



On Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access: Statement from the Executive Committee of the International Communication Association (ICA)

ICA leadership strongly supports the principles of inclusion and diversity and recognizes that inequities have long existed, and continue to exist, in the communication discipline and its constituent activities of teaching, research, scholarship, and praxis. These inequities include, but are not limited to, those based upon nationality, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. As an international association, ICA recognizes diversity in all its forms as being crucial to the advancement of the communication discipline. The Executive Committee of ICA recognizes the challenges of diversification as extending to every facet of our Association and, indeed, the field. We welcome the opportunity to further strengthen ICA through our ongoing process of rigorous introspection and change. We believe that instituting change and promoting mechanisms to enhance inclusion, diversity, equity, and access in ICA is *intrinsic to our mission* (see the most recent update of our [mission statement](#), approved by the Board of Directors on 24 May 2019).

ICA is an international association, comprising members from 87 countries. We recognize that questions of inclusion and exclusion, and of diversity and equity, manifest themselves in different ways in particular national contexts, and disparities in power dynamics differ from region to region. These dynamics are further complicated by intersecting categories of identity and social identification. Thus, our continuing efforts to diversify ICA need to be cognizant of all inequalities as they take shape differently on a global scale. Across all contexts, we robustly affirm that merit and diversity are *not* mutually exclusive principles, and we remain firmly committed to enhancing both academic excellence and diversity. We believe that diversity practices in any scholarly field are complementary to and aligned with academic excellence and that lived experience is essential to producing research in particular areas of communication. ICA's commitment to diversity of thought and geographic representation exists alongside its commitment to diversity in terms of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and other bases of inequity. We are actively seeking continued, meaningful, and deliberate collaboration with multiple groups to ensure that, together, we effect real and lasting change in ICA.

Such collaborations will allow the Executive Committee to gather full information from myriad stakeholders; identify opportunities and challenges in the short- and long-term; and assess recommendations from multiple perspectives. Only with the information gleaned from these conversations can we begin to make wholesale changes to infrastructures defined by the Association's current bylaws. For instance, the Executive Committee is currently discussing the recommendations arising from the [#CommunicationSoWhite](#) article and related preconference and ICA-sponsored session held in Washington, DC in May 2019. These collaborations will build on, and add momentum to, recent developments in ICA's ongoing diversification efforts:

- The Board of Directors approved a [new Code of Ethics](#) for the Association in May 2019. Stemming from two years of work by ICA's *Task Force on Ethical Considerations*, the new document codifies our commitment to: respect for human rights; scholarly and scientific enquiry; open communication; inclusivity and respect; and the Association's social responsibility to enhance the public good.
- After Board discussions in May 2019 about the need to address diversity, the Executive Committee has created the Task Force on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access (IDEA). The Executive Committee is currently crafting the task force's charter, which will include defining what diversity, inclusion, equity and access mean in the context of ICA, assessing the current state of affairs, and making recommendations for changes. Once the charter is complete, the task force will be populated and begin its work. Its deliverables will include preliminary recommendations to the Executive Committee within six months and a full slate of recommendations for discussion by the Board of Directors in May 2020.
- The Executive Committee has worked with the ICA Fellows Chair each year since 2016 to make a difference in the gender, geographic, and ethnic diversity of Fellows inducted, with a substantial improvement shown thus far: 40% from outside the US, 43% female, and 21% nonwhite. Pre-2017 figures stood at 22%, 33%, and 8%, respectively. The Executive Committee will continue to work with the Fellows, and is asking the current Fellows Chair to lead a discussion among the ICA Fellows about what should be done to increase inclusion, diversity, equity, and access to election to Fellow, and to provide those recommendations to the EC. We will work with the Fellows to implement these and other ideas that will lead to increased heterogeneity among all aspects of the community of ICA fellows.

Our efforts to enhance inclusion, diversity, equity, and access have been ongoing, and we are committed to continued work that produces substantive change in the Association. ICA has worked assiduously to accommodate diversity of thought. Our international association now houses 33 divisions and interest groups. Our standing committees and task forces include a balance of qualitative and quantitative scholars from around the globe. Their deliberations reflect the broad swath of epistemological and methodological orientations about how communication is conceived of and studied.

In the past few years, ICA headquarters has worked to increase inclusion efforts for attendees of its annual conference: transgender attendees, parents of young children, those with physical disabilities, and those with sensory issues, addictions, and other needs. To close the gap in the ability for parents to attend conferences, ICA now offers subsidized childcare and a nursing room. We have instituted other policies designed to provide an inclusive atmosphere for all attendees. Alongside a longstanding policy of providing over US\$60k in travel grants for attendance by underserved and financially disadvantaged scholars, ICA has: funded ethnic minority students local to each conference with targeted attendance waivers and mentorship; implemented guidelines regarding demographic representation on panels; added pronouns to badges; and included indigenous land acknowledgements. Details on additional efforts can be found on our conference [accessibility and inclusion page](#). Though these efforts do not yet reflect the full range of possible interventions, we strive to find solutions that increase access and inclusion for those who have not been served well in the past by our field.

ICA is likewise committed to diversity in its own employment and workplace practices. ICA is an Equal Opportunity Employer, which in the US is defined as a commitment not to discriminate on the basis of “race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability or genetic information.” ICA also provides fully paid parental leave for an employee of any gender who welcomes a new child into the family through birth or adoption, and provides health care for all employees.

The ICA Executive Committee recognizes that long-term changes to the Association *vis-à-vis* inclusion, diversity, equity, and access will not take place overnight. Toward that end, and beyond the efforts noted above, we pledge to continue to work with ICA committees, task forces, divisions, interest groups, journal editors, program planners, and ICA Fellows to advance within the Association principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, and to ensure that the Association reflects the breadth of its membership across its constituent areas. Some changes to be implemented might necessitate changes to the ICA bylaws, which will require approval by the Board of Directors and membership ratification in the autumn election.

We affirm our commitment to improving our diversity in its various forms, and by extension, improving how the Association can best serve its members, the discipline, and society at large. It is only with sustained collaborative efforts that we can strengthen our organization and our discipline, thereby promoting a truly international and inclusive scholarly field. Indeed, working toward such goals is intrinsic to the Association’s mission, and we strive for a discipline in which all are equally able to participate and be recognized for excellence.

Signed,

The Executive Committee of the International Communication Association

Peng Hwa Ang, General Secretary (Nanyang Technological U, SINGAPORE)

Claes de Vreese, President-Elect (U of Amsterdam, NETHERLANDS)

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