

The NERA  
 Researcher is a  
 quarterly  
 newsletter for  
 members of the  
 Northeastern  
 Educational  
 Research  
 Association

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# The NERA Researcher

Volume 47, Issue 4

December 2009

## The President's Message



**Katharyn Nottis**

As I write my initial NERA Presidential message, I am reminded of the first time I ever went to a NERA conference. It was at a resort in the Catskills with décor that challenged my sense of aesthetics—I never was that fond of turquoise! But, on the plus side, the resort did provide an opportunity to get a free dance lesson! However, more importantly and why I am recalling this first experience now, is that I attended that conference with my major professor and mentor, Tom Shuell from the University at Buffalo, and a fellow graduate student. Tom had taken us to NERA so we could be introduced to the educational research community and present our research in a supportive environment. The positive experiences I had at my first NERA conference stayed with me and I acquired the confidence to present my research at varied locations and conferences over the years. That initial conference started a pattern for me of annual participation and, over time, I began to carry on an important NERA tradition. I now bring graduate students and junior faculty from my institution and reconnect with valued colleagues. I always leave Friday's lunch invigorated!

We no longer hold our annual conference in the Catskills. These past few years we have been in Connecticut at a modern facility with all the amenities and technology we need. We have also attracted many more attendees than were at the first conference I attended in the late 1980's. This year, we had over 350 attendees thanks to the hard work and dedication of the previous president, Kristen Huff, and her 2009 conference team! But despite the increased numbers and the new location, what has not changed, and makes NERA truly special, is the opportunity for both young and senior researchers to share their research in a supportive and nurturing environment. Actually, from my own perspective, I would say that this environment has become even more supportive over time for young researchers. We now have an active graduate student issues committee with voting representation on the NERA Board of Directors. This year's conference had a number of sessions sponsored by the graduate student issues committee as well. While mentoring was always a key part of the NERA experience, we now have a more formalized procedure for graduate students to get mentoring while at the conference, thanks to the hard work of Tom Levine from the University of Connecticut. So, if anything, I think we have become even better at mentoring young educational researchers.

While NERA has always focused on the relationships between newer and more seasoned researchers, relationships among researchers in different disciplines

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Message from the Editors

Greetings NERA Members!  
We hope you all enjoyed the 40<sup>th</sup> annual NERA Conference. It was a special occasion complete with birthday cake and a toast. Many thanks go to Maureen Ewing, Liz Stone and Peter Swerdzewski for all of their hard work organizing the event.

As Katharyn Nottis wrote in her President's Message, NERA is known for being a place where researchers can go to share their research in a supportive and nurturing environment. It was true when she was new to NERA and is still true today. The mentoring program organized by Tom Levine is one example of how NERA is more supportive than ever before. See the announcement by Tom in this issue about the mentoring program.

In this issue of *The NERA Researcher* we hope you enjoy the recap of the 40<sup>th</sup> annual NERA Conference, the awards, the photos, and the Presidential address by Kristen Huff.

As always, we hope you find this issue of *The NERA Researcher* informative. Please let us know if you have ideas on ways to improve this publication.

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**The President's Message**  
(Continued from page 1)

and at different institutions have also started to expand. For example, due to the diligence and guidance of Thanos Patelis of College Board, the NERA District/State Task Force brought together national and state experts in measurement at a special session at this year's conference. Efforts such as these expand our vision of who are our research partners. With this expanded vision we also need to simultaneously and more formally look at the variety of collaborations that already do take place among educational researchers as well as with researchers in other disciplines and at different agencies. Are there any gaps? Any areas where research partnerships need to be more formalized? Why should we do this? As educational researchers, we have an important role to play in policy decisions that are happening at the local, state, and federal levels. We also have a key part to play in the teaching and learning research that is occurring in other disciplines such as engineering and management. In this spirit, the theme of the 2010 conference is Building Research Partnerships. As we begin 2010, let us all strive to think of new collaborative relationships and ways to assume a more active role in the decision making that is currently taking place.

**Institutional Memberships**

Ten universities and organizations became institutional members this year:

Bucknell University	\$1,000
The College Board	1,000
Measured Progress	1,000
University of Connecticut	1,000
James Madison University	750
Johnson & Wales University	750
Bloomsburg University	500
Buffalo State College	500
Buros Center for Testing/ University of Nebraska-Lincoln	500
University of Massachusetts at Amherst	500
William Paterson University	500
Westfield State College (in-kind)	1,700

**Membership Highlights**

This year's conference attendance broke the record set last year of 306 which was the first time attendance topped 300 since 1975.

This year's attendance was 352 with an overall membership of 362 (last year's was 320). The attendance of graduate students doubled last year with 128 compared to 69 the year before—133 this year.

	Professional	Retired	Graduate Students
Membership	223	6	133
Conference	215	6	131

This year's conference welcomed 104 new members and 158 returning members. Conference attendees represented more than 75 institutions and education agencies.

Of the 339 members who answered the question electronic or paper, 97 still want to receive a paper copy of the *Researcher* and 242 said I'm Going Green! and said, Electronic only.

**Membership Committee Report**

The Membership Committee is pleased that, partly as a result of our recruitment and outreach efforts during the past year, this year's NERA conference was highly successful with many new members in attendance. The committee will have a new chair for next year and is urgently seeking volunteers to serve as committee members.

## Using Educational Research to Improve Student Learning: The Role of Assessment

By Kristen Huff

(excerpts from the Presidential Address delivered October 23, 2009 at the 40<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association)

It's not often that one gets the chance to speak on the topic of one's choice – without the pressure of a discussant! – to the Northeast's most esteemed and dedicated educational researchers. I am humbled and honored by this opportunity.

By way of introduction, I will be clear from the outset: I am a fervent believer in the power of assessment to reform and to improve student learning. Would it surprise you to hear that one of the largest backers of NCLB is an organization whose mission is, quote: "To work for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college, and forever close the achievement gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from other youth. Our basic tenet is this — All children will learn at high levels when they are taught to high levels." This is from EdTrust, and they championed NCLB legislation because without a way to shine a light on and bring to the fore the inequities of our educational system, such inequities will easily, quickly, and quietly be swept under the rug. This is an example from large-scale assessment, but there are other examples that highlight how other types of assessments are reforming education and I hope to share a couple of those momentarily.

Are our assessment processes and policies perfect? Not by a long shot ... but quality assessment is critical for improving student learning, and that is why I am dedicated to improving our measures, our interpretations and our uses of assessment. Thank you in advance for allowing me to share a few thoughts with you on this topic.

By assessment, I mean everything from assessment-rich instructional practice that a teacher employs minute-by-minute, as he or she is observing students, assessing how they are engaging with the classroom activities of the moment, and making adjustments accordingly.

A growing body of research indicates that such assessment-rich instructional practice is one of the most effective ways to increase student achieve-

ment, especially those students who lag behind. In other words, **formative assessment is reforming**.... However, research also shows that such practices are not nearly as widespread in classrooms as they need to be, and even when they are, our understandings about how students develop deep, conceptual understanding of complex, advanced material is nascent at best, so that only a fraction of teachers are prepared to respond to the variety of responses from students who are situated at various points along any given learning progression... which is the heart of using assessment formatively, minute-by-minute, to alter instruction as needed to create the optimal learning environment.

Another form of assessment that is critical to improving how students learn but is often overlooked in discussions of assessment is the assessment that researchers conduct to evaluate the impact of innovative curricula or instructional strategies. These assessment practices – from assessment design to valid interpretations of results – must be optimized so that educational research can be more effective and directly affect policy and practice.

And then there's summative. This is the one that causes all the trouble, right? Whether it's mid-terms or finals at the classroom level that send students into a panic, or – the type of summative assessment that is on everyone's minds these days: end-of-grade testing for accountability purposes that we hear so many complaints about... that there's too much testing in the classroom already, that teachers are forced to give up instructional time for testing... that the tests are not aligned with the intended standards... that the reliance on selected-response items overemphasizes undesirable things like rote memorization, declarative knowledge, factoids, plug-and-chug....

These are legitimate criticisms, just as the reasons we have found ourselves in this predicament are, too, legitimate. For example, one reason that multiple-choice questions are prioritized in standardized assessment is because we want to gather as much

information as possible in as short an amount of time. Why so little time? Because testing is seen as something that detracts from instruction instead of enhancing it.... Why is it seen this way? Well, one reason is because multiple-choice items are so prominent. We're in a vicious cycle.

But, we're trying to break out of that cycle. The National Research Council advised us years ago to break out of the current paradigm.... But what does this mean? I have some ideas and they go beyond just large-scale assessment.

For assessment to have an effective role in improving student learning, we must, first reconceptualize how we think about assessment.

Assessment is making a judgment based on imperfect observations, or evidence. Why imperfect? Because we can't crack open students' heads and peer inside to see how well they can comprehend or analyze. And, any task that we devise – regardless of how authentic we think it is – will be flawed. It is imperative that we, as a profession, must become much more rigorous and thoughtful when we determine what constitutes observations of student learning, the optimal situations – or tasks – that yield observable evidence of student learning, and the criteria that we bring to bear when we evaluate the evidence we collect. This is something that I've been continuously fascinated by for years, and continue to be, and ***that is the degree to which unfounded and largely unarticulated assumptions about what constitutes evidence of student learning – and our observations of it – drive critical decisions in assessment, curricula and instruction. The degree of ambiguity is negligent and if you catch me in a bad mood I would say even criminal.***

To break out of the current paradigm, we must become much more rigorous in how we conceptualize and conduct assessment as a reasoning process – not a thing that is administered and scored... and this goes for any type of assessment.

One reason – and I think it's the primary reason – there are so many unarticulated assumptions and ambiguity is that we know so little about how students learn for understanding, develop deep conceptual knowledge, and learn how to reason critically.... We're beginning to get there, but we're at the beginning of that journey. And the research in this area takes folks with lots of different skills and expertise, to come together as a team. An interdisci-

plinary team is required to hypothesize learning progressions, create assessments that test our hypotheses, analyze the data, and refine our hypotheses accordingly.

To break out of the current paradigm, we need more information about how students learn specific concepts and apply skills for enduring understanding. We need to articulate the learning progressions for all types of learners; in other words, we need to do a lot of interdisciplinary work.

Finally, to use assessment to improve student learning – to break out of the current paradigm – we must ensure that assessment practice and policy concur.

We strive to align and make coherent our curriculum, instruction and assessment, which all should emerge from the learning process, or from the theory of student learning, or from the student model – in other words, from the “learning progression” stuff we know so little about. With more research, with better research, we'll get there. The point is, while we are striving to improve assessment for learning in the classroom, we've got a mismatch between our assessment for accountability and what's happening in the classroom, or what needs to happen in the classroom. This mismatch must stop. We've got to create accountability systems that mirror the types of assessment practices we want to see happen in the classroom. There are a lot of very innovative things happening out there....

For example, automated intelligence (AI) tutoring holds great promise for innovation in assessment; however, for AI to be optimized, we must have much, much more interdisciplinary research on student learning models, learning progressions, .... And by interdisciplinary research, I mean that we need to not only partner with content experts in various disciplines, but bring the same kind of rigor and technology to educational assessment and learning research that is used in other fields, such as how eye-scan technology is used in cognitive psychology research, or how brain scans are used in cognitive neuroscience.... Do you know that recent research using brain scans has been able to identify the moment of insight, which is – regardless of the field – what is needed in complex problem solving? Just imagine the leaps and bounds we could make in teaching, learning and assessment with the results of this kind of sophisticated research.

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## Northeastern Educational Research Association 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009 Conference Highlights

Greetings, NERA members! We hope that you enjoyed the 2009 NERA conference, which ran from Wednesday October 21 through Friday October 23, 2009, and that you are now rested and ready for 2010.

The program team would like to thank all the folks who made this year's conference a success. Of course, that includes all the members, so thank you! This year, our program included 124 individual paper presentations, 14 symposia, 42 posters, and 2 working groups. Submitting a paper, attending a session, and serving on a committee are just some of the ways to contribute, and it all factors in to the success of the conference. We encourage you to contribute to the 2010 conference as well. The President, Katharyn Nottis, and the program Chairs, Dolores Burton, Thanos Patelis, and Angela Pang, have already hit the ground running, and next year's conference promises to be one worth being a part of. We are looking forward to it ourselves... attending as participants, of course! If you did not get a chance to fill out your participation form and indicate how you'd like to get involved, feel free to email the team at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com) to let them know you'd like to be a reviewer, session chair, or session discussant, or to be considered for one or more specific committees. Speaking of committees, we worked closely with John Young this year as he chaired the Membership Committee, and the increased participation this year indicates what a huge difference his committee's efforts made. Thanks, John!

We were fortunate to have two excellent keynote speakers, Mary Kennedy and George Pruitt, to provide context and motivation for the educational research agendas we pursue. The pre-conference and in-conference training sessions presented by Mary Pitoniak, Susan Loomis, Caroline Wylie, Dena Pastor, Stan Shaw, Michael Coyne, and Kelly Godfrey, supplied valuable training that we hope you were able to take advantage of. Thanks to all of our invited speakers!

Additional thanks go to Tom Levine for continuing the mentoring program, which by all accounts was another great success. In addition to the formal

mentoring he facilitated through that program, Tom was an excellent mentor to our team, and deserves a huge round of applause. It's hard to put into words how much that moral support and advice mean to a team attempting to put together a conference that will continue the great tradition of NERA conferences. We also want to extend our thanks again to Helen Marx for helping with the hotel contract, entertainment, and snacks, and to Barbara Helms for her patience and guidance with respect to the budget and the website throughout this process. The work Barbara does behind the scenes is, in large part, what makes NERA tick. Again, words are not enough!

We are so lucky to have been able to work with Tejal Shah, who coordinated and organized the registration table. This was no small feat, and all conference attendees benefited directly from her work and leadership. We want to thank the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Research and Evaluation Methods graduate students who generously volunteered their time and manpower to making the registration process go smoothly: Amy Semerjian, Tia Sukin, Brooke Magnus, Katrina Crotts, Leah Kaira, Jenna Copella, Chris Foster, Minji Lee, Jason Schweid, Yu Meng, Hanwook Yu, and Jerome Clauser.

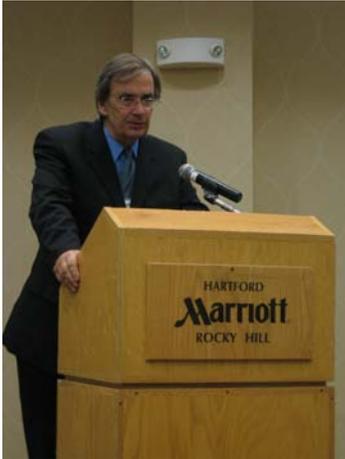
We must thank the staff at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, led by Laurie, Wilfredo, and Robert. If you did not witness them in action, you likely have no idea of what an impressive job they did transforming various rooms and areas so quickly and seamlessly. They have an excellent team, and were a pleasure to work with!

We hope you enjoyed the great jazz music Wednesday night and the Glamour Girls Thursday night, as well as the toast to NERA made by Phil Archer and the festive social events that provide us the chance to relax a bit and enjoy laughing together and dancing, while keeping an eye on the box score.

Last, but certainly not least, we need to thank Kristen Huff, now our Past-President, for giving us the opportunity to put this conference together.

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## 2009 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring



James Carifio

The Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring was established in recognition of Tom Donlon's long and valued contributions to NERA, particularly as a mentor to so many colleagues. Presented for the first time in 2000, the award is given to someone identified for distinguished mentoring. It is an honor to announce Dr. James Carifio as the recipient of this year's award for his mentorship, kindness, patience, and life coaching skills.

Dr. Carifio is currently Professor of Education at the University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate School of Education. For over 40 years, he has been mentoring and life coaching undergraduate and graduate students, beginning with his early work as a doctoral student. He was one of the founding teachers of The Hyde School in Bath, Maine, and was honored at the Hyde commencement in 1997 by the students he taught who he "kept an eye on" over the course of their lives and careers. He has spent much of his professional life mentoring students who had numerous obstacles to overcome on their road to higher education. His students have described him as an "exemplar for the definition of an intentional, effective, and meaningful mentor" and "a teacher who cares and struggles through with his students and challenges them to achieve the extraordinary, and mentors them even when it is inconvenient, without time constraints."

## 2009 Recipient of the Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service to NERA



Gavrielle Levine

The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is given to a NERA member who exemplifies the qualities which Leo Doherty brought to NERA, as well as to his colleagues, friends and students. Four characteristics were clearly identified: leadership, ethics, humanity, and service to professional organizations. The recipient of this year's Leo D. Doherty Award, Gavrielle Levine, exemplifies all these.

Gavrielle received her Ph.D. from Columbia University and is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus. Prior to coming to LIU, Gavrielle was a researcher with E. Z. Rothkopf at Columbia and later with R. L. Thorndike at Teachers College.

In addition to teacher, Gavrielle is a program evaluation consultant and has worked with such children's educational television programs as *Reading Rainbow*, *3-1-2 Contact*, and *Ghostwriter*. She also has an impressive list of publications and presentations.

Gavrielle first came to NERA in 1987 and became the editor of the *NERA Researcher* in 1993 and served in that position until 1995. She was elected to the board of directors and served from 1997 to 2000 and chaired the Teacher-as-Researcher committee in 1999. With respect to leadership, Gavrielle was elected to the post of president-elect in 2003 and became president in 2004.

Gavrielle continues to present at NERA, to serve on committees and to provide support, experience and wisdom to NERA.

## The College Board

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The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,200 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT<sup>®</sup>, the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

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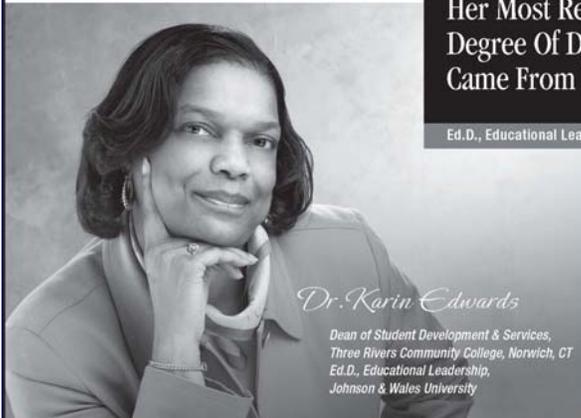
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# Northeastern Educational Research Association 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009 Conference Photos



Mary Pitoniak and Susan Cooper Loomis



Liz, Pete and Maureen



Maria Martiniello and Craig Wells



Theresa Harris-Tigg presents a poster



George Pruitt

## Northeastern Educational Research Association 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 21-23, 2009 Conference Photos



JMU Group



UMass Group



Let them eat cake.



Kristen Huff

*A Toast to NERA,*

*An organization of scholars, a community of mentors, and a family of friends. Based in tradition, while always poised for change. May the next 40 years be as fruitful as the first.*

*~Phil Archer*



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Using educational research to improve student learning  
(Continued from page 5)

Another innovation is automated scoring... David Williamson, an esteemed member of the Fordham Five, is a research scientist at ETS who is doing amazing things in getting computers to score content-based essays and – get this – spontaneous speech! We simply MUST better leverage technology so that we can reduce costs of human scorers; one of the main reasons constructed responses are not used more often in summative assessments here in the U.S. is due to the high cost of human scoring.

Finally, computer-based assessment also allows us to create items that have construct-relevant task features, not just bells-and-whistles for the sake of bells-and-whistles.

There are lots of other innovations in assessment design and delivery that could help us create state-of-the-art, innovative assessment systems that support all forms of assessment; we're not there yet, but we're close. An apt analogy may be the evolution of computers: They used to be big, clunky, and inconvenient.... Ron Hambleton loves to tell the story of how he used to have "punch cards" and that he'd have to walk across campus and load them into the mainframe to run his computer programs, then come back later to pick up the output.

Now, two or three decades later, computers are seamlessly integrated into our work and personal lives to the degree we can hardly imagine what it was like before. That's what assessment, all kinds of assessment – formative, interim, summative – could be like in the classroom: perfectly relevant, and so integrated with curriculum and instruction that students don't even know when they are "being assessed" versus just participating in another rich learning experience.

In closing, my platform is straightforward: We've got to "break out of the current paradigms" that are shaping our assessment definitions, practices and policies. I've offered a few thoughts and ideas here about how we can do that, and there are more and other ways. I hope that I have helped you understand why I, for one, believe that assessment has a strong role to play in reform, and by reform, I mean improving student learning.

I know that there is a lot more we need to do in U.S. classrooms to improve student learning but it is my sincere hope that one day we can leverage technology and innovation to create assessments of such high quality whereby teachers would embrace "teaching to the test" – a truly revolutionary idea.

## NERA 2010: Building Research Partnerships

The 2010 Conference Team is looking forward to an exciting conference, *Building Research Partnerships*. The conference will be held on October 20 to 22, 2010 at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, Rocky Hill, CT. The committee is in the process of planning pre-conference and in-conference professional development sessions, concurrent and poster sessions, keynotes, and networking opportunities based on your feedback from the 2009 conference. Our theme, *Building Research Partnerships*, focuses on collaborative relationships between and among researchers and complementary relationships that enhance interdisciplinary research that move the knowledge base forward. The pre-conference professional development sessions will feature a panel of researchers representing different lenses of collaboration, including Professional Development Schools and strategies for teaming. More information about the conference will be forthcoming shortly on the NERA website <http://www.nera-education.org>. We look forward to seeing you at NERA 2010!

Dolores Burton, Thanos Patelis, Yanhui (Angela) Pang  
2010 Conference Team

Conference highlights  
(Continued from page 6)

She has a passion and vision that has made it exciting to work on bringing her ideas to fruition.

If this seems like a lot of thank you's, it's because they are well-deserved. The conference went well despite the usual issues here and there, and that is due to the work and contributions of a great number of great people.

We hope that if you didn't get a chance to fill out your evaluation form, and you have suggestions or comments, that you will email the 2010 team at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com) to help them make next year's conference even better! And we hope to see you there!

## Teacher-as-Researcher Award 2010

The Teacher-as-Researcher award, established by NERA in 1993 to promote educational research and to encourage the development of research among junior researchers, focuses on recognizing teachers for outstanding efforts to conduct action research in their classrooms and to use the outcomes to improve teaching and learning. Action research has been defined as, “a systematic, sustained, and publicly shared way of learning and improving one’s self and one’s practice” (Arhar, Holly, & Kasten, 2001).

The Teacher-as-Researcher Award is presented annually. The award honors a teacher or a team that includes a teacher serving as a principle investigator, co-investigator, or collaborator who has conducted a classroom research project or applied research findings to inform his or her own teaching. The teacher should have primary responsibility for the research design that includes an application of a theory informing the study or the development of a theory from the results of a study, but not necessarily be the sole person in its development. The setting of the study should be part of the nominees’ regular professional responsibilities (not as a student teacher or part of a dissertation) and the results should result in a change in practice. Evidence of the resulting change in practice should be documented by data presented by the nominee and should show that the teacher has applied theory to practice and that practice has changed.

Classroom teachers are invited to apply directly for this award or be nominated by NERA members, school counselors, school administrators, faculty mentors, or others familiar with the teacher’s work. All applications/nominations should follow the format of the Teacher-as-Researcher Award application form and be postmarked or emailed to [EICHENHO@ADELPHI.EDU](mailto:EICHENHO@ADELPHI.EDU) as an attachment in Word no later than June 15, 2010. Information regarding the award and applications are available on the NERA website at <http://www.nera-education.org./conference/awardnominations.php>.

The 2010 awardee will be invited to speak about the research project at a special session at the **NERA 41th Annual Conference October 20-22, 2010** and be presented with the award at that time. The award includes a plaque, NERA membership, \$150 toward travel, and two full-days of meals and lodging at the Hartford Marriott Rocky Hill, Rocky Hill, CT, NERA’s conference site.

We thank you for your support of this important recognition of teacher practice. Please feel free to send questions or comments regarding the Teacher-as-Researcher award to [dburton@nyit.edu](mailto:dburton@nyit.edu).

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## NERA Matches Nine Graduate Students with Mentors

By Tom Levine, University of Connecticut

NERA has always been a place where members can find people and resources that improve their research. To further this tradition, for the second consecutive year, our 2009 NERA conference featured formal arrangements for mentoring. Nine graduate students were matched with four NERA mentors, scholars chosen on the basis of their relevant expertise and mentoring skill. NERA thanks Scott Brown, Sara Finney, Megan Staples, and Dianne Zager for generously agreeing to read student work in advance of the conference, and for sharing their feedback in 30-minute individual meetings with students during the conference. Graduate students called the experience “invaluable”, and credited their mentors for their supportive tone, their generous written and verbal feedback, and their ability to provide new ways of approaching students’ research.

I thank the past and current year’s conference co-chairs and board members for their support of this new program. We look forward to offering more mentorship at next year’s conference! If you are a graduate student who could benefit from getting perspective and feedback beyond what you already have available, please plan to submit a request for a NERA mentor during the summer of 2010. Look for details regarding how you can request a mentor in upcoming issues of the *NERA Researcher*.

## The Graduate Lounge By Allie Brown, James Madison University

It is hard to believe that the 2009 NERA conference has already come and gone. The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) sponsored two sessions for graduate students. One was a panel presentation regarding professional perspectives on the future of educational research. Specifically, Dr. Judy Robb from the University of New Hampshire, Dr. John Young from the Educational Testing Service (ETS), and Dr. April Zenisky from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst shared observations from their experiences in the field and discussed how they see educational research progressing in the future. Students also had the opportunity to ask for personal advice with regard to graduate school and careers. The other GSIC-sponsored session was a workshop on grant writing. Drs. Stan Shaw and Michael Coyne from the University of Connecticut discussed both how to find grants to apply for, as well as how to write successful grant proposals. In addition to the in-conference sessions, GSIC also organized a graduate student social with complementary appetizers. This social provided the opportunity for graduate students from different programs to meet one another and hopefully make long-lasting connections.

For the upcoming year, GSIC members will continue to find ways to support the professional development of NERA graduate students. In addition, we will keep reaching out to new graduate students to increase the diversity of institutions represented at NERA. Although, GSIC is sad to see Carol Barry, Andri Ioannou, Christine Shea, and Asil Ali Ozdogru complete their service to GSIC, we look forward to selecting four new members. Currently, the GSIC consists of three members:



**Allison Brown** ([brownar@jmu.edu](mailto:brownar@jmu.edu)) is in her second year of the Quantitative Psychology master's program at James Madison University. In addition to an interest in applied statistics and measurement, she is interested in issues related to positive psychology, personality, and motivation. Allison is serving as the 2009-10 chair for the GSIC.



**Marisa Cohen** ([mcohen1@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:mcohen1@gc.cuny.edu)) is in her fourth year of the Educational Psychology Program at CUNY Graduate Center. She is currently working on her dissertation examining the acquisition of science material by elementary school students through the use of imagery interventions. She teaches undergraduate Introductory Psychology courses, as well as Masters level research method courses.



**Megan France** ([francemk@jmu.edu](mailto:francemk@jmu.edu)) is in her second year of the Assessment and Measurement Program at James Madison University. Her substantive research interests include variables related to college students' relatedness with their peers and the university environment such as university belonging, attachment, and mattering. She is also interested in applications of structural equation modeling. Megan served as the 2008-09 chair for the GSIC.

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A note of special thanks to Barbara Helms, who is mentoring Helen Marx to become NERA Treasurer. Barbara served two years beyond her elected term as Treasurer by request of the Board; she went above and beyond the description of the Office in every way. We are particularly grateful for her leadership in establishing NERA as a 501(c)3 institution, and for her profound commitment to excellence in her role as Treasurer as well as everything she does for NERA.

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**NERA RESEARCHER**  
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