

1999 NCA Convention**NCA Presidential Address**

Editor's Note: Orlando L. Taylor's address was given on November 6, 1999, at the NCA Annual Meeting in Chicago.

**M**r. First Vice President, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It has been truly an honor and privilege to have served as the 85th, and the first, president of color of the National Communication Association on this, the eve of 20th century.

I have been extremely fortunate to have led the Association in one of the most significant years in its history. During this past year, NCA purchased a building in downtown DC, acquired several grants that will place the discipline squarely in the center of many trends in higher education, and—during this very convention—approved the Association's first electronic journal. I am especially thankful for the work, support and encouragement of Executive Director Jim Gaudino, the entire national office staff, my colleagues on the Administrative Council, members of the Legislative Council, the Local Arrangements committee for the New York Convention and several selected individuals. I also wish to express special appreciation to many members of my Howard University staff—particularly Denise Moore and Andrea Jackson—for tolerating me more than usual these past three years and for supporting me completely and loyally during the campaign for election and my stints as Second Vice President, First Vice President and currently as NCA president. Without the help of these individuals and many others, I could not have enjoyed the many successes that were achieved during my presidential year. And now, we gather this evening in this great city, Chicago, on the eve of the 20th century and the impending dawn of a new millennium.

A philosopher once said something on the order of "he who fails to learn from the past is destined to repeat it." On this occasion, I would like to take a brief moment to look back at the glorious past of our Association and our discipline during the 20th century before taking a futuristic gaze into the next millennium.

It is significant that we are meeting here in Chicago as the sun is beginning to set on the 20th century. For, after all, it was here in Chicago, this very city, on the morning of November 28, 1914 during a meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English—of which speech was a section—when 17 academic speech professionals voted unanimously to establish the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS), thus bringing to life the association that we know today as the National Communication Association.

These 17 courageous and academic revolutionaries dared to openly "color outside the lines" to advocate an academically heretical thought—that the field of speech was a legitimate academic discipline deserving of an independent voice within the academic community. Let us be mindful of the fact that at the time of the founding of the first national professional association for academia-based speech professionals—just 85 years ago this year—not a single college offered a major in speech or

communication, as it is now called. Of course, there was no graduate study in the discipline and, according to Andrew Weaver, who attended the 1914 meeting but who did not vote on the establishment of NAATPS, speech professionals worked in an environment of suspicion, hostility and contempt. (Some might say that we still do.)

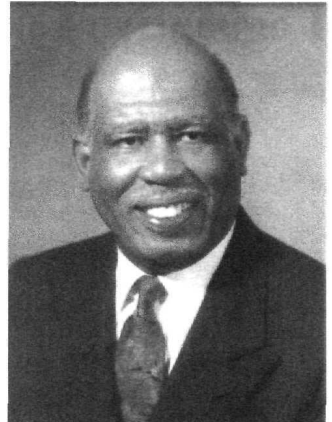
In all seriousness, we've come a long way as a discipline in a relatively short period of time. We are a healthy discipline that is poised to pursue even greater horizons in the next millennium if we are willing to continue "coloring outside the lines."

Before proceeding further, I would like to pause to acknowledge the vision and foresight of the founders of the Association on this, the last convention of the 1900s.

- Isaac Merton Cochran, Carlton College (MN)
- Arthur Loren Gates, Miami University (Ohio)
- Joseph Searle Gaylord, Winona State University (IL)
- Haldor Gislason, University of Minnesota
- Harry Bainbridge Gough, Depauw University (IN)
- Binney Gunnison, Lombard College
- Clarion Dewitt Hardy, Northwestern University
- James Lawrence Lardner, Northwestern University
- Glenn Newton Merry, University of Iowa
- James Milton O'Neill, University of Wisconsin (whom many call the "Father of Our Association" and who was also the first president, the first journal editor and the spark plug of the rebellion following an important NCTE speech in 1913).
- J. Manley Phelps, University of Illinois
- Frank Miller Rarig, University of Minnesota
- Lew Sarett, University of Illinois
- Benjamin Carlton Van Wye, University of Cincinnati
- Irvah Lester Winter, Harvard University
- James Albert Winans, Cornell University
- Charles Henry Woolbert, University of Illinois

These 17 visionaries laid the foundation for our discipline to acquire a national perspective and presence and established the ACADEMIC credibility of our work.

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# Taylor addresses NCA convention participants

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Since our founding, we have had 85 national presidents, and while we have considerable work to do with respect to leadership access for both genders and for persons from diverse racial and cultural groups, I am proud that several of our presidents have been women. And on this, the eve of a new millennium, I am especially proud that I am the first person of color to serve as your president and that another person of color, Jack Daniel, has served as this year's chair of our Finance Board. I hope that all of these achievements are positive signs that equal opportunity is becoming the norm for true diversity within this organization. Also, as a point of personal privilege, I wish to acknowledge the following individuals:

Former president Lionel Crocker of Denison University, who, as my phonetics professor, taught me that I could compete academically with anyone.

The late J. Jeffrey Auer of Indiana University, a former NCA president who instilled within me a thirst for research and the pursuit of the core values of the academy as a scholar-teacher, first as the professor of my first graduate communication class at Indiana University and later as the chair of the department in which I assumed my first academic position following receipt of the Ph.D. degree from Michigan.

And former president Robert Jeffrey of University of Texas, Austin, who mentored me on the art, science and politics of academic administration—specifically on how to be a dean.

I thank each of these former presidents for I stand here tonight partly on their shoulders and certainly in their shoes. I ask each one of you now to join me in a moment of silence in honor of Jeff Auer, one of the great leaders of our Association, who passed just three weeks ago.

Since our founding in 1914, our discipline has undergone remarkable progress and many changes, including many name changes—from NAATPS to the National Association of Teachers of Speech, to The Speech Association of America, to the Speech Communication Association, and finally to the National Communication Association.

Our Association has always been open to change—not just for the sake of change, but always with purpose and for good reason. For example, our name changes have reflected changes in interests, national trends, issues, and, above all, in our ongoing efforts to address the full range of communication issues and needs of our nation and world. For example, our name change from the Speech Communication Association to the National Communication Association reflects our interest in all methods used by humankind to express ideas, cultural beliefs, and emotions. We have also broadened our definition of research to embrace different research methodologies, from the quantitative to the qualitative, and from the vantagepoints of diverse cultural and gender perspectives.

We have grown from 17 people here in Chicago almost 85 years ago to an Association of more than 7,000 members—and from an Association that attracted 60 attendees to its first annual meeting to one that boasts at this year's meeting an attendance of approximately 4,400 persons. And an Association whose headquarters will be located in a few months in the same neighborhood as numerous professional societies and associations, less than one-half mile from the White House and one mile from the United States Congress. What an awesome thought!

Indeed, our move to Washington represents a significant

moment in the history of NCA and the discipline. It will move the discipline to Main Street USA and the world. It will provide NCA with an appropriate location to advance two of the most important components of the NCA strategic plan proposed by the Administrative Council and approved by the Legislative Council in 1993.

Among other things, the strategic plan calls for NCA to obtain increased external recognition for the discipline and the Association and especially with policymaking bodies.

A subsequent document, *Communication 2000: Advancing into the 21st Century*, calls for NCA to "take its place alongside the professional associations supporting other established academic disciplines." In accomplishing this goal, *Communication 2000* calls for NCA to advance the discipline and promote the importance of its knowledge base and teaching practices with all relevant audiences.

What better place to accomplish these lofty goals than Washington, DC, our nation's capital!

As we gaze into the future, NCA and our discipline face many challenges—and I believe—opportunities. I have discussed many of them in my monthly columns in *Spectra* during the past year; nonetheless, I would like to again reflect briefly on just a few of them in this, my final act as NCA president.

## Defining the Discipline and Its Centrality

In one of my earliest columns as NCA president, I remarked on questions and comments that were posed to me early in my career as a department chair. The questions and comments went something like the following: "...exactly what is the discipline of communication? It seems to me that it is more of a profession than a discipline. What, for example, are its theoretical foundations? As near as I can tell, communication has no theory unique unto itself. Its theories have been borrowed from pure academic disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, linguistics, etc."

Questions and comments like these and countless others are reflective of the difficulties we often face in establishing the discipline of communication in the academic and research communities. First, some of our colleagues simply don't know the theoretical foundations of the discipline. Others are unaware of the distinctions between the academic and scholarly aspects of the field of communication on the one hand and the practice of communication as an applied professional skill on the other. Some continue to see graduate study in communication as belonging to the professional degree community, as opposed to the research community. To be sure, there is a distinct, applied element to the field of communication, but all of it is based on solid theoretical constructs and research data! Indeed, we faced this very issue this morning as chairs of our doctoral-granting departments met with an official from the National Research Council.

While annoying and sometimes insulting, these failures of understanding and recognition can sometimes lead to very unfavorable consequences. For example, senior academic leaders often feel comfortable in recommending the elimination of academic departments on the grounds that they are not essential academic disciplines. Faculties and administrators in other academic disciplines sometimes feel secure in hiring modestly trained communication professionals as "experts" within their units to teach communication as a skill. Still others fail to see the significance of the discipline of communication as an essential

element of a liberal education in the information age, as well as an important component to graduate education in virtually all fields.

Thanks to the fine work of former NCA president Judith Trent and several others of our Association leadership, NCA was elected into membership in the American Council of Learned Societies in 1997. Selection for membership in this highly prestigious professional organization, representing the major social science and humanities disciplines, was an important milestone in the discipline's quest for inclusion into the academic disciplinary "club." It also helped to establish the discipline on the radar screen for certain training and research grant programs from private and governmental agencies.

There have been other positive signs of the discipline's increased respect and recognition in recent years. For example, the recent report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching on *Re-Inventing Undergraduate Education* spoke to the need of enhancing written and oral communication in undergraduate education. The 1995 COSEPUP Report from the National Academy of Sciences made a similar recommendation at the graduate level, as have several other reports emanating from the science and technology graduate communities.

The National Science Foundation recently announced a new funding competition that contains a specific communication component for the preparation of the next generation of doctoral recipients in science, mathematics and engineering. All of this speaks to an increasing recognition of the centrality of the communication discipline.

And, of course, there is the whole notion of what one needs to know to be "an educated person." In the post-industrial information society of the new millennium, it is clear that knowledge of communication as a competence and an intellectual commodity will be just as important within the construct of liberal education as mathematics, history and the arts. In short, it will be considered as an academic body of knowledge at the core of what it means to be educated.

Communication as a discipline now faces a new and important challenge. That is, recognition by the periodic *Study of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States* by the National Research Council. Last conducted in 1993 and published in 1995, this standard of the graduate program rating game has never rated doctoral programs in communication.

One major problem that prevented us from consideration in the 1995 ratings was an internal lack of cohesion as to how Ph.D. programs in communication are classified within our various institutions. Sometimes such programs are referred to as Speech. In other institutions, they are referred to as Communication. In still others, the nomenclature is Rhetoric, Mass Communication, Cultural Studies, etc. The uses of these varied designata—sometimes research degree-oriented and other times professional degree-oriented—are reflected in the uses of different classification codes by doctoral granting institutions in their annual reporting of earned doctorates to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

I am pleased to report that NCA and the other communication disciplines are examining this issue by seeking terminology that will embrace all of our disciplines and result in a more critical mass of individuals who receive Ph.D. degrees. In addition, we have begun discussions with the National Research Council on this topic in an effort to have communication included in the next survey, currently scheduled for 2002. It is significant that Dr. James Voytuk, a key leader in the NRC world, appeared at this very convention to discuss this matter with the chairs of our doctoral programs.

### Communication and The Public Good through Linkages with Other Disciplines

Our various publics—taxpayers, legislators, funders, and students—are increasingly expecting academic disciplines, and especially their academic leaders and institutions, to be connected to the public good. They want the disciplines, all of them, and their gatekeepers to use disciplinary knowledge and skill to address the needs and problems of humankind. As communication scholar-teachers and communication practitioners, we face both challenges and opportunities to connect our work—and the preparation of our students—to addressing such vexing issues as interethnic conflict, aging, health care delivery, illiteracy, quality education, etc. Indeed, I would submit that the leading disciplines in the next millennium will be precisely those that find ways to connect to the needs of the people.

In addressing the public good, I would submit that communication as a discipline will be positioned in a far more strategic position if it is linked with other academic disciplines in interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary arrangements, as opposed to isolated, somewhat parochial environments.

Our aforementioned move to downtown DC will strategically locate our Association as neighbor to numerous professional associations that are central to advancing the communication discipline. Greater linkages with the communication discipline will, in turn, enrich the disciplines representing these associations. For example, we are already connected through a recently acquired grant of \$150,000 to the Council of Graduate Schools and the Association of American Colleges and Universities in the Preparing Future Faculty Project. Through this project, we will work in collaboration with the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association, the American Political Science Association and the American Sociological Association to reform doctoral education by infusing a faculty preparation component without subverting the usual theory and research requirements.

Our colleague, Richard Cherwitz, and his colleagues at the University of Texas, among others, have assumed national leadership in expanding the PFF concept to Preparing Future Professionals, not only in communication, but also in all disciplines with respect to adding a communication component.

Through the good work of our colleague, Jim Applegate, we have strengthened our ties with the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) in the area of Service Learning and with The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching through its Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

AAHE has awarded NCA a four-year service learning award that will be used to promote service learning (S-L) in the communication field through a series of advocacy and resource development efforts. During year-one of the grant, NCA will initiate several S-L activities designed to enhance the concept of campus engagement through service learning.

NCA has also been awarded a small grant through the Carnegie Teaching Academy's efforts to encourage disciplinary societies to promote the concept and practice of the scholarship of teaching and learning (S.T.L.). The project activities commenced in fall 1999 and will extend through the NCA 2000 National Convention. Some of the activities that constitute this new grant have already been assigned to NCA members, while others are still in the discussion stage.

### Expanding Career Choices

As communication is increasingly seen as a central discipline in the academic community and the workplace, it is imperative that

communication students of the future understand and appreciate all of the career choices that await them. Statistics of doom and gloom are increasingly raised by some in the academic and public worlds on the subject of over-supply and underemployment of doctoral degree recipients in certain fields, especially in academia and within the humanities. However, I would argue three points. First, there is no overabundance of doctoral recipients in the FULL range of academic environments where jobs in our field reside, especially within community colleges and in industry. Second, there is no over representation of people of color. Third, there is a need for mentoring all students about career choices outside of academia—and preparing them to succeed within these arenas! With reference to points one and three, our colleagues in research universities must gain greater recognition and respect for non-academic careers and for academic careers in non-research institutions.

Bob Weisbuch, at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Program, has been a major spokesperson on careers outside the academy for humanists. He has also been a major voice in preparing graduate students for careers in a variety of venues in government and industry, in addition to the academy.

### Curriculum and Certification

As we proceed down the pathway of preparing our students for serving the public good, there are obvious questions that need to be asked—and answered—with respect to curriculum reform. We might, perhaps, even consider the establishment of standards that might govern applied programs in our field, especially at the master's level and for programs that are clearly oriented toward professional preparation as opposed to research. Currently, NCA has no such certification program for individuals or departments in applied professional areas and, therefore, anybody or any department within any institution can declare themselves as *experts* in the applied aspects of our discipline. The public is poorly served by this situation and so is our discipline. Can you imagine a lack of certification for lawyers or physicians or for law schools or medical schools? Our discipline traditionally has resisted such efforts, but I believe that it is time for us to revisit this topic. As one of my last acts as president, I have, therefore, appointed a Task Force to review this topic and to inform our officers and the LC on where (whether) we should proceed in this area.

Another question for the discipline of communication is, should communication departments be encouraged to offer postbaccalaureate certificates—before other departments or disciplines decide to offer them for us—and what standards, if any, should NCA suggest to govern such certificates? Personally, I see academic-based postbaccalaureate certificate programs as an interesting and potentially lucrative complement to traditional graduate communication programs, especially in applied communication specializations. I can see, for example, a postbaccalaureate certificate in health communication being very attractive to a graduate student or professional in social work, clinical psychology or nursing as a complement to their training within their disciplines. Likewise, a postbaccalaureate certificate in organizational communication or intercultural communication might be an attractive complement to an MBA degree in management. Of course, persons who already hold a degree in one communication specialization—interpersonal communication, for example—might choose to expand their career options by pursuing a postbaccalaureate certificate in organizational communication or intercultural communication.

### Technology and the Communication Discipline

Like it or not, we are living in an age in which various forms of technology are influencing virtually everything that we do, from how we withdraw money from the bank to how we teach our classes. There are those in our discipline—albeit a dwindling number—who argue that technology is incongruent with a discipline that focuses upon human communication. Indeed, some even argue that one cannot teach communication courses in a technology-based environment. Yet, there are already some institutions, e.g., Regents University in Virginia, that are offering Ph.D. degrees on-line.

The advent of various information technologies is not only influencing how we deliver communication courses and the physical environment of our classrooms, but how we respond to numerous research questions that are being asked that require, in my view, our discipline's lead in finding their answers. For example, how has technology influenced the communication within and across organizations and how have these influences affected traditional organizational boundaries? For example, in my own world—the world of the university—everyone has direct access to the president, provost, dean, etc., by merely sending him or her an e-mail message. In the past, an appointment would have been required, which might have taken weeks or forever to schedule. And, speaking of e-mail, what about changes in interpersonal communication where the ten-minute telephone call, interspersed with queries of "how is the family?" have diminished to a series of "yesses," "oks," "FYIs," etc. What is this doing to our interpersonal relationships? On the other hand, the new technology may be enhancing intercultural communication in some settings as race and gender-related communication barriers give way to the anonymity of the e-mail sender and receiver.

Again, I am pleased to report that our Association has begun to address these issues. In addition to the marvelous work of our Task Force on *Technology in the Discipline*, headed by Tom Benson, the participants in our summer conference on *Technology in the Discipline*, have already prepared a number of resolutions advanced to the LC to guide departmental and faculty policies and practices on the uses of technology on such topics as the digital divide, intellectual property and faculty roles and rewards.

Regarding the digital divide, NCA officers and staff should advocate for Federal legislation aimed at providing universal access to electronic means of communication. NCA members should make research on closing the digital divide a priority, and NCA should work with other organizations to ensure that communities in the U.S. and elsewhere have adequate and accessible electronic communication resources. We should all be alarmed, for example, that within our own country there is a significant gap between the rich and the poor and between whites and people of color with respect to Internet access (from close to 45 percent for Whites and less than 25 percent for African Americans and Hispanics—the two fastest growing segments of our society). If we are not careful, this new commodity—technology based information—will WIDEN the gap between the haves and the have-nots and, in turn, exacerbate tensions that already exist related to disadvantaged status and ethnic differences.

Finally, at this very convention, the LC voted to establish the first electronic journal in our discipline, *The Communication Review*. This is most important! It will allow scholarship to reach our members much more rapidly than ever before, and it will expose our scholarship to the wider academic and research communities.

I trust that you join me in congratulating the planners of this venture for their work, and our LC for endorsing it.



### Diversity

Few would argue the importance of diversity within our discipline and within the academic disciplines for at least three reasons:

1. The homogenous mix of diverse cultures and ethnic groups are natural complements and by-products of the fulfillment of the American dream and, thereby, of the larger order of universal social justice.
2. Diversity enhances the development of an educated workforce.
3. Diversity within the educational environment enhances the quality of learning for all students—both majority and minority.

For these, and other reasons, the celebration of and sensitivity to diversity in every aspect of our lives is in the national interest and in the Association's interest.

We have accomplished much in the past 30 years in making our discipline more inclusive. We see more scholarship in our journals and more topics on our convention programs pertaining to cultural, racial, gender, linguistic and sexual orientation diversity. We also note more people of color among members of our Association and members of our faculties. More women hold leadership roles in our Association and in the professional workforce. And certainly, the election of Jack Daniel and me into two important leadership roles within NCA are milestones.

But we still have much work to do—and we must all be vigilant in doing it. For example:

- Our faculties, especially at the tenured level, remain overwhelmingly Caucasian.
- Our leadership in departments is nearly all Caucasian.
- Our national office staff also fails to reflect adequate racial and ethnic diversity;
- Too few people of color are members of publication and research boards, or journal editors—and too little research is being conducted by people of color.
- There is still too little infusion of multicultural topics throughout the discipline.

Again, we still have more work to do.

It was within this context that a few years ago then NCA Second Vice President Judith S. Trent created a *Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Diversity*. Among many other activities, the group, chaired by President Sidney Ribeau of Bowling Green State University, conducted a survey of the communication discipline to 1) describe the racial and ethnic demographics of our field, 2) report on the diversity programs sponsored by our communication departments, and 3) study the attitudes of graduate students of color in our communication programs.

Among the findings of the study were the following:

- As a discipline, there was a sharp decline of students of color at the graduate level. In fact, many graduate programs reported having no students from these groups. Some reported having just one or two.
- In general, graduate departments were doing very little to explicitly recruit students of color, with the exception of participating in those programs conducted by their institutions. Few had any locally directed or departmentally funded diversity efforts.
- Students reported that while there seemed to be a considerable amount of talk about diversity, there appeared to be very little

action in support of it. Many students of color described their departments' discussions on diversity as rhetoric with little commitment or follow-up.

The Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Diversity has submitted several recommendations for achieving diversity within our discipline. Several of the recommendations have been enacted and many more are working their way through our governance system.

One of these recommendations is quite germane to my professional experience in that it involves the relationship between HBCU campuses and traditionally white institutions. This relationship is often described as the "pipeline" through which undergraduates flow to graduate school and, ultimately, to faculty positions and other professional careers.

The study that NCA conducted suggests that, to a great extent, the "pipeline" or "river," in the words of Bowen and Bok in their recent book, *The Shape of the River*; does not exist for many students of color. At the very least, the study shows that the "pipeline" has too many leaks to supply our faculties and practitioner ranks with sufficient numbers of people from these groups with doctoral degrees.

The reasons for the leaks in the "pipeline" are complex. For example, our discipline is poorly represented on HBCU campuses. The same is true for the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Tribal Colleges (populated largely by Native Americans). Moreover, there have been insufficient bridges built between undergraduate programs within these institutions and our graduate degree offering institutions.

One thing I know for sure is that there are many academically talented students at HBCUs and other minority serving institutions in the United States. Indeed, my institution, Howard University, has been a major beneficiary of many graduates of these institutions. Because of our connection with HBCUs, Howard not only graduates more African Americans with doctoral degrees in communication than any other institution in the country, but it houses one of the largest communication doctoral programs of any institution in our discipline. I hope that other universities, under NCA leadership, will heighten connectivity with HBCUs, HSIs and Tribal Colleges.

As NCA's president, I have attempted to begin the process of sealing the leak in our "pipeline" for communication students, faculty and practitioners of color.

As a beginning, I launched an HBCU Initiative. I have asked Andrew Ann Dinkins Lee of Albany State University to chair a small working group of HBCU faculty members to address the matter of HBCU connectivity to the discipline. As a first step, I've asked that they conduct a study to determine the status of communication studies at HBCUs, HSIs and Tribal Colleges with respect to such issues as enrollment trends, postbaccalaureate career paths, faculty professional preparation and interests, institutional support, etc. The committee is finishing its work as I speak and will prepare recommendations for the consideration of the NCA leadership and staff.

### Preparing Future Faculty and Professionals

Few would argue—and data support the notion—that the nation's professoriate is getting older. The academy will need many new faculty members in the next millennium. The question for the discipline—indeed all disciplines—is "how do we prepare the next generation of faculty members?" Historically, the preparation of new faculty members meant the acquisition of a graduate degree—usually a research-oriented Ph.D. degree—with little emphasis on pedagogy and the other roles and responsibilities

of the professoriate. Today and tomorrow, that won't be good enough.

Future members of the communication professoriate must, in addition to having strong grounding in communication theory and research, have knowledge and skill in the art and science of teaching, mentoring skills, technology competence, familiarity with legal issues in higher education, and so forth. They must also have a familiarity with the various academic cultures of academic institutions ranging from community colleges to research universities.

I am proud that in recent years our association has assumed national leadership in addressing the future professoriate issue. We launched Preparing Future Communication Faculty (PFCF) in 1996 and, just recently, received the aforementioned sizable grant to develop systematic strategies for preparing future communication faculty. The American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Historical Association, and the Modern Language Association will join us in this effort. Feeding off of our PFCF initiative, NCA assumed a leadership role in the successful grant proposal to The Pew Charitable Trusts.

I am equally proud of the work of colleagues like those at the University of Texas under the leadership of NCA members like Richard Cherwitz that goes beyond preparing future faculty to the notion of preparing future professionals. In short, this effort recognizes that graduates from our academic programs have career options beyond the academy and that it is both a challenge and an opportunity for our discipline to provide these students with the skills that they will need to succeed in settings outside of academia.

### Globalization

Before I conclude, I must say a word about globalization. To state the obvious, people all over the world communicate; therefore, the significance of communication as an academic discipline and as a subject of research exists worldwide. As we continue to evolve as a discipline, we must expand our horizons beyond the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and beyond the Gulf of Mexico and the northern borders of the land. We must connect with our colleagues in other parts of the world. While we have had a long-standing interest in Europe, we must expand our interests to that part of the world where close to 85 percent of the world's population resides—in Asia, Africa and South America. In recent years, we have made great strides in this regard, connecting with our colleagues in Mexico, Central America and South America. Just this past summer a delegation of NCA members from the United States went to South Africa to attend the first officially sponsored NCA event on the continent of Africa. This is a small step, but I hope, the beginning of the expansion of collaborative efforts to historically neglected parts of the world.

As we pursue these efforts—and others—the new building in downtown D.C. will help in the work yet to be done. However, I do not advocate raising our dues. We must be more entrepreneurial, develop our infrastructure for increased fundraising initiatives, enhance our grants preparation capability and management, and, of course, increase our successful acquisition of grants.

If we do all of this, we will be prepared for the journey into the next century. In many ways, our nation experienced a similarly climactic transition as it transformed itself from an agrarian to an industrial society a century ago. Now as we are being transformed

from an industrial to an information society, with communication being a valued commodity, we have enormous opportunities as a discipline.

In the process of our transformation, we must not fail to recall the core values of our discipline, especially its commitment to Freedom of Speech and Assembly (updated during this convention). The right to free expression is central to NCA and to the communication discipline. It leads us to value all communication, regardless to the race, gender, sexual preference, language, etc. of the participants in communication acts.

Our view of freedom of speech and expression must be expanded to value different varieties of language in addition to different styles of communication, e.g., Ebonics, regional dialects, the speech of the oppressed, etc. Our pregnant silence on the topic of communication and language diversity on some occasions has been deafening, as it was, for example, during the recent Ebonics debate. I am proud, however, that our Association did co-sponsor a conference with 13 other professional associations on the topic of communication diversity, resulting in the book which I co-edited titled, *Making the Connection: Language and Cultural Diversity on Academic Achievement*

Another core value that we must continue to celebrate in the next millennium is our willingness to take stands. In the 1960's, for example, NCA actively lobbied for the establishment of a National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities. Six years later, in 1966, we lobbied for speech education in the public schools. We have also taken important stands over the past three decades in support of affirmative action and civil rights for all individuals. Taking stands has been a part of our legacy. We must preserve this aspect of our history.

Third, we must continue our commitment to affirmative action in an environment of growing hostility, while we continue working assiduously to achieve inclusiveness among faculty, students, staff and administrators. In the process, we must re-affirm our commitment to upholding the rights of these individuals, promoting genuine respect for diversity, advocating unity through diversity, and, most of all, "coloring outside the lines."

We must seize the moment to communicate the legacies of past achievements, while simultaneously remaining open to new ideas and new initiatives. We must value and embrace the notion that there are many ways of knowing and seeking truth. We must value communication as a scholarly subject for study, but respect its application and its performance. And through all of our diversity, we must constantly seek the centrality of the discipline that binds us together.

In this momentous year, we have placed ourselves firmly on the threshold of not only a new century, but also a new organization and a re-invigorated NCA.

I am proud to have had the opportunity to serve the Association as your president during 1999. And now, as I pass the gavel of leadership to my friend and colleague, Raymie McKerrow, I pledge to him—and to you—my continued commitment to our mutual quest for our discipline—to "color outside the lines."