

PCA 2025 Annual Conference

September 26–27, 2025

Welcome to the PCA 2025 Annual Conference!

On behalf of the planning committee, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 Pennsylvania Communication Association Conference, hosted this year on the beautiful campus of Saint Francis University in Loretto, PA.

As Vice President and planner for this year's conference, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for joining us for this important academic gathering. Your presence reflects a shared commitment to advancing the field of communication through thoughtful scholarship, collaboration, and community.

Saint Francis University offers a scenic and inspiring backdrop for our time together, and I hope you find both the environment and the programming enriching. Whether you are presenting research, engaging in meaningful dialogue, or reconnecting with colleagues and friends, may this conference spark new ideas and strengthen the bonds that make our association so vibrant.

Thank you again for being part of this year's conference. We are truly glad you're here.

Warm regards,

Kim Flanders

Vice President & 2025 Conference Planner
Pennsylvania Communication Association

Friday, September 26, 2025

12:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Registration – Schwab Hall Foyer

Refreshments & Work Area – Schwab Hall Vista Room 301

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Executive Council Meeting – Schwab 214

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

Salon Session Schwab 106

The Science of Authentic Influence: Mastering Body Language and Communication

Shelly O'Donovan, CEO, Authentic Influence Group

3:00 pm – 4:15 pm | Concurrent Sessions

Session 1.1 – Sponsored By Strategic Communication/IMC Interest Group
Schwab 106

Chair: Laurie Lawrence, Florida State University

Respondent: Darlene Natale, University of North Carolina at Pembroke

- The Evolution of Teaching Social Media Strategies and its Place in a Business School Curriculum – Kelly Rhodes, Saint Francis University
- Harmonizing Voices: The Strategic Integration of Communication Channels for Organizational Excellence – Tricia Giannone McFadden, Saint Francis University

Session 1.2 – Sponsored by Undergraduate Writing Competition - Winners
Schwab 102

Chair: Maryl McGinley, University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown

Respondent: Paul Lucas, University of Pittsburgh – Johnstown

- Bakhtin Walks into a Bar: The Author and Hero Relationship of Billy Joel's "Piano Man" – Audrey Husted, Geneva College
- "You Can Be Anything": Highlighting Barbie's Hyperfemininity and Hypermasculinity In The Animated Films by Sanjana Vinjamuri, Immaculata University; Indiana Gallant, Immaculata University
- The Rhetorical Arrow of Storytelling in The Hunger Games – Rebecca Ribblett, University of Pittsburgh

Session 1.3 – Sponsored By Applied Communication Interest Group
Schwab 202

Is DEI Dead?: Implications, Challenges, and Opportunities

Chair: Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University

Panelists: Georgia Bedford, Duquesne University; Valerie Lynn Schrader, Penn State Schuylkill; Fadoua Loudiy, Slippery Rock University; Tatyana Dumova, Point Park University

Political climate shifts have led to restriction or elimination of DEI programs in government, education, and businesses. There is a widespread claim in the media that DEI is "dead." However, despite political backlash and corporate rollbacks, most of Americans continue to express support for the values of diversity (66%), equity (63%), and inclusion (60%). The commitment to fostering inclusive learning environments also remains strong. Faculty are adapting by integrating broader concepts such as socioeconomic diversity, asset-based teaching, holistic pedagogy, accessibility, and inclusive instructional methods. This panel will explore how instructors are responding to these changes by sharing practical strategies and experiences for sustaining the core values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the communication classroom. Participants will offer insights into the implications of the current DEI rhetorical interruption, the challenges of transition, and opportunities for supporting all students in today's complex socio-political climate.

4:30 pm – 5:45 pm | Concurrent Sessions

Session 2.1 – Debate Coaches Roundtable: Tracking the Changing World of Debate and Forensics Schwab 106

Chair and Respondent: Tim Michaels, Penn State University

Panelists: Sarah M. Deluliis, Duquesne University; Courtney Wright, Penn State University; Heather Frederick, Slippery Rock University; Alvin J. Primack, University of Pittsburgh; Molly Martin, University of Pittsburgh; Arie Likhtman, University of Pittsburgh

Competitive debate and forensics at the collegiate level has a long history, and despite its entrenchment in tradition, the activity is also facing a time of transformation. Some change has been the deliberate response to changes in pedagogical philosophy, such as the push for restoring the civic roots of debate, while many other changes have been thrust upon the community, emanating from budget cuts across the higher education to the adaptations to emergent technologies for competitions. Tracking such wide-ranging and fast-paced changes, however, is a necessary but challenging task for current debate educators and presents an overwhelming barrier for those interested in first exploring debate as a classroom activity or co-curricular organization. The divergent trajectories of these issues warrants discussion for those that represent debate's past, present, and future.

To facilitate a conversation regarding the transformations within debate—and in response to this year's conference theme—we propose a roundtable session probing questions of the changes to tournament practices, pedagogical approaches, budgetary concerns, and technological logistics. This roundtable will consist of both faculty and graduate students who currently serve or previously served as coaches and directors of debate and forensics programs, representing programs from across the commonwealth and from a multitude of different types of debate circuits. Rather than presenting individual papers, the participants will draw on debate's tradition of deliberative approaches to inquiry, guided by a series of collaboratively-sourced questions to further a discussion that will offer insights to current debate scholars and those interested in the pedagogical value of debate practices as well.

Session 2.2 – Sponsored by Communication Education Panel Schwab 102

Chair: Maryl McGinley, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown

Respondent: Joel Ward, Geneva College

Panelists: Maryl McGinley, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Paul Lucas, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Sheryl Goodman, Ursinus College; Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne; Jill Burk, Penn State Berks

This panel offers a pedagogical entrance into conversations about assignment design with an eye toward mitigating AI use. The panelists posit: as AI use increases, so does the significance of the Humanities classroom. Current research echoes this sentiment, noting that dependence on AI can create deficiencies for college students. A recently published piece alerts us to the trend of overreliance, warning, “This appears as a major issue considering the aim of higher education is to enhance cognitive abilities, which could be compromised by excessive dependency on technological tools including the AI-based tools” (Abdaljaleel et. al., 2024). The following presentations will detail ways in which panelists are creating assignments to assist students in understanding the implications of AI use and encourage critical thinking, conversation, and connection.

Session 2.3 – Graduate Writing Competition Top Papers Schwab 202

Chair and Respondent: Richard Talbert, Heidelberg University

- Breaking the Silence: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Bell Let’s Talk Campaign – Tiffany Bohner
- Allegoria: Rhetoric and Revelation in St. Augustine – Keili Darius Branche
- When a Bite is More Than a Mouthful: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Apple Logo – Samuel Edogbanya

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Campfire on the Caboose: A Song Circle Supper

JFK Lounge

Sponsored by: Saint Francis University Division of Professional Studies

Join us for a relaxed evening of dinner and conversation, followed by a renewed PCA tradition: the song circle. It's a chance to unwind, connect with colleagues, and share in the joy of music and community. Come for the food, stay for the harmony.

Welcome: Kim Flanders, Saint Francis University

Opening Remarks: Tricia Giannone McFadden, Director, Executive Doctor of Education Program

Dinner Prayer: Father Jason Wooleyhan

Song Circle Co-chairs: Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University; Valerie Lynn Schrader, Penn State Schuylkill; Kim Flanders, Saint Francis University

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Saturday, September 27, 2025

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Registration – Schwab Foyer

8:00 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast – Vista Room, Schwab 3

Past Presidents' Breakfast – Schwab 312

9:00 am – 10:15 am | Concurrent Sessions

**Session 3.1 – Sponsored by Communication Education Interest Group
Schwab 102**

Chair and Respondent: Paul Lucas, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown

- One Size Does NOT Fit All: Integrating Employee Preferences into Workplace Bereavement Leave and Communications Policies – Kent Tonkin, Saint Francis University
- Crisis, Trust, and Transformation: A Case Study of the Red Cross Society of China – Ying Zhao, Duquesne University
- Story “Time”: Resolution, The Endless, and Character Accessibility – Paul Lucas, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Rebecca Ribblett, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown

**Session 3.2 – Sponsored by Applied Communication Interest Group
Schwab 106**

Communicating Crisis in Higher Education

Chair: Kim Flanders, Saint Francis University

Panelists: Kim Flanders, Saint Francis University; Valerie Lynn Schrader, Penn State Schuylkill; Laurie Lawrence, Florida State University; Janelle Gruber, Penn State Schuylkill

This panel examines how universities communicate when big, often difficult changes happen. Whether it is a long-anticipated shift or a crisis, institutions must find ways to communicate clearly, responsibly, and with empathy. Panelists will examine four varied cases: St. Francis University's transition from Division I to Division III athletics, Penn State's announcement of multiple campus closures, Florida State University's response to a campus shooting, and PASSHE's merging of six universities into two. Drawing on firsthand research, media analysis, and institutional messaging, the discussion will consider the balance between strategic communication and ethical responsibility. The panel will also reflect on how the words universities choose, and when and how they use them, can build trust, cause confusion, or even deepen harm. These case studies offer a chance to think about how communication is not just a

response to change, but a powerful tool that can shape how a community understands and moves through it.

Session 3.3 – Sponsored by Philosophies of Communication and Rhetoric and Public Address Interest Groups

Schwab 202

Chair and Respondent: Richard Talbert, Heidelberg University

- From Rhetoric to Praxis: Aristotelian Foundations and the Philosophical Evolution of Communication as a Discipline – Tricia Giannone McFadden, Saint Francis University
- Navigating Rhetoric and Culture in Kashmir: A Burkean Analysis of Agha Shahid Ali Poetry – Rayna Batool, Ohio University
- Toward a Portrait of Paine the Persuader: An Introduction to the Rhetoric of *The Age of Reason* – David Hoffman, Baruch College

10:30 am – 11:45 am | Concurrent Sessions

Session 4.1 – Sponsored by Communication Education Interest Group

Schwab 106

Chair: Laurie Lawrence, Florida State University

Respondent: Tatyana Dumova, Point Park University

- Logging Off to Look Closer: Teaching Digital Detox to Confront Surveillance and Social Media Overuse – Patty Wharton-Michael, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown
- From Rhetoric to Robots: Integrating Generative AI into the Communication Classroom Without Losing the Human Touch – Laurie Lawrence, Florida State University
- Adopting Cultures to Navigate Communication Among Cultures: A Semester-Long Assignment – Rayna Batool, Ohio University

Session 4.2 – Sponsored by Communication Ethics Interest Group

Schwab 102

Chair: Richard Talbert, Heidelberg University

Respondent: Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University

- A Communication Ethics Literacy Perspective on Public Speaking – Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University; Michael R. Kearney, Dordt University
- The Duquesne School of Communication Ethics: Towards an Inside View – Chr. Michael Graham, Jr., Duquesne University
- Applying McLuhan's "Medium Is the Message" to Ethics in the Digital Age – Yaroub Al Obaidi, Duquesne University

- Modern Marketing and the Crisis of Consumer Loss of Agency & Critical Thought – Andrea DiBernardo, Duquesne University

Session 4.3 – Sponsored by Communication Education Interest Group

Schwab 202

Ctrl+Alt+Reimagine: Rebooting the University for a Digital Age

Panelists: Caroline Fitzpatrick, Alvernia University; Ryan Lange, Alvernia University; Kris Lowrey, Alvernia University; Jodi Radosh, Alvernia University

This panel examines how colleges and universities can respond to rapid technological and demographic change through intentional institutional adaptation. Rebooting a university for the digital age isn't just about adopting tools, but reimagining power, participation, and voice in learning. As artificial intelligence (AI) transforms scholarly practices and challenges long-held notions of authorship and ownership, educators must rethink pedagogy and policy. Simultaneously, digital media reshape how students perceive identity and authority in the classroom, requiring new approaches to teaching perspective and critical engagement. Against the backdrop of the demographic cliff, an exploration of how gray decision intelligence (gray DI) can help institutions reconceptualize enrollment strategies and resource management. Furthermore, service learning offers a concrete model for reimagining the role of universities — not as ivory towers, but as networked hubs of civic innovation and reciprocal partnerships. Together, these conversations offer a forward-looking vision of how technology can drive not just operational efficiency but meaningful transformation in higher education.

Each panelist will share expertise and experiences related to intellectual property and AI, gray decision intelligence, media representation and identity, and community engagement before responding to comments and posing questions for audience interaction. Physical and/or digital handouts of resources will be provided.

12:00 pm – 1:15 pm

Vista Room Schwab 302

PCA General Business Meeting and Luncheon

1:30 pm – 2:45 pm | Concurrent Sessions

Session 5.1 – Sponsored by Communication Education Interest Group

Schwab 106

Pedagogy for the Turbulent Times: Strategies, Practices, and Ideas

Chair and Respondent: Sheryl Goodman, Ursinus College

Participants: Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University; Valerie Lynn Schrader, Penn State Schuylkill; Sheryl Goodman, Ursinus College; Kimberly Flanders, Saint Francis University; Cem Zeytinoglu, East Stroudsburg University; Paul A. Lucas, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Tatyana Dumova, Point Park University

On the eve of America's Sestercentennial, there is a growing societal feeling that the nation entered into complex, volatile, and tumultuous times. Among the signs are extreme political polarization, a sense of economic instability, financial turbulence, distrust of the mainstream media, and a distant threat of domestic chaos. As Americans grapple with economic, social, political, and mental health-

related stressors, college educators continue their mission of preparing the next generation to enter the workforce and contribute to society as citizens. Even most challenging turbulence creates an opportunity for growth through developing resilience. This panel will facilitate a constructive conversation about how to embrace complexity by sharing experiences and ideas. In short, how do we prepare students for a future that feels more uncertain than ever?

**Session 5.2 – Sponsored by Intercultural Communication Interest Group
Schwab 102**

Chair and Respondent: Natalya Vodopyanova, Penn State Wilkes-Barre

- The African American Jeremiad and the Social Gospel: A Reflection on the Foundational Thought of Mordecai Johnson – Diana L. Nogay, Old Dominion University
- Cultural Intelligence, Cultural Sensitivity, and Cultural Competence in a Social Media World – Richard L. Talbert, Heidelberg University
- Same Country, Different Signals: Nonverbal Communication in Urban Traffic – Natalya Vodopyanova, Penn State Wilkes-Barre

**Session 5.3 – Sponsored by Health Communication Interest Group
Schwab 202**

Chair and Respondent: Özüm Üçok-Sayrak, Duquesne University

- Health and Wellness Advocacy: Consequences of Health Disparities on Impoverished Populations, Underserved Communities, and Marginalized Groups
Victor Grigsby, Duquesne University
- “The Grace to Welcome Those who Suffer”: The Art of Care in Medical Communication.
Özüm Üçok-Sayrak, Duquesne University; Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University
- Interpersonal Encouragement as a Propelling Force in Healthy Behaviors: A Case Study
Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University; Sandra L. Stonge, Independent Scholar; Narice May, Independent Scholar

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

**Boxcars of Thought: Rolling Research Forward
PCA Poster Session and Graduate Fair – Vista Room – Schwab 302**

Haley Seedor, Penn State Schuylkill

Kenneth Burke, Identification, and the Case of Campus Closures

Jenalise Muir, Penn State Schuylkill

Burkean Identification and 'The Odyssey'

Janelle L.H. Gruber, Penn State Schuylkill

Parenting "For Real Life": Teachable Moments and Burkean Identification for Adult Viewers of the Television Program Bluey

Lily Kreiser, Penn State Schuylkill

"This is Bigger Than the Music:" Kendrick Lamar, Hegemony, and the 2025 Superbowl Halftime Show

Karen C. Theveny, Penn State Brandywine

Sound & Screen: Student Voices Through Podcasts & Trailers

Indiana Gallant, Immaculata University

Promising Young Woman: An Exploration of Hyperfemininity and Power

Kacey M Harper, Penn State Schuylkill

You're On Your Own Kid

Madisyn Billingsley, Penn State Schuylkill

Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?: A Rhetorical Analysis of facework in 8 Mile?"

Kirsten Johnson, Elizabethtown College; Madilyn Fratis, Elizabethtown College

Coverage of News Stories by Mainstream and Non-Traditional News Organizations and Journalists on TikTok

Joe Downing, Penn State York

Google Notebook LM and the Transformation of Undergraduate Research Practices

Riley Knox, Saint Francis University

The Infamous Pandemic

Elijah Villarrial, Saint Francis University; Grayden Lewis, Saint Francis University; Miles Webb, Saint Francis University

Laser Engraving Consumer Preferences: A Quantitative Study

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Walking Tour of Schwab Estates – Father Jason Wooleyhan, Saint Francis University

Meet at Schwab Foyer (Bring Walking Shoes!)

4:30 pm – 5:45 pm | Concurrent Sessions

Session 7.1 – Sponsored by Communication Honor Society Undergraduate Student Papers Interest Group

Schwab 106

Chair:

Respondent:

- An Analysis of Difficult Discussions: Strategies that Encourage and Discourage Dialogue – Kylie Ruggiero, Ursinus College
- Track and Field: An Ethnographic Study of Gender Dynamics – Lily Nagy, Ursinus College
- Preventing Drunk Driving Among Young Adults: Innovative Campaign Strategies for Safer Roads – Megan Marlin, Saint Francis University; Kathryn Tanis, Saint Francis University; Julia Givens, Saint Francis University

Session 7.2 – Sponsored by Media, Society, and Technology Interest Group

Schwab 102

Chair and Respondent: Kris Lowrey, Alvernia University

- Censorship, Polarization and the Demise of Satire – Darlene W. Natale, University of North Carolina Pembroke

- Navigating the Digital Landscape: Understanding Social Media's Impact – Tiffany Bohner, Penn State Schuylkill
- Students and the Rise of AI: Perceptions, Practices, and Policy in Higher Education – Patty Wharton-Michael, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Mark DiMauro, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown

Session 7.3 – Sponsored by Communication Education Interest Group Schwab 202

The Poetics of Rhetoric: Art Study as Persuasion Primer

Janie Harden Fritz, Duquesne University; Samuel Edogbanya, Duquesne University; Sarah Deiuliis, Duquesne University, Joel Ward, Geneva College

Aristotle defines rhetoric as a faculty of observation. However, often in contemporary rhetorical education emphasis begins with grammar and logic rather than considering a student's observational faculties which are as Aristotle proposes, rhetorical. This panel discusses the potential implications of encouraging students to study the arts as a primer for a rhetorical education. As Ivan Illich suggests, one of the best ways to understand the nature of persuasion is to guard one's senses so that they retain their sensitivity when presented with bids for capturing attention. By studying art in the communication classroom, we can better equip students to develop their observational faculties which is in turn, the art of rhetoric. Such observation is not only visual but also includes the other senses. This panel proposes art study not just in the visual arts but also the way that art as a practice develops a student's faculties of observation in every sensory situation. Papers will also demonstrate how pedagogically such aesthetic conditions include a critical function for understanding the formal qualities of art in developing the scholastic bias of a given area of study.

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

PCA Awards Ceremony, Banquet, and Keynote Address

JFK Lounge

Sponsored by: Shields School of Business, Saint Francis University

All attendees are invited to attend PCA's annual awards ceremony, banquet, and keynote address.

Keynote Speaker: Nicholas Ruffner, Sheetz Public Affairs Manager

As public affairs manager, Nick Ruffner leads external communications efforts for Sheetz, which has more than 770 store locations across Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Michigan

and Ohio. Ruffner's responsibilities include all media relations, crisis communications and reputation management. In 2024, he was promoted to public affairs manager at Sheetz – continuing management of Sheetz public relations but expanding his role in assisting Sheetz entering new markets, making sure that all audiences (media, the public, local municipal officials) know what Sheetz can bring to local communities.

Ruffner attended the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. Subsequently, in 2007, Ruffner graduated with a Master of Science in Broadcast Journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

Ruffner began a career in broadcasting in 2007, working as a television anchor/reporter at WJAC-TV in Johnstown up until late 2011. He then served as the news director for a group of seven radio Pennsylvania.

Nick's career in public relations began in July 2013 as a communications coordinator for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and was later hired, in 2015, as the communications director for Congressman Glenn 'GT' Thompson. In that role, he handled all public relations activities for the Congressman's office. Nick served in that role through Nov. 2016, when he moved to the Altoona area to work for Sheetz.

Ruffner was recognized, in 2020, as Corporate Public Relations Professional of the Year by Regan Communications and PR Daily. In 2021, he was named a Top 40 Under 40 Leader to Watch by Convenience Store Decisions.

Nick lives in Duncansville, PA, with his wife, Zoleanne, and three children – Christian, Claire and Carter.

7:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Schwab 302 Vista Room
Executive Council Meeting

Thank you for joining us at PCA 2025!