

ECA VICE PRESIDENT ELECT-SELECT CANDIDATE STATEMENT

DON W. STACKS, PH.D.

I am honored and consider my nomination for ECA First Vice President Elect-Select the outcome of three decades of attending ECA conferences, serving it as it has asked me to, and making lots of friends and colleagues over those years. I attended my first ECA convention as a part-time student at American University while serving in the US Army stationed not far from the 1974 conference hotel at L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, DC. I then moved "south" to complete my MA and Ph.D. in communication at Auburn University and the University of Florida, respectively. I "returned" to ECA upon taking my first academic post in 1978 and have been an active member ever since.

My ECA history includes serving as an editorial board member on all ECA's association journals, an editorship nomination for Communication Quarterly, and currently serving as editor of Communication Research Reports. I have presented or responded to papers or served on conventional panels or worked on preconference workshops just about every convention since 1978. This history of service to the association has resulted in being honored by ECA first as an ECA Distinguished Research Fellow and then as an ECA Distinguished Teaching Fellow.

My administrative experience has been at the departmental level, rebuilding two programs and taking my current program from relative obscurity to national prominence (top 25 undergraduate, top 10 graduate programs). In addition, my administrative experience with conferences includes running the 1979 regional Danforth Associate conference, serving as division or interest group chairs at NCA, SCA, AEJMC, and PRSA; and President of the Alabama Speech Communication Association. I directed the International Public Relations Research Conference, the world's largest public relations research conference for 18 years. Each conference met or beat financial expectations.

Thinking back to what has drawn me to ECA over the years I am reminded of my impressions from that first meeting years ago in DC. Although a fish out of water, I quickly met a number of the people I was reading in my off-duty academic classes – and they talked to me – not only about their work, but about what I wanted to do within academia (I had already published an article and was a founding editorial board member of the Journal of Applied Communications Research). In many regards that first conference, which mixed research, teaching, and informal mentorships was a major influence on my career.

That said, what do I propose doing?

First, expand the student experience (undergraduate and graduate) to include not only research sessions but also mentoring sessions to keep the best and brightest in the ECA.

Second, provide time for research discussions that fit a different format than stand up and present; a roundtable discussion format where presenters and participants actually discuss the research in 15-20 minute sessions. This would not take away from the formal presentations, but it seems would re-engineer some sessions that would reflect ECA's commitment to promoting research.

Third, develop and begin a Distinguished Administrative Fellow program that would help those who are picked – or would like to explore the role of the communication administrator – as a functioning instructional and mentoring force in establishing excellent departmental, school, and university administrators (we currently have a solid group in the Administrators

Interest Group). This group might take on problems faced by ECA institutions and individual concerns about the tenure and promotion process.

Fourth, given the sound financial status we now enjoy due to concerted efforts by current and former ECA Executive Directors, interest groups are being given the opportunity to build their programs through conference grant support. This is the first step and should be followed as financially possible by top paper monetary awards as one path (also serving as a useful tool in garnering publicity for ECA). Further, I would like to expand this effort to the support of undergraduate and graduate research and teaching and conference presentations. An additional thought might be to create two sets of research grants one for support of young faculty and/or graduate students and another supporting senior faculty who wish to pursue new lines of research and utilize our Distinguished Fellows as reviewers. These are just a few of my thoughts about increased support across ECA.

In sum, I'm excited about leading ECA forward over the upcoming years. I believe I have the necessary background to work with current and future leadership in continuing ECA's mission. I would be honored to serve as First Vice President Elect-Select if so voted by the membership. I appreciate your considered support in the upcoming election.