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It is truly a great honor to be nominated for the office of Second Vice-President of the Central States Communication Association (CSCA). This organization has been such an important part of my professional life since my days as a graduate student, and I welcome the opportunity to serve the association and its members in a leadership capacity. When I consider the many ways that I have benefited from my involvement with this outstanding organization, perhaps the most rewarding aspect has been the many friendships and collaborations that I've developed with wonderful colleagues from throughout the Central States region. Indeed, if fortunate enough to be elected CSCA Second Vice-President, a guiding focus of my tenure as an officer will be to promote the building of relationships designed to support the professional development of our members, advance our association within the larger Communication discipline, and share the vital knowledge we produce and education we provide with relevant public constituencies.

I first joined CSCA while a doctoral student at the University of Kansas, attending my first annual conference in 1993 in Lexington, KY (a joint meeting held with the Southern States Communication Association). In fact, with my own students still today, I share stories of that meeting where three graduate students – all short on cash – drove 11 hours (*each way!*) from Kansas to Kentucky to attend their very first CSCA meeting, and where I presented my first single-authored conference paper. For the past 17 years, I've attended every one of our annual gatherings; and, during this period, I've become increasingly

involved with various elements of the association. My service to CSCA includes serving as the founding Chair of the Political Communication Interest Group; and I also chaired the committee that initiated and raised funds for the J. Jeffery Auer Award, the Political Communication Interest Group's annual monetary award for the top graduate student paper. On two occasions, I've been honored to receive CSCA's research award, the Federation Prize, which supported two studies that were subsequently published in *Communication Studies*. Further, I've served as a member of the *Communication Studies* Editorial Board under three different journal Editors, and I also chaired the association's Nominating Committee. From serving as an Interest Group officer, to program planning for our annual conference, understanding the publication and review process of our journal, and through my involvement with the organization's various standing committees, I feel that I possess the background and requisite knowledge to serve effectively as an officer of the organization.

Currently, I'm an Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Before receiving my Ph.D. in Communication Studies from the University of Kansas in 1996, I was awarded a master's degree in Communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and bachelor's degrees in Communication and Government from Western Kentucky University. My teaching and research focus primarily on political communication, with specific research interests that include presidential debates, political campaigns, media and politics, and presidential rhetoric. I also investigate citizens' engagement in civic and political affairs, and particularly young citizens' political engagement. My published research includes four co-authored / edited books and numerous journal articles and book chapters, with my refereed scholarship appearing in

such leading journals as *Communication Monographs* and *Journal of Communication* (a full description of my teaching and research activities, including a copy of my CV, can be found on my faculty web page at <http://communication.missouri.edu/people/mckinney.html>).

I recognize that a major strength – and also a challenge – for an organization like CSCA is the wide range of communication professionals that make up our membership. Spanning the broad spectrum of formal education, including K through 12 and all types of institutions of higher education, a great variety of communication educators utilize CSCA as a venue for their professional support and development. While my own experiences as an educator do not include K-12 instruction, I do have first-hand experience with the full range of higher education. My primary work has been in the arena of doctoral education at the research university. Yet, for several years I served as an Adjunct Instructor at a community college (teaching evening and weekend courses to largely “non-traditional” students employed full time while earning their degrees part time); and I also served two years as a faculty member at Missouri Southern State University, an undergraduate Communication Department where I taught the typical “four-four” teaching load consisting of multiple sections of the “core” course each semester, as well as courses often outside my specific area of expertise. I am well aware that a doctoral faculty member’s needs and expectations of CSCA vary greatly from those of the community college Instructor. Our challenge as an association, therefore, is to understand the different – and potentially competing – demands of our membership, and to address important needs within the context of a rapidly changing higher education landscape. For example, realizing that more than half of all students now enrolled in public higher education are in community colleges

suggests greater attention and resources be directed to the needs of these frequently neglected educators.

Returning to my earlier theme of promoting the building of relationships through CSCA, if elected Second Vice-President I envision building on the association's existing efforts to introduce our undergraduate communication students to the wider arena of communication research and graduate education; and also continuing to promote avenues for mentoring relationships between graduate students and junior faculty with senior communication scholars. While CSCA has not done so in several years, we may wish to re-establish closer relationships with other regional communication associations by considering the possibility of jointly held meetings. When I served as Director of Academic Affairs for the National Communication Association, I coordinated activities between our four regional Communication associations and NCA. While attending each of the regional conferences and working with officers from the four regions, I gained a valuable perspective on the important role played by our regional associations in advancing the Communication discipline. Finally, I'm very interested in forging greater relationships across our disciplinary sub-divisions by promoting collaboration among the association's many interest groups, caucuses, and sections (with possibilities including a convention theme that would feature jointly sponsored panels, perhaps special journal issue(s) devoted to specific research questions or topics examined from multiple disciplinary perspectives, etc.).

These are just a few of the many ways that we can develop important relationships through CSCA activities. I'm well aware that on so many of these fronts past and current leaders of the organization have already implemented excellent initiatives to advance

similar goals, and I will continue to build on these efforts. Over the past few months I've learned a great deal from my conversations with numerous members regarding the future of our association, and I invite others to contact me with your ideas, questions and concerns at McKinneyM@missouri.edu or by phone at (573) 882-9230. I welcome your support and pledge my full commitment to our association if elected to serve.