

# The NERA Researcher

## The President's Message



April Zenisky

Dear NERA Colleagues,

I write you this message on the first full day of spring! However, I admit that I feel a slight need to check my calendar app to verify that this is not April Fools' Day - as I look out the window, visibility is once again limited due to yet another snow event. The data, historical and otherwise, suggest that warmer and greener times are coming, but for many of us physically situated in the northeastern United States, it certainly feels as though the arrival of those days is a bit more leisurely this year.

But, enough grumbling! To accentuate the positive and focus on silver linings, I hope this issue of *The NERA Researcher* finds you well and professionally productive. The optimist in me says there is nothing quite like long, cold winter days and nights for designing studies and writing up research findings. After all, NERA's 2015 Conference is coming up (and the

Call for Proposals is included in this newsletter—but more on that in a moment).

The Winter meeting of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors was held January 30-31, 2015 at the Trumbull Marriott (and, yes, it snowed then and there too). Over the course of this meeting, NERA's leadership received and discussed in depth committee reports focusing on all aspects of the organization, concerning operations and special initiatives to affinity groups and awards. I view this winter meeting as having an especially important role in the annual cycle of NERA governance, because it is a terrific opportunity to reflect on NERA's considerable accomplishments but also to plan ahead, both for short and long terms. This year's winter meeting was certainly filled with many thoughtful and dynamic conversations, and provided me with an even greater appreciation for the quality and quantity of volunteer work that NERA benefits from. Below are some of the key discussions I wish to bring to your attention.

- Over 150 responses to the 2014 Conference Survey were returned (THANK YOU!), and the feedback was at once gratifying and constructive. The 2014 conference, with a new venue, was a tremendous success, and the 2015 Conference Co-Chairs have identified numerous ways to incorporate your feedback to further enhance conference offerings and attendee experiences this coming fall. Areas for particular attention include meal costs, a/v, lodging counts, and meeting room set-ups.
- On a related point, we reflected on various aspects of the conference in depth, as site selection for 2017 and beyond will be occurring in 2016. This process is influenced by a variety of factors, including cost, geographical proximity for members, public transportation availability, and NERA's size. The cost of meals was noted as one point of concern, because many conference activities take place at meals, and if some members avoid meals because of the expense then that may negatively impact their conference experience and/or engagement. As a point of information to NERA members, meal costs (including snack breaks) are negotiated into the contracts with the conference hotels, and are fixed in each of those contracts, but we are looking for ways to defray various costs for members now and in the future, especially for graduate students.
- A formal membership and conference registration refund policy has been instituted by vote of the Board. It was noted that in recent years providing refunds on membership and the conference resulted a net loss for NERA once PayPal business transaction fees were taken into account. Accordingly, NERA's refund policies are as follows:

### *NERA Membership Refund Policy*

All membership purchases are final.

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## The NERA Researcher

The NERA Researcher is the official newsletter for members of the Northeastern Educational Research Association.

### Message from the Editors

Dear NERA Members,

Preparations are well underway for the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual NERA Conference. Our 2015 Conference Co-Chairs, Amanda Clauser, Kimberly Colvin and Katrina Crotts Roohr, have provided a conference overview and welcome message, the call for proposals, and a list of frequently asked questions about the conference to get you all well-informed and, above all, excited about attending the upcoming 2015 conference! Within this issue you will also find information on several awards that NERA bestows on deserving members each year. These awards are a great way to acknowledge a colleague and/or mentor who have made an impact within our field. Please consider submitting award nominations!

As you may have heard, *The NERA Researcher* is transitioning to an all-online newsletter. We will no longer print and mail out the newsletter. However, we will continue to provide a print-ready PDF version of the newsletter for our members. Additionally, we are very excited to pilot *The NERA Researcher* in an enhanced format for viewing on the web. Look out for an email from us in the coming weeks with a link to this enhanced version of the newsletter. Next month we will be soliciting feedback from you via a short survey. We would love to hear from our members! Please do take the time to tell us what you think of the newsletter enhancements.

We are also seeking a production and design co-editor for *The NERA Researcher*. Bo Bashkov's term ends this fall upon the conclusion of the 2015 conference. Within this issue you will find information on the responsibilities of this position and the types of skills necessary for this role. Please feel free to contact us if you are interested or if you would like to nominate someone.

Lastly, but certainly not least! We would like to thank Barbara J. Helms for her continued support and assistance with the newsletter. We hope you all enjoy reading this issue! If you have any ideas for *The NERA Researcher*, including ideas for special articles, please contact us at [theneraresearcher@nera-education.org](mailto:theneraresearcher@nera-education.org).

Best,  
Haifa Matos-Elfonte & Bo Bashkov  
The Editors

## Executive Committee

**President:**  
April Zenisky  
*University of Massachusetts  
Amherst*  
[azenisky@educ.umass.edu](mailto:azenisky@educ.umass.edu)

**Past President:**  
John W. Young  
*International Baccalaureate*  
[jwyoung35@comcast.net](mailto:jwyoung35@comcast.net)

**President-Elect:**  
Charles DePascale  
*National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment*  
[cdepascale@nceia.org](mailto:cdepascale@nceia.org)

**Treasurer:**  
Elizabeth Stone  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[treasurer@nera-education.org](mailto:treasurer@nera-education.org)

**Secretary:**  
Mary Yakimowski  
*Sacred Heart University*  
[yakimowski@aol.com](mailto:yakimowski@aol.com)

## Board of Directors

Felice Billups (2014-2017)  
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[fbillups@jwu.edu](mailto:fbillups@jwu.edu)

Carol Barry (2014-2017)  
*The College Board*  
[cabarry@collegeboard.org](mailto:cabarry@collegeboard.org)

Craig Wells (2013-2016)  
*University of Massachusetts  
Amherst*  
[cswells@educ.umass.edu](mailto:cswells@educ.umass.edu)

Javarro Russell (2013-2016)  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[jrussell@ets.org](mailto:jrussell@ets.org)

Abigail Lau (2012-2015)  
*Emmanuel College*  
[lau.abigail@gmail.com](mailto:lau.abigail@gmail.com)

Rochelle Michel (2012-2015)  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[rmichel@ets.org](mailto:rmichel@ets.org)

Xi Wang (2014-2015)  
*University of Massachusetts  
Amherst*  
[xiw@educ.umass.edu](mailto:xiw@educ.umass.edu)

## Appointed Positions

**2015 Conference Co-Chairs:**  
Amanda Clauser  
*National Board of Medical  
Examiners*  
[aclauser@nbme.org](mailto:aclauser@nbme.org)

Kimberly Colvin  
*University of Albany, SUNY*  
[kfcolvin@gmail.com](mailto:kfcolvin@gmail.com)

Katrina Crotts Roohr  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[kroohr@ets.org](mailto:kroohr@ets.org)

**The NERA Researcher  
Co-Editors:**  
Haifa Matos-Elfonte  
*The College Board*  
[hmatoselefonte@collegeboard.org](mailto:hmatoselefonte@collegeboard.org)

Bo Bashkov  
*James Madison University*  
[bo.bashkov@gmail.com](mailto:bo.bashkov@gmail.com)

**NERA Webmaster:**  
Tia Sukin  
*Pacific Metrics*  
[tsukin@pacificmetrics.com](mailto:tsukin@pacificmetrics.com)

**NERA Conference  
Proceedings Co-Editors for  
Digital Commons:**  
Jim McDougal  
*University of Massachusetts*  
[jemcdougal@aol.com](mailto:jemcdougal@aol.com)

Jessica Flake  
*University of Connecticut*  
[jessica.flake@uconn.edu](mailto:jessica.flake@uconn.edu)

**Mentoring Program  
Co-Chairs:**  
Ross Markle  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[rmarkle@ets.org](mailto:rmarkle@ets.org)

Jonathan Rubright  
*American Institute of CPAs*  
[jrubright@aicpa.org](mailto:jrubright@aicpa.org)

### STANDING COMMITTEES

**Communications Chair:**  
S. Jeanne Horst  
*James Madison University*  
[horstsj@jmu.edu](mailto:horstsj@jmu.edu)

**Membership Chair:**  
Nina Deng  
*Measured Progress*  
[nndeng@gmail.com](mailto:nndeng@gmail.com)

**Nominations Chair:**  
John W. Young  
*International Baccalaureate*  
[jwyoung35@comcast.net](mailto:jwyoung35@comcast.net)

**Graduate Student Issues Chair:**  
Xi Wang  
*University of Massachusetts  
Amherst*  
[xiw@educ.umass.edu](mailto:xiw@educ.umass.edu)

**Teacher-as-Researcher  
Chair:**  
Salika Lawrence  
*St. John's University*  
[lawrens1@stjohns.edu](mailto:lawrens1@stjohns.edu)

### AWARDS COMMITTEES

**Thomas Donlon Mentoring  
Award Chair:**  
Thanos Patelis  
*National Center for the  
Improvement of Educational  
Assessment*  
[tpatelis@nceia.org](mailto:tpatelis@nceia.org)

**Leo D. Doherty Memorial  
Award Chair:**  
Stephen G. Sireci  
*University of Massachusetts  
Amherst*  
[sireci@acad.umass.edu](mailto:sireci@acad.umass.edu)

**Lorne H. Woollatt  
Distinguished Paper Chair:**  
Johan van der Jagt  
*Bloomsburg University of  
Pennsylvania*  
[jvanderj@bloomu.edu](mailto:jvanderj@bloomu.edu)

### AD HOC COMMITTEES

**Infrastructure Chair:**  
Steven Holtzman  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[sholtzman@ets.org](mailto:sholtzman@ets.org)

**Strategic Planning Chair:**  
John W. Young  
*International Baccalaureate*  
[jwyoung35@comcast.net](mailto:jwyoung35@comcast.net)

**Diversity Chair:**  
Ellina Chernobilsky  
*Caldwell College*  
[echernobilsky@caldwell.edu](mailto:echernobilsky@caldwell.edu)

**Conference Ambassadors Chair:**  
Rochelle Michel  
*Educational Testing Service*  
[rmichel@ets.org](mailto:rmichel@ets.org)

**Site Selection Chair:**  
Charles DePascale  
*National Center for the  
Improvement of Educational  
Assessment*  
[cdepascale@nceia.org](mailto:cdepascale@nceia.org)

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**NERA Conference Registration Refund Policy**

The deadline to receive a refund for registration is two weeks (14 days) before the conference.

Conference registration cancellations received prior to the deadline are eligible to receive a refund less a \$10 service fee.

Cancellations received after the stated deadline will not be eligible for a refund.

Cancellations will be accepted by email in writing and must be received by the stated cancellation deadline.

Refunds will be credited back to the original credit card used for payment, or for members paying by check or cash NERA will issue a check within 14 days.

- In advance of the 2015 Winter Board meeting, a new task for committee chairs was to formally align their activities to NERA's current Strategic Plan (adopted in 2014). This afforded my colleagues on the Board and I the chance to visualize how well all of the activities carried out for NERA by our various committees are advancing the goals in the Plan. Below is a broad overview of accomplishments and plans in each goal area by committee/position/program (self-reported from committee chairs). While work continues to use these data to identify areas for further action (and even future refinement of the Strategic Plan), I'll repeat myself - the breadth and depth of what NERA's volunteers accomplish is impressive!

Goal Area	2014 Accomplishments and 2015 Plans by Committee / Position / Program
<b>Goal 1:</b> Support and promote high quality Educational Research.	Communications; GSIC; Mentoring; TAR Issues; Donlon; Woollatt
<b>Goal 2:</b> Keep members up to date on emerging trends and issues in the field of educational research.	Digital Commons; Communications; GSIC; Membership; <i>The NERA Researcher</i>
<b>Goal 3:</b> Develop and nurture the future leaders of the field of education, and encourage current leaders to interact with and mentor junior NERA members.	Digital Commons; Nominations; Strategic Planning; GSIC; Mentoring; Membership; TAR Issues; Donlon; Doherty; Diversity; Ambassadors
<b>Goal 4:</b> Maintain an effective, financially viable professional organization with inclusive governance.	Treasurer; Mentoring; Membership; <i>The NERA Researcher</i> ; Infrastructure
<b>Goal 5:</b> Purposely cultivate leadership.	Digital Commons; Nominations; Strategic Planning; Communications; GSIC; Mentoring; Donlon; Doherty; Ambassadors
<b>Goal 6:</b> Begin formal outreach to other professional organizations.	TAR Issues; Diversity
<b>Goal 7:</b> Increase internationalization and/or broaden stakeholder participation in NERA.	Strategic Planning; Communications

Stepping away from the topic of the Winter Board meeting, there are a few more points I wish to bring to your attention. First of all, the Call for Proposals for NERA's 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference is here! The 2015 Co-Chairs have been quite busy crafting the forms and the informational documents you'll need to submit your proposals. That information can be found in this issue of our newsletter, it will be emailed to you, and you can access it through the NERA Website at your convenience. There are a number of presentation formats you may wish to consider as you think about your participation in this upcoming meeting, including individual papers, symposia, roundtables, posters, and a new Data Blitz session structure. In addition, in your proposal you have the option to highlight how your proposal connects to our conference theme of *Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds* for possible inclusion in a spotlight session on this theme. As always, we will need your help to carry on the success of previous NERA meetings, in the form of you as proposal reviewers, session moderators, discussants, and of course, presenters and attendees! **Note: Proposals can be submitted anytime between May 1 and June 5.**

As you head over to the website for conference proposal submissions, please note that NERA has message boards for your use as members. You can use them to share information about job postings, educational research conferences, and other notices that are of a professional nature pertaining to education and educational research that benefit NERA members directly. When you log in as a member, you have the option to receive message board postings sent to you via email at a frequency of your choosing (as in, daily, or weekly, or never). Alongside NERA's other social media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn), the message boards offer another way for members to connect and share information.

On the topic of webinars, I wish to thank Lydia Liu and Katrina Crofts Roohr for their enormously informative talk on student learning outcomes in higher education presented on February 24. I will have details on forthcoming webinar events to announce to you soon, but in the meantime, if you—*YOU!*—as a NERA member are interested in presenting a webinar, please consider submitting a proposal through our web form. More information and the proposal form can be accessed through a link in the "What's New" box on the NERA homepage, or email me ([azenisky@educ.umass.edu](mailto:azenisky@educ.umass.edu)) for the link.

One final note—you have received the Call for Nominations from Past-President John Young regarding several open NERA governance roles, specifically President and two Directors. I strongly urge you to consider nominating yourself or a colleague for those positions. Those kinds of emails can be easy to gloss over as less relevant to you for any number of reasons, but by nominating someone else or volunteering for the slate yourself you can help to shape this organization for years to come. If you have questions about the responsibilities that come with either role, please contact me, any of our current Directors, or Past-President John Young (contact emails can be found on the NERA Governance page, [http://www.nera-education.org/nera\\_leadership.php](http://www.nera-education.org/nera_leadership.php))—we'd be happy to talk with you at your convenience.

And, however delayed it might be, Happy Spring!

## Call for Proposals

46th Annual Conference  
October 21-23, 2015  
Marriott Hotel, Trumbull, Connecticut

### Conference Theme: *"Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds"*

Education today is marked by numerous challenges, as recent years have brought a re-imagining of curriculum and a redefinition of what students should know and be able to do, under the glare of a renewed (and highly concentrated) focus on accountability. For educational researchers, the questions are many but the issues cannot be compartmentalized and considered in isolation. As we, a community of researchers, look to take on these complexities in education through our research activities, it is critical that collaboration be encouraged and facilitated across specialties, institutions, professional status, and roles, to promote the connections and conversations that lead to new knowledge.

As a regional affiliate of the American Educational Research Association, NERA invites proposals for our annual meeting spanning all areas of educational research. We welcome proposals from new and experienced researchers and will consider both completed and in-progress research. Below you will find the general requirements for NERA proposals as well as specific guidelines corresponding to the four session formats. For more information about the conference, including FAQs about NERA proposals, visit NERA at [www.nera-education.org](http://www.nera-education.org).

#### Submission Requirements

- Complete information for author(s) including affiliation(s).
- Descriptive title (**maximum: 15 words**).
- Three keywords.
- Description of paper to appear in conference program (**maximum: 50 words**).
- Proposal, NOT including tables, figures, and references (**maximum: 1000 words**).
  - ◊ Proposal should include: study purpose, theoretical framework, methodology, results, conclusions, and educational implications.
  - ◊ Warning: Proposals with more than 1000 words will not be accepted.

#### Submission Format

The proposal submission form will be online and accessible from the NERA website by May 1st, 2015. At the time of submission, authors will be required to select from a list of descriptive keywords to categorize the proposal.

#### Submission Review Process

- Proposals *must* be submitted electronically by **Friday, June 5th, 2015 (11:59pm EST)**.
- 2 to 3 NERA members will blindly review each proposal.
- Each proposal will be judged according to the following criteria: educational or scholarly significance, perspective or theoretical framework, appropriateness of methodology, clarity of expression, and appeal to NERA membership.
- Proposal decisions will be emailed to first authors in mid-August. Details about session dates and times will follow when the program is finalized.

## Session-Specific Guidelines – 2015 NERA Conference

When submitting your proposal, you will be asked to indicate which of the following session formats you prefer for your research. We encourage submitters to select more than one possible option, as selecting multiple options increases your likelihood of acceptance. Regardless of the session you choose, your paper will be subjected to rigorous peer review by NERA volunteers. As each format provides a medium for contributing your research to the field, all session formats are equally important. We hope to maintain a variety of sessions this year to maximize the educational experience for NERA members.

### 1. Individual Presentations

#### a. Individual Paper:

Proposals should describe completed or nearly completed research to be presented in 10-15 minutes. Sessions will be organized so that 3-5 other individual presentations will be grouped according to similar research areas. In most paper sessions, a discussant will be assigned to read the set of papers in advance and present a 10-15 minute synthesis, critique, or analysis of the set of papers to spur discussion.

#### b. Data Blitz (NEW!):

A Data Blitz session is a fast-paced session with short presentations each providing highlights of a study. Presenters will have 5 minutes and a maximum of 4 Power Point slides to describe their study. It's an opportunity for presenters to offer a preview of their research and highlight their findings to a large group. Proposals should follow the same format as an individual paper and describe a research project, either completed or nearly completed.

#### c. Roundtable:

Roundtable sessions allow maximum interaction among presenters and with attendees. There is greater emphasis on discussion between the authors and participants during a roundtable session. Each table will have 3-5 researchers of accepted papers clustered around shared interests. Each session will have a designated chair knowledgeable about the research area, to facilitate interaction and participation, and when appropriate a discussant will be assigned to a roundtable session as well.

#### d. Individual Poster:

Proposals should describe a research project, either completed or nearly completed, that lends itself to a visual display and would benefit from informal individualized discussion and

feedback. Similar to the individual paper presentations, each poster will have a discussant. Specific directions for the size of the poster will be posted on the NERA Conference website.

### 2. Theme-Based Paper Session/Symposium

Proposals should describe a set of 3-5 presentations organized around a common theme. The chair and discussant for this session must be identified in the proposal. The format and procedure for these sessions are identical to the *Individual Paper Presentation* sessions.

#### Link your proposals to the conference theme (NEW!)

This year we would like to encourage individuals submitting proposals to indicate on the proposal form how their research directly touches upon our conference theme of *Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds* for possible inclusion in a spotlight session centered on the theme. Note that this is not a requirement for proposals.

#### Special call for teacher researchers!

Click the following link for more information about the special call for teacher researchers to attend NERA and present their research: [http://www.nera-education.org/award\\_nominations.php](http://www.nera-education.org/award_nominations.php)

#### Call for conference volunteers and reviewers!

We will be sending out a survey asking for NERA members to volunteer as proposal reviewers, session chairs, or discussants. Keep an eye out for the survey!

If you have any questions, please contact the conference chairs at [NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com](mailto:NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com).

Thank you,

Amanda Clauser, *National Board of Medical Examiners*  
Kimberly Colvin, *University at Albany, SUNY*  
Katrina Crotts Roohr, *Educational Testing Service*  
NERA 2015 Conference Co-Chairs

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## 46th Annual Conference Overview and Welcome

Hello NERA Members,

Planning for the 2015 conference is well underway and it should be a very exciting conference! First, we want to thank everyone for responding to the 2014 conference evaluation survey that has been useful in helping us plan the next conference. We would also like to thank the 2014 Conference Chairs, Pamela Kaliski, Ross Markle, and Javarro Russell, and Past President John Young for their great work in making the 2014 conference a success.

This year's conference will return to the Marriott Hotel in Trumbull, CT for the second time. The dates of the Conference are October 21-23, 2015. Membership and conference registration forms will be available on the NERA website: <http://www.nera-education.org> this summer. Our conference theme is "Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds." New this year, we want to better link your research to our theme. As you submit your proposals, we invite you to indicate whether your paper directly relates to the theme for possible inclusion in a Spotlight session. We are excited to announce the introduction of Data Blitz sessions this year, which are fast-paced sessions designed to highlight research in a 5-minute presentation. Other organizations such as the American Psychological Association have used these exciting sessions to spur conversation and interaction among members with common interests. We encourage you to submit proposals to this new session type!

Additionally we have a number of other great sessions and activities planned:

**Professional Development Workshops:** There will be pre- and in-conference workshops, including the following topics: R – at the introductory and advanced levels, SEM, and K-12 Participatory Action Research.

**Working time for Special Interest Groups:** New this year, we will have time for individuals and groups with shared interests to meet and work together on collaborative projects, or simply to brainstorm ideas for future collaborations.

**Mentoring:** The mentoring program will provide graduate students with the opportunity to meet with professionals in the field. Mentors can provide individualized feedback on research projects and/or dissertations, as well as provide guidance during the conference.

We are excited to announce our keynote and invited speakers, who have expertise in a number of different areas:

**Keynote Speakers:** *Dr. Ronald Ferguson* from Harvard University whose research centers on the achievement gap and school improvement, and *Dr. Nancy Streim*, an Associate Vice-President at Columbia Teachers College who works in school and community partnerships.

**Invited Speakers:** *Dr. Preston Green* from the University of Connecticut will talk about the legal status of charter schools, addressing public accountability and student rights, and *Dr. Joanna Gorin* from the Educational Testing Service who will offer a closing talk on innovations in assessment.

We hope that you are planning to attend the conference, and that you will also encourage friends and colleagues to attend. This year, we will continue using the online proposal submission process. Please see the Call for Proposals and FAQ for more information. We also encourage you to distribute the Call for Proposals to other educational researchers who may not have access to this publication. The proposal system will open in early May and you will have until **June 5<sup>th</sup>** to submit your proposals.

We are looking forward to another successful and exciting NERA conference! Email us if you have any questions: [NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com](mailto:NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com)

Thank you!

Amanda Clauser, *National Board of Medical Examiners*  
Kimberly Colvin, *University at Albany, SUNY*  
Katrina Crofts Roohr, *Educational Testing Service*  
NERA 2015 Conference Co-Chairs



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<http://www.jmu.edu/outreach/assessment.shtml>

MSC 6806  
 Harrisonburg, VA 22807  
[assessment@jmu.edu](mailto:assessment@jmu.edu)  
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# Frequently Asked Questions

46th Annual Conference

October 21-23, 2015

Marriot Hotel, Trumbull, Connecticut

**Conference Theme:** *"Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds"*

## **Does my research project have to be complete to be accepted to NERA?**

Not necessarily. In-progress or nearly completed research will be considered for the conference, but the research should show the potential of being ready for presentation by the date of the conference. We encourage proposers to strongly consider submitting their in-progress work as Roundtable presentations. This format facilitates greater discussion between participants and the audience, allowing you to receive input and feedback that could inform your research or help to overcome potential hurdles.

## **How are the proposal descriptive keywords used?**

These terms are used in several ways. Specifically, these will be used to match the proposals to the appropriate reviewers, to place the proposals in the best-fitting sessions, and to assign appropriate discussants to the sessions. Please select the descriptor that is the best match to your proposal as your first choice and two additional descriptors as next-best options.

## **What is the review process like?**

Reviewers are volunteers, who have self-identified as being willing to review proposals in the same topic areas as the proposal keywords. The program committee, according to the reviews and availability in the conference program, makes final decisions.

## **When will my research paper need to be ready?**

Discussants must be able to review research papers prior to the sessions in order to properly prepare for discussions. You will be asked to email your research papers to the Discussants by October 1st.

## **Will a projector and laptop be available in my session?**

Institutional sponsors will be supplying LCD projectors for each session. Arrangements only need to be made to have a laptop present at the session. The chair of the session will arrange the laptop and file transfers to the laptop by email before the session. Presenters are expected to cooperate with chair requests.

## **What size should my poster be?**

Easels with foam display boards will be available for poster presentations. Poster size should be no larger than 36" x 48". The display should be easily read and clear from a distance of at least 3 feet from the board. The title, author, and affiliation should be at least 36 point font. The rest of your lettering should be **at least 28 point font**. Be sure to include diagrams, figures, photos, bulleted text, or other visuals that describe your research. More information regarding posters will be posted on the NERA website.

## **What if I am accepted to NERA but I am unable to attend NERA when the time comes?**

Submitting to NERA represents a commitment that you intend to attend the conference if accepted. If something prevents you from being able to attend, and co-authors or colleagues cannot present in your place, you must withdraw your presentation *before* the session by emailing [NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com](mailto:NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com).

## **You have several session options for submitting proposals. Are any considered more rigorous than others?**

No. All formats are peer-reviewed methods for disseminating your research. The rigor of the peer review process is the same for **all** proposals submitted to the conference. Peer review allows NERA to maintain an appropriate level of quality for the experience of those presenting their research, as well as those receiving the research.

## **What is a Data Blitz session?**

Data Blitzes have become a popular format to allow a large group of

researchers to present the highlights of their research in one session, while the audience has the opportunity to hear many diverse research topics. There could be as many as 15 presenters in one Data Blitz, where each presenter has 5 minutes and a maximum of 4 PowerPoint slides to provide an overview of their research.

All presenters must send their slides to the organizer of the session ahead of time so that no time is wasted between presenters. More details about this new format will be provided to the presenters when notification of acceptance is made. We expect this to be a fun and informative session for the presenters and their colleagues in the audience!

## **What is the role of the Chair?**

The role of the chair is to facilitate the organization of the presentation session. Duties may include collecting the papers, communicating with authors, managing audio/visual equipment, and ensuring the timeliness of the session. In some cases, the chair would assist in facilitating discussion among the audience members and authors.

## **What is the role of the Discussant?**

The discussant is responsible for drawing from his/her expertise to comment on papers and presentations. The goal is to provide professional and constructive criticism and raise issues for broader consideration that connect to these works.

## **What are the conference registration fees?**

The conference registration fees will be: Professionals \$85; Retirees \$20; Students \$30. Late fees will be instituted after October 1st. All registrants must also be NERA members. Information about membership and dues can be found on the NERA website ([www.nera-education.org](http://www.nera-education.org)).

## **Are my registration fees adjusted if I just come for one day or part of a day?**

NERA makes great effort to keep registration fees as low as possible for all attendees; therefore, it is not possible to provide adjusted registration fees for partial attendance.

## **What is included in the Conference Hotel?**

The conference will be held in the Marriott in Trumbull, CT. For the conference, the hotel offers several different accommodation rates: single, double, triple and quad rooms. The rate for conference rooms includes all meals during the conference. Rates for the hotel will be posted on the website in the summer.

## **How will I submit my NERA proposal?**

An online submission system to submit proposals will open in early May.

If you have any further questions, please contact the conference co-chairs at [NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com](mailto:NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com).

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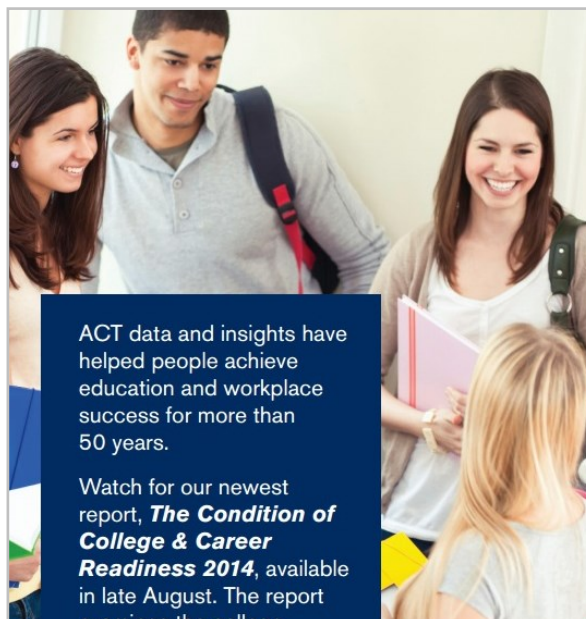
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## Special Call for P-12 Presenters & Teacher-as-Researcher Award

The Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) extends a call for teacher-researchers to present their work at the 46th Annual Conference in October 2015. We encourage teachers, professional learning teams, coaches, school administrators, and other stakeholders to submit proposals. Proposals can focus on completed research projects or works in progress. Please refer to the Call for Proposals for more information. Consider submitting proposals based on students' learning goals, growth targets, and teacher artifacts that show evidence of practice. Other hot topics include:

- Differentiating instruction
- Supporting diverse learners
- Inclusive classrooms
- Co-teaching / collaborative teaching
- Common Core State Standards
- Close reading
- Academic writing
- Technology integration
- Assessment
- Interdisciplinary planning and teaching
- Common planning
- Home-school connection
- Reading intervention and remediation
- Teacher evaluation
- Coaching

This conference is an ideal forum for teachers enrolled in graduate programs to disseminate their research. Teacher-researchers should also apply for the Teacher-as-Researcher (TAR) Award. The purpose of the award is to encourage teachers to conduct research and to use the findings of that research to inform their own teaching. The TAR award recipient is a teacher (P-12; i.e., preschool through high school) who has conducted classroom research to modify and improve his or her teaching efforts and instructional effectiveness.

Classroom teachers are invited to apply directly for this award or be nominated by NERA members, school administrators, faculty mentors, or others familiar with the teacher's research. All applications should be submitted no later than June 30, 2015. The application form is available at: [http://www.nera-education.org/docs/NERA\\_TAR\\_Application\\_2015.doc](http://www.nera-education.org/docs/NERA_TAR_Application_2015.doc)

The 2015 award recipient will be invited to speak about the research project at a session at the annual October NERA meeting in Trumbull, CT and be presented with the award at that time. The award includes a plaque, NERA membership, and \$150 toward travel, meals, or lodging at the NERA conference.

All those accepted to present must register for the conference. Check the NERA website in May for information about how to register. Professional development credits for conference attendance are available. Please feel free to contact me at [LawrenceS2@wpunj.edu](mailto:LawrenceS2@wpunj.edu) with any questions.

Thanks, Salika Lawrence  
Chair, NERA Teacher-as-Researcher Committee

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## Call for Nominations

We are seeking nominations for the following open elected positions:



- **NERA President (3-year term as President-elect, President, Past President)**
- **NERA Board Members (2) (3-year term)**

We have many great members who can help keep NERA going strong but we need you to nominate them. Please send your nominations for President, Secretary, and Board Members to John W. Young, NERA Past President at [past-president@nera-education.org](mailto:past-president@nera-education.org) by **May 15, 2015**. All nominees must be current members of NERA. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague for these important positions.

## Call for Production & Design Co-Editor

### What is this position?

The Production & Design Co-Editor position is a three-year commitment that entails formatting and assembling the content of *The NERA Researcher* three times a year (i.e., the Winter, Spring, and Fall issues of NERA's official newsletter). The person in this role will take over Bo Bashkov's responsibilities and will work with Haifa Matos-Elefonte, the Content Co-Editor responsible for communicating with the NERA leadership and members, gathering all materials, and reviewing/editing the content in each issue (followed by proofreading by her and Barbara J. Helms, our long-term volunteer reviewer).



Haifa Matos-Elefonte & Bo Bashkov

### What skills are required?

The most essential skills that this position requires are:

- Familiarity with or willingness to learn MS Publisher
- Great attention to detail
- Good organization skills
- Excellent time-management skills

### What skills are preferred?

- Experience with photo editing software (e.g., Photoshop, Picasa)
- Good written communication skills
- Online publishing experience

### Where to find more information?

If you are interested in this position or you know someone who might be, please get in touch with Bo at [bo.bashkov@gmail.com](mailto:bo.bashkov@gmail.com) or Haifa at [hmatoselefonte@collegeboard.org](mailto:hmatoselefonte@collegeboard.org). Note that the new Production & Design Co-Editor will not officially take over the role until after the 2015 NERA Conference. However, we would like to involve the new person as early as this summer for training purposes.



## Call for Nominations for the Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring

The Thomas F. Donlon Award for Distinguished Mentoring was established in 2000 in recognition of Tom's long and valued contributions to NERA, particularly as a mentor to so many colleagues. Since then the award has been presented annually to other NERA members who have demonstrated distinction as mentors of colleagues by guiding them and helping them find productive paths toward developing their careers as educational researchers.

The practice of mentoring in education has been going on for centuries and most of us can name a person who helped us move our careers along by being more than just a friend or colleague. That person may have been an advisor in developing your research agenda or perhaps brought you to NERA for the first time after suggesting that you might be ready for a conference presentation.

At this time nominations are again being sought for this annual award. Nominees must be NERA members and may be nominated by any member(s) of NERA to whom they served as mentors. If you would like to see a member of NERA who was your mentor be recognized for his/her contributions to your success, send your nomination to Thanos Patelis **via email** at [tpatelis@nciea.org](mailto:tpatelis@nciea.org) by **July 1, 2015**. In addition to the nomination letter, all nominations must be accompanied by at least three letters of support indicating the ways in which the nominee distinguished him/herself as a mentor. Up to five separate letters of support can be sent for each nominee. The award will be presented at the 2015 NERA conference. Please contact Thanos if you have any questions about the Donlon Award or the nomination process.

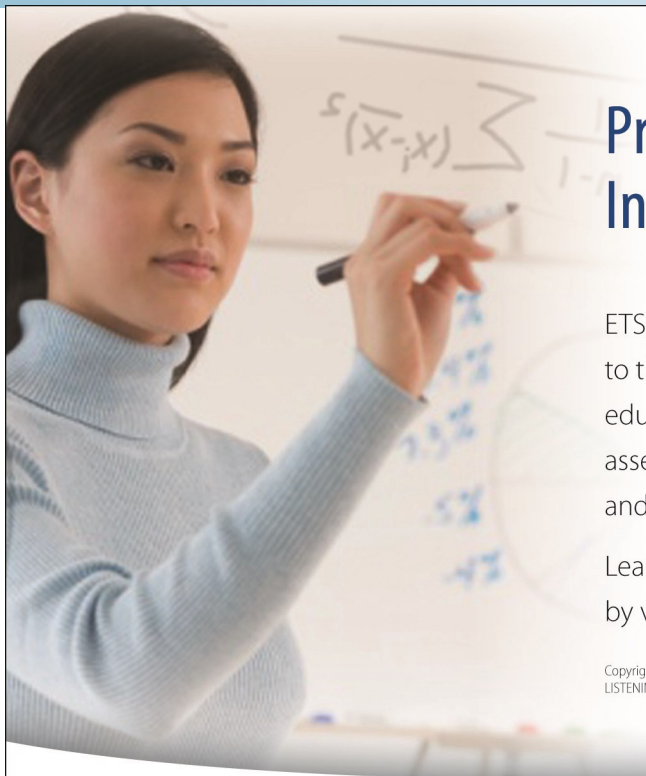
## Winner of the 2014 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award

Congratulations to Kathleen Sheehan, the 2014 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award winner for her paper entitled, *"What Proportion of the High School/College Text Complexity Gap is due to Genre-Based Differential Feature functioning (DFF)?"*

The Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award is an award named in honor of Lorne Woollatt, a distinguished New York State educator and NERA member. NERA research papers submitted for this award are evaluated on a 35-point scale. The winner is also awarded a stipend for travel to present the awarded paper at the American Educational Research Association Conference (AERA) to be held April 16-20<sup>th</sup> in Chicago.

Kathleen Sheehan is Principal Research Scientist in the Research and Development Division at Educational Testing Service (ETS) located in Princeton, New Jersey. She has won a variety of awards and patents. This award-winning paper will be presented at the 2015 AERA Conference.

Her paper addresses an important problem in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), with the problem being that they accelerate text complexity expectations for students in grades 1 through 12. This is to close a "vast" and "alarming" gap between the complexity levels of the texts that students read in high school (HS) compared to those that they will be expected to read in college and careers. The paper examines a key assumption underlying the method used to quantify this gap: that scores generated via traditional readability metrics are not subject to genre-based differential feature functioning (DFF). Analyses suggest that a strategy of accounting for genre DFF reduces the estimated magnitude of the gap by nearly 50%. Implications are presented.



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## Update from the NERA Mentorship Program Co-Chairs

Ross Markle  
*Educational Testing Service*

Jonathan Rubright  
*American Institute of CPAs*

NERA strives to not only be a professional *organization*, but also a professional *community* where we can learn from one another. Since mentoring is a valued and a valuable piece of this professional community, we want to ensure that all NERA members are aware of the mentoring opportunities available. The NERA Board of Directors supports two main approaches: 1) conference-based connections and 2) an online message board. Both approaches share the common goal of increasing mentoring relationships among NERA members, yet each has its own unique advantages.

The conference-based Mentoring Program has existed for several years and serves as a focused, hand-selected match-making process. Each year, the Mentorship Program co-chairs collect information from members who want to be a mentor or want to be mentored. Mentor-Mentee pairs are matched based on research interests, career goals, or areas of desired growth expressed by the mentee, and the background and expertise of mentors. Pairs are then encouraged to talk before, and meet during, the annual NERA conference. By participating in the Mentoring Program, participants receive the benefit of a structured and informed match, and have dedicated time during the conference to meet with their mentor or mentee. Additionally, mentees are not reliant on existing social connections and can meet experienced and valuable mentors of whom they might not have been aware.

The mentoring message board, instituted last year by past-president John Young, is available 24 hours a day and can be accessed via the "Mentoring Board" link listed under the Mentoring tab on the NERA website. From there, members can sign up to be a mentor or potential mentees can view the contact information for mentor volunteers. The advantage of this approach is that members can sign-up or reach out at any point throughout the year. Users have the freedom to form their own mentor-mentee relationships. This may even connect researchers in the same geographic area and foster face-to-face meetings. It also allows members to be a mentor or a mentee even if they cannot attend the annual conference.

As you can see, both approaches aim to foster mentoring, yet have their own set of benefits. Please take advantage of either (or even both) based on your own preference. As always, feel free to reach out to Ross ([rmarkle@ets.org](mailto:rmarkle@ets.org)) or Jonathan ([jrubright@aicpa.org](mailto:jrubright@aicpa.org)) should you have any questions. Happy mentoring!

### Call for Nominations for the Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service to NERA

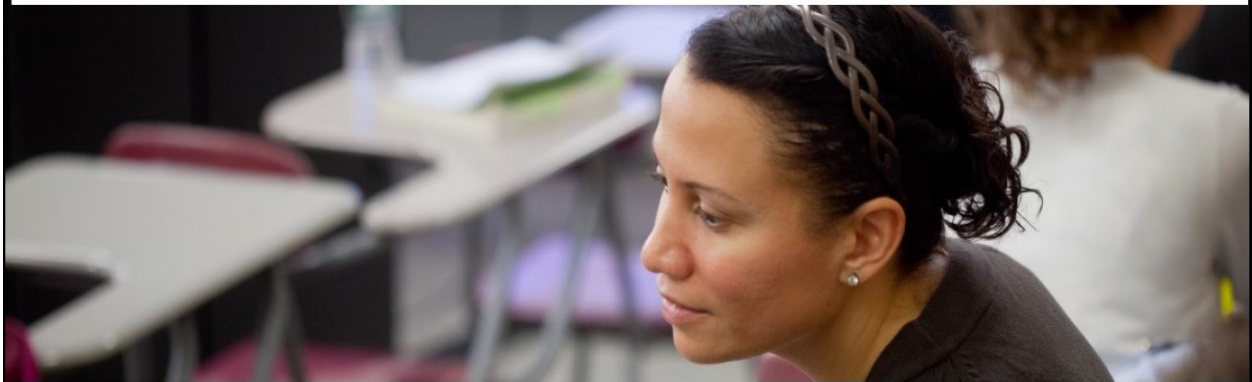
The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is given to a longstanding NERA member who exemplifies the qualities that Leo Doherty brought to NERA members, his colleagues, and students over his career. The award, instituted by the NERA Board of Directors in 1981, honors the memory of Leo Doherty. He was instrumental in the development and growth of NERA as a professional association for educational research. His leadership qualities, which were both ethical and humane, encouraged others to pursue and achieve their goals. Thus, this award is presented to NERA members who have exhibited outstanding leadership and service to our organization.

The Leo D. Doherty Award Committee for 2015 strongly encourage nominations for this award. Nomination letters should be sent as an email attachment to **Stephen Sireci** at [sireci@acad.umass.edu](mailto:sireci@acad.umass.edu) no later than **June 30, 2015**. Nomination letters should explicitly name the nominee and offer a concise and compelling case for the candidate in terms of their leadership and service to NERA. Inquiries regarding this award may also be sent to Stephen.

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## Communications Committee Update

Jeanne Horst  
*James Madison University*

Hello NERA Members:

I hope this finds you enjoying the spring season, wherever you may be. Given that this is my first article as NERA Communications Committee Chair, I would like to first thank Jonathan Steinberg for his dedicated leadership over the years. He helped create a new structure for the Communications Committee and organize the ways in which we disseminate information to NERA members. Fortunately for us, Jonathan remains on the committee. Thank you, Jonathan!

NERA has multiple forms of official communication available to us. Therefore, the Communications Committee thought it prudent to develop a policy about the dissemination of NERA information. We are all familiar with the official NERA emails and because we do not want to over-inundate NERA members with emails, only official NERA news, NERA Conference news, and *The NERA Researcher* will come to you via email.

At the same time, we would like to be able to share useful information to and from NERA members. Did you know that we also have a Twitter account, a LinkedIn page, and that NERA and the NERA Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) have Facebook pages? Social media and the NERA message boards are recommended for information such as job openings, internships, calls for relevant non-NERA conferences, and other information of interest to NERA membership. Please visit the NERA website, <http://www.nera-education.org> and click on the tab "Message Board". If you wish to share information, there is now a Communications Request form, which is located at <http://www.nera-education.org/downloadables.php> or by visiting the NERA website under the "About" tab.

In other news, this year Bo Bashkov will be replacing Tia Sukin as webmaster. Tia has managed the website for the past three years, and has done a phenomenal job. Thank you, Tia! We will keep you informed as this transition takes place.

If there are other ways that we can serve you, please feel free to contact me at [horstsj@jmu.edu](mailto:horstsj@jmu.edu).

S. Jeanne Horst  
Chair, Communications Committee



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## Membership Committee Update

Nina Deng  
*Measured Progress*

Dear NERA Members:

As the 2015 annual conference planning is under way, the Membership Committee is working hard to increase NERA membership and conference attendance. **I am very pleased to announce that our Bring-A-Friend Recommendation Form is available online now!**

Please go the email ("**Bring a Friend to NERA!**") that was sent out on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and simply click on the link to let us know of any colleagues, students, or friends who might be interested in joining NERA. It is an easy and fast process. Refer now and don't wait! We will invite them to submit proposals at the conference or just come as attendees. I also want to thank those who have participated already. We have received some responses within only a few days of sending out the email. Thank you so much for your great support!

If you provide your name during the recommendation, those you recommend will receive a special invitation including your name as a reference. When they register for the conference in the fall, they will be asked to provide the name of the person who referred them to NERA. **The NERA member who brings the most new members will win a small prize!**

If you cannot find the link, or you have any questions, comments or suggestions, feel free to reach me at [ndeng@gmail.com](mailto:ndeng@gmail.com).

Thank you so much for your continuous support, which is so critical to NERA!

Sincerely,

Nina Deng  
Chair, NERA Membership Committee

Past President **John W. Young** has a new position, Head of Research for International Baccalaureate in Bethesda, MD. He leads research for a global organization that serves more than one million students worldwide.

On February 13, 2015, *The NERA Researcher* Co-Editor **Bo Bashkov** (advised by Dr. Christine DeMars) successfully defended his dissertation titled, "*Examining the Performance of the Metropolis-Hastings Robbins-Monro Algorithm in the Estimation of Multilevel Multidimensional IRT Models.*" He also accepted a new position as Associate Psychometrician at the American Board of Internal Medicine in Philadelphia, PA, where he will be in charge of three exams in different internal medicine subspecialties.

**Jerusha Gerstner**, a third-year doctoral student at James Madison University, accepted a new position as Manager of Talent Management Analytics and Solutions at Marriott International, Inc. On April 3, 2015, she also successfully defended her dissertation titled, "*Addressing Serial-Order and Negative-Keying Effects: A Mixed-Methods Study.*" Her adviser was Dr. Debbi Bandalos.

**Dr. Michael K. Barbour** co-authored a new book, *Online, Blended & Distance Education in Schools: Building Successful Programs*. This book provides educators and school leaders in the K-12 sector and graduate students in Educational Technology and related programs in higher education with expert opinions and insights on practice and policy in K-12 online, blended and distance education programs, including curriculum, instruction, technology, and management aspects. It describes the status and trends of the field, provides illustrative program examples, explores the issues and challenges that programs face and highlights ongoing research in key areas related to program effectiveness.

**Seth Kershner's** article, "America's Tween Soldiers," will appear in the April issue of *In These Times*. His story deals with the phenomenon of military training programs in middle schools, and discusses a recent case of grassroots resistance from Louisville, KY. <http://inthesetimes.com/>



## The Graduate Lounge

Xi Wang

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

### **Tentative Plans for NERA 2015 GSIC In-Conference Sessions**

The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) is preparing two in-conference sessions for the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual NERA Conference in 2015. The sessions will feature two topics closely relevant to graduate students:

**Tentative Session #1 — How to Write an Effective Report:** panelists with rich experiences in reviewing manuscripts will discuss several good versus bad examples taken from actual research reports and articles, and describe fifty common mistakes to avoid in writing a research report.

**Tentative Session #2 — Exploring Different Job Areas and Developing Effective Job-seeking Skills:** professionals from different job areas including academia, government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations will talk about their daily job responsibilities, describe what skills they look for in job applicants, and provide suggestions on constructing an effective CV or resume tailored to a variety of job areas, as well as preparing for the interview process.

**Stay tuned for more information about GSIC sessions!**

### **Call for Proposals for the 2015 NERA Conference**

GSIC would like to encourage all graduate students to submit both completed and in-progress research to the 2015 NERA Conference, which will take place from October 21-23, 2015 at the Trumbull Marriott Merritt Parkway Hotel in Trumbull, CT. The online proposal submission system will be open May 1<sup>st</sup> through June 5<sup>th</sup>.

NERA is an especially supportive environment for graduate students, which helps to reduce the stress of presenting at conferences. When presenting at NERA you will receive positive feedback and constructive criticism on your papers from respected professionals in the field. Presenting takes practice and because of NERA's supportive attitude towards graduate students, it is a great place to present your papers!

### **Benefits of Being a NERA Member as a Graduate Student**

Besides the three-day annual conference, NERA offers professional development opportunities for graduate students throughout the year:

**Free Webinars** on research methodology and special topics in educational research. Graduate students have the opportunity to learn from experts and leading researchers about the current development and future directions of a research topic.

**Mentorship program** where graduate students and young professionals can network with a NERA mentor concerning research projects, professional advice, and career development. During the annual NERA conference, mentees can meet their mentors in person during the happy-hour social.

### **Making a Difference within NERA**

**Make use of NERA message board.** You can find information about internship opportunities, job openings, and other conferences on the NERA [message board](#). If you have any questions or suggestions for NERA GSIC, feel free to use the NERA [GSIC forum](#) to let us know your opinions!

**Bring a friend to NERA.** If you enjoy your conference experiences at NERA and all the benefits of being a NERA member, you can increase access to these networking and learning opportunities by recommending a colleague or a friend to NERA. Fill out the [Bring-A-Friend Recommendation Form](#) and let more people benefit from NERA!

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