



**Communication, Conduct and Pragmatic Interplay**  
**The 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 16-18, 2020**  
**Why Are We Going Virtual?**

**Statement from the Executive Council:**

Dear NYSCA Community:

We hope this email announcement finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy. As scientific data about COVID-19 is unfolding, we have a moral obligation to the larger NYSCA community to be transparent about the decisions we are in the process of making.

We have cancelled our current contract with Villa Roma for this year, on the premise of extending our cordial relationship with them. This was done with an understanding on both sides (NYSCA and Villa Roma) that the annual conference can return to be housed at the site in future.

We are now looking forward to **hosting a virtual conference through the WebEx Cisco system** operated by The State University of New York at New Paltz, the academic home of the primary conference planner of the 78<sup>th</sup> annual conference, Noura Ahmad Hajjaj. WebEx is a prominent academic videoconferencing platform for engaging and primarily synchronous interactions through concurrent breakout sessions with participants. While we aim to primarily have synchronous meetings, we remain mindful about welcoming pre-recorded sessions to the conference as well.

Given the severity of the pandemic, we will waive our conference registration fees for undergraduate, graduate, and adjunct faculty at the 78<sup>th</sup> annual conference. NYSCA calls upon the good will of long-time members, executive council members, life members, past presidents, and full-time faculty to renew their membership through the online registration system Eventbrite at the early-bird price in the amount of \$50, in order to receive their annual **electronic subscription** to the *Atlantic Journal of Communication*.

COVID-19 has completely shifted the landscape of conference gatherings around the world. After re-opening New York state, conventional, or even hybrid conferences - without a vaccine in fall 2020 - will be a heavy financial toll on our beloved association. It is not just that we are required to strictly adhere to social distancing rules, check temperature, abide by physical distance measures, no buffet or coffee stations, and provide disposable facemasks, gloves, sanitizers, mini packs of tissues, and small bottles of water to conference attendees, but after comprehensive research of CDC guidelines on conference gatherings and several phone conversations with CDC health experts, the primary conference planner reported that the new normal for conference organizers is to share conference attendees' data with local healthcare officials, provide for two emergency ambulances at the hotel site, and reserve containment rooms for quarantine.

In case someone contracts the virus, the association hosting the conference becomes responsible for a 14-day quarantine of said person at the hotel site. Further logistical arrangements are also expected to be made with local healthcare providers and the hotel to ensure the patient does not leave until the quarantine period or recovery is complete. In the worst-case scenario, the convention host would need to arrange to transfer the patient to the nearest emergency room of a local hospital in an emergency ambulance.

As a result of these guidelines, we are communicating our deep concerns about both public health and liability, and their harmful, potential impact on our association if we move toward an in-person conference. We hope that our community understands how tough this decision is for the Executive Council, especially for Noura Ahmad Hajjaj, who, with a subcommittee of special planning, will continue to organize an exceptional, and first(!) virtual conference in the history of our organization.

We will continue to further update you about more exciting events taking place at our 78th virtual conference. In the meantime, please stay safe and healthy, wear a facemask to protect yourself and others, continue with social distancing best practices, wash your hands with soap and water, and contact Noura Ahmad Hajjaj at [nysca2020@gmail.com](mailto:nysca2020@gmail.com) for further inquiries.

Sincerely,

**2019-2020 Executive Council**