced "kuh-RAN") Kennedy.

While she's teaching two classes as an adjunct instructor at Alabama State University in Montgomery, she's holding down a job as a recruiter at The University of Alabama at Birmingham and full-time enrolled as Ph.D. student at The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.



Kennedy

"I knew I wanted to work in academia. I knew I wanted to teach at the College level," Kennedy said.

Now she's doing both at the same time.

This semester she's teaching two sections of public speaking to freshmen, sophomores and juniors at Alabama State University.

But that's not all the teaching she does.

At The University of Alabama at Birmingham's School of Medicine, where she's worked since 2017,

Kennedy supervises a course students are required to take in order to conduct research in the School of Medicine. In addition to her on-site work, she spends a good deal of time on road.

"I go into high schools, some community colleges to try to get students to come to UAB study in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) areas such as neuroscience, immunology and genetics."

# PROFILE

## Univ. of Montevallo's Wang reflects on decade of teaching as her authentic self

By Niya Miller  
Vice President-Elect

Dr. Tiffany Wang was named the first recipient of the inaugural ACA teaching award during the 2021 conference. In response, Wang stated,

"I was so excited to be the recipient of the inaugural ACA teaching award! I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the University of Montevallo COMS program community for the past ten years. I'm grateful for our students and alumni who wrote me letters of support for this award and my University of Montevallo Department of Communication friends and colleagues who inspire me to be a better teacher and mentor."

Her approach towards teaching is inspired by 20th century Greek writer and philosopher, Nikos Kazantzakis. Wang explained that Kazantzakis saw ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which students are invited to cross and encouraged to create bridges of their own for others. In the classroom, Wang said she "encourage[s] students to cross the bridge and create bridges of their own by facilitating connections between theory and practice, college and career, and campus and community." She continued,

"Through these connections, students can create bridges of their own as they see how communication bene-

fits them in their personal, educational, and professional lives."

Her advice for those seeking to improve their classroom instruction practices is practical.

"Seek out professional development opportunities on your campus and at academic conferences like ACA. When I go to a conference, I try to go to at least one Great Idea for Teaching session or short course. These kinds of sessions are a great place to network and collaborate with others who share your teaching interests" She recommends.

She also suggests "reaching out to teachers you admire and see if you can sit in on one of their classes or invite them to come sit in on one of your classes" for feedback.

Wang is motivated to be herself in the classroom—even if this means approaching a particular course differ-



ently than one of her colleagues might approach that course. "I've found that my students and I are both happiest when I am my authentic self as a teacher, advisor, and mentor" she said.

Currently, Wang is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies, Basic Course Coordinator, and Director of Progression to Profession at the University of Montevallo.

She is enjoying sabbatical during the Spring 2022 semester.

### NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR 2022

#### Alabama Communication Association Award for Outstanding Teaching

The ACA Award for Outstanding Teaching recognizes individuals who demonstrate excellence in teaching communication in Alabama.

Eligible nominees must be employed full-time teaching courses in communication within the state of Alabama.

Eligible nominees may teach at any level (e.g., K-12, community college, university). In order to encourage nominations and recognize excellence in teaching at all types of institutions, the award committee may present awards to individuals at different academic levels.

Nominations, including self-nominations, require the following materials: 1) a single letter of nomination, 2) the nominee's curriculum vitae, and 3) a teaching philosophy statement not to exceed 500 words.

Other materials, including evidence of teaching effectiveness and supporting letters, may be submitted but are not required.

Nominations should be submitted via email to ACA President Sally Hardig at [hardigsb@montevallo.edu](mailto:hardigsb@montevallo.edu) NO LATER THAN **June 8, 2022**



# Students Gain Tips For Career Search From ACA Experts

FALL Roundtable continued from page 1

‘R.’ Then, note a positive lesson you learned from the scenario.”

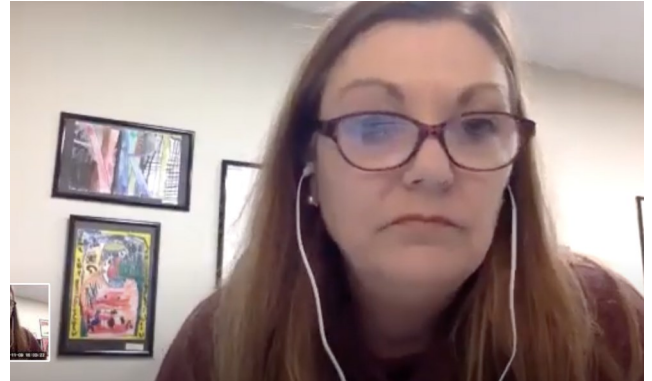
To positively set themselves apart from others, Sherrill had key advice for students or soon-to-be job applicants. She stated, “every time you do a job application, rewrite your cover letter specifically for that job.” With this, attendees were challenged to edit their materials to match the key words and phrases of a desired job description. Doing so helps to filter an application as one to consider, rather than move past.

Final cautionary words were offered from the panelist. “Take notes, jot down questions, and ask for a second to think about your answers,” said Sherrill.

It is important to come across as thoughtful and prepared she explained. “Avoid distracting virtual interviews,” warned Walker. With this, he noted the importance of non-distracting backgrounds and pitfalls of using the selfie-mode on the cameras.

Hunt encouraged students to “have a good email address.” He told students to avoid non-professional email addresses, particularly those with catch phrases and slang.

Lastly, Sherrill challenged students to “apply for opportunities. Even the ones that feel like a long-shot.” Walker echoed Sherrill’s advice and added “practice is the only way to get better.” Finally, Hunt encouraged students to “invest in themselves and be willing to struggle. You have to put in the work” he said.



ACA President Sally Hardig moderated the roundtable.



## ON PORTFOLIOS

*“It is fairly seldom that you’re going to hand somebody hard copies of things these days. So think about how you can put together material in a PDF (Portable Document Format) that you can edit, and re-arrange”*

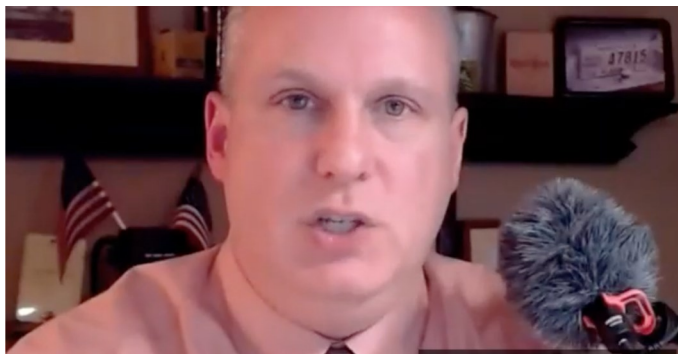
—Lindsey Sherrill  
The University of North Alabama



## MAKING THE BEST IMPRESSION

*“Prepare the things you can prepare and control the things you can control. In terms of the interview itself, it’s preparing for those common interview questions”*

- Jefferson Walker  
University of Montevallo



## THE OUTLOOK

*“The good news is for those who are willing to work, there seems to be really good jobs available.”*

- Jay Hunt  
University of South Alabama

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