

First Vice President Elect-Select

Danielle R. Mehlman-Brightwell, Ph.D.

Full Circle: Honoring Our Legacy, Building Our Future

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to be a nominee for First Vice President Elect-Select of the Eastern Communication Association. ECA has been an important part of my career journey, and in many ways, my journey with ECA has come full circle. I began my ECA membership as a student, and over the years, ECA has grown alongside me as my career has evolved. I began my professional career as an adjunct, then moved into instructor and staff positions, eventually becoming an assistant professor and director.

Through much of my career, ECA has remained a professional home where I have continued to learn, grow, build relationships, and find opportunities to serve. My leadership within ECA began as secretary, then as vice-chair, and finally as chair of the Political Communication Interest Group. I now have the privilege of serving on the Executive Board as the representative of Political Communication. Each role has given me a different perspective on our association and, most importantly, on the people who make ECA what it is. My journey is merely one example of the many journeys represented within ECA.

ECA has provided us with opportunities for scholarship, service, mentorship, collaboration, and lifelong professional relationships. ECA has brought us full circle: connecting scholars and students, bridging institutions and communities, all while creating a professional home for us in the field of communication no matter where we are in our communication career journey. Our legacy is learning from what others have built; our circle is the journey we share no matter where we are; our future is what we will build together.

With ECA's 120th Annual Convention coming up in 2029, I look forward to celebrating the legacy of the members who brought us here and to looking ahead to the future of communication scholarship. If elected, I will build on the initiatives of past leaders and listen to the evolving needs of our members while preserving the community and sense of belonging that make ECA a professional home. Building our future will require us to navigate significant changes in our profession and in higher education.

Artificial intelligence is changing how we teach, how we understand our discipline, and the jobs our students are preparing to enter. At the same time, many institutions are facing declining enrollments, reduced funding, program cuts, the loss of grant funding, increased demands on faculty, and uncertainty about the future of higher education.

I know ECA cannot solve all these challenges, but ECA is a community where we come together to navigate them, learn from one another, and build a stronger future for our discipline. As First Vice President Elect-Select, my priorities are strengthening ECA's future by growing membership, connecting our members through mentorship and networking, and investing in the next generation of communication scholars and professionals.

My marketing background has taught me to understand who I am trying to reach, listen to what they value, and share the benefits. I would bring that perspective to ECA by helping us strengthen our membership, expand our reach, and communicate about the opportunities ECA provides.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve ECA. Rather than giving you another pen for your desk, I want to share what I have found useful in academia. I created a [*digital desktop organizer*](#) to help you keep your professional materials organized into three areas: Service, Teaching, and Professional Development. The desktop organizer is just one small strategy that has helped me stay organized and make my work more manageable.

Because sometimes the best way to give back is to share what we have learned along the way.

Thank you for being part of ECA and for giving me the opportunity to serve.

All the best,

Danielle R. Mehlman-Brightwell, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Communication
Director of Community Outreach
University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
drm153@pitt.edu