

The NERA Researcher

The President's Message



April Zenisky

Dear NERA Colleagues,

This past summer, my husband, our two young daughters, and I were driving back home to western Massachusetts from a family wedding held in the Washington, DC area. Normally we go over the Tappan Zee Bridge and wind through Connecticut, but between construction and traffic we thought we'd be better off to take the New York State Thruway and connect to the Massachusetts Turnpike that way. Though longer distance-wise, we'd be moving and - as far as 400-mile family road trips go - it would be a far, far happier ride for all four of us. That is how I came to be passing Exit 19 on the Thruway, and thinking back to taking that exit when I attended my first few NERA meetings as a graduate student, when it was held in Ellenville and later, Kerhonkson.

I was introduced to the idea of NERA a couple of weeks into graduate school in the fall of 1998, when our professors informed all of the first-year doctoral students about this upcoming conference held in the Catskills in October. There really wasn't any question about going, but rather, just details of room-sharing and rides to be worked out. It was clear that our faculty held NERA in very high regard as an opportunity to meet professionals and other grad students in our field, as a place to learn about emerging research in both our specialty and the larger field of education, and as a chance to grow within a very supportive research community.

So now, some sixteen-odd years later, I am writing to you not as a first-year graduate student with a "new member" sticker on my name badge, but as NERA's President for the coming year. It is an honor and a privilege to be in this position, and to have the opportunity to serve NERA in this capacity. NERA has experienced a variety of changes over these years, but my initial impressions of NERA remain true. This is exemplified by the 2014 conference that so many of us attended this past October. Organized by the 2014 Co-Chairs (Pamela Kaliski, Ross Markle, and Javarro Russell) and supported by now Past-President John Young, the conference's offerings were intellectually diverse, professionally stimulating, and, quite simply, impressive in both depth and breadth. Thank you, Pamela, Javarro, and Ross, for all that you put in to make our 2014 meeting such a resounding success!

In addition to the conference, NERA's strength is due to you, the membership of NERA, as researchers who are doing interesting and creative research and who choose NERA as the place to share your work. In the coming year I hope to build on the remarkable precedent of the impressive NERA presidents before me, who sought to both preserve and expand on the ways that our organization has value to you professionally. We have a terrific and highly informative newsletter in *The NERA Researcher*, a growing Digital Commons repository for papers, and an exceptional stable of dedicated volunteers involved in NERA governance at all levels. Last year, John Young introduced the NERA webinar series, and we will be sending out information on planned webinars for 2014-2015 soon (confirmed topics include learning

(Continued on page 3)

Inside this issue

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Appointed Positions | 2 |
| Message from the Editors | 2 |
| Member News | 3 |
| 45th Annual Conference Wrap-up..... | 4 |
| 2015 Conference Announcement | 6 |
| 2014 Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award For Outstanding Leadership and Service | 8 |
| 2014 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring | 10 |
| 2014 NERA Presidential Address | 12 |
| NERA Strategic Plan 2014 | 17 |
| NERA Communications Committee Report | 20 |
| Membership Committee Update | 20 |
| Membership Data Report | 20 |
| NERA Ambassador Committee Report | 22 |
| Infrastructure Committee Report | 22 |
| NERA 2014 Business Meeting Wrap-up | 23 |
| Teacher-as-Researcher Award Committee Update | 24 |
| The Graduate Lounge | 25 |
| Photos from the 2014 Conference | 26 |



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,

We can't believe how quickly 2014 has flown by! As we reflect on this past year, we'd be remiss if we did not take the time to acknowledge the gathering of colleagues and friends that took place this past October for the very first time in Trumbull, CT at the 45th annual NERA conference. John W. Young, 2014 President, and his Conference Co-Chairs (Pamela Kaliski, Ross Markle, and Javarro Russell) organized a fantastic and quite memorable event. In this issue, we include highlights from the conference including John Young's presidential address, a recap of conference proceedings, GSIC activities, special recognition for award recipients, and pictures taken throughout the conference.

As we bid 2014 farewell, we have a lot to look forward to in the coming year. Our 2015 NERA president, April Zenisky, and her Conference Co-Chairs (Kimberly Colvin, Katrina Roohr, and Amanda Soto) are diligently working toward organizing another fabulous conference for you, our NERA members! Inside this issue you will read April's very first president's message, a message from the 2015 Conference Co-Chairs, and updates from various NERA committees, including a special update from the Strategic Planning Committee.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and that you've all enjoyed a wonderful holiday season with your loved ones. As always, many thanks to Barbara J. Helms for her continued support and assistance with the newsletter. If you have ideas for *The NERA Researcher*, including ideas for special articles, please contact us at theneraresearcher@nera-education.org.

Warmest Wishes,
Haifa Matos-Elefonte & Bo Bashkov
The Editors

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(Continued from page 1)

progressions and Prezi presentation software). Let me also invite you to help: if there is a topic you want to suggest for a NERA webinar, please contact me at azenisky@educ.umass.edu!

On a related note, when I first became a member of NERA, the primary value of membership lay in the conference. One reoccurring conversation in recent years, however, has focused on ways to enrich NERA membership with greater year-round value. To that end, I have convened a Working Group on Professional Development and Training, to help NERA's leadership support our members from a professional development perspective. This group is charged with reflecting on current NERA practices, member interests, and needs to craft a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the development and delivery of professional development and training, both within and outside of the conference. Members of this group are former President Lynn Shelley from Westfield State University, Tom Levine from UConn, Ross Markle from ETS, Kim Colvin from University at Albany, and Kristen Smith from JMU. I am looking forward to working with them, and will keep you updated on our progress throughout the coming year. Here too is an opportunity for your input: please send me email with any thoughts and/or ideas that you may have that I may share with this working group.

Looking ahead, the 2015 Conference Co-Chairs Kim Colvin (University at Albany), Katrina Roohr (ETS), and Amanda Soto (NBME) are laying the groundwork for a terrific meeting, which will again be held at the Trumbull Marriott. The program theme of "Interdisciplinary Approaches, Collaborating Minds" will be anchored by two truly exceptional keynote speakers. Dr. Ronald Ferguson, Co-Chair of the Achievement Gap Initiative and Senior Lecturer in Education and Public Policy in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University will provide our opening keynote on Wednesday night, October 21, while Dr. Nancy Streim, Associate Vice President for School and Community Partnerships and Special Advisor to the Columbia University Provost at Columbia Teachers College will speak midday on Thursday, October 22. More details about the program are forthcoming, and as always, the membership will play a critical role in shaping the meeting as well, through your submissions and suggestions. You can connect directly with the 2015 team by email at NERAConferenceChairs@gmail.com.

I want to conclude this column with a few last notes.

- Our election results have put NERA in good hands for the foreseeable future, with President-Elect Charles DePascale, new Board members Carol Barry and Felice Billups, and new Secretary Mary Yakimowski. I speak for the Board and the Executive Committee when I say that I very much look forward to working with Charles, Carol, Felice, and Mary.
- The Winter Meeting of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee will take place January 30-31 in Trumbull, CT, to review accomplishments and on-going tasks as well as to discuss needs of the organization relative to our strategic plan for 2015 and beyond.
- I also wish to express my gratitude for the mentoring and support that so many of NERA's members have provided to me in recent months. I appreciate the various past-presidents who have reached out to me armed with truly helpful advice and a willingness to be a continuing resource for NERA.
- Lastly, I have also enjoyed communicating with the many of you who hold committee roles to identify committee needs and priorities for the coming year. On a related point, thank you to all who volunteer to make NERA what it is, year in and year out.

Member News

Seth Kershner and **Scott Harding** were co-authors of an article which appeared in the spring issue of *Peace Review*:

Kershner, S. & Harding, S. (2014). Addressing the Militarization of Youth. *Peace Review*, 26(2), 250-257.

Their years of research on the topic have culminated in a book, *Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools*, which is currently under contract with Palgrave Macmillan.

The College of Education and Human Services at **Montclair State University** is proud to announce new grant awards:

Recipient: Jamaal Matthews
Title: How Urban Adolescents Come to Think of Themselves as Mathematicians
Funder: National Science Foundation
\$133,808
2014-2018

The funded research takes a social-cognitive approach toward understanding how students construct their math identities during middle and high school within the urban context.

Recipient: Alina Reznitskaya
Title: Measuring Argument Literacy Skills of Elementary School Students
Funder: Spencer Foundation
\$50,000

The goal of this project is to design and validate a set of measures to assess argument literacy skills of elementary school students in language arts classes.

Recipient: Jennifer Goeke
Title: Restructuring Preservice Preparation for Innovative Special Education (RePPriSE) - Year 4
Funder: The U.S. Department of Education
\$278,908

The purpose of this project is to restructure MSU's existing post-baccalaureate MAT Dual Certification program to prepare middle and secondary educators through three interdisciplinary strands of teacher preparation: Inclusive pedagogy; Intensive content area preparation in mathematics or science; and Integrative STEM (iSTEM) education.

45th Annual Conference Wrap-up

The 2014 NERA Conference was certainly one of growth and change. Indeed, each year finds a new NERA President and Conference Committee setting the tone for the conference, but this year also saw a new conference venue in the Trumbull Marriott, new session types, and a new conference management platform. While we certainly learned a few lessons (which will certainly be passed onto the next team), we feel that this year's conference was a success, and thank everyone who was involved.

The new conference location allowed for a larger conference than in recent years, and one of the largest conferences in NERA's history. We received 259 research proposals – a 30% increase over last year – coming from 239 unique authors and 131 different schools, colleges, universities, and organizations from across the United States. Accordingly, conference attendance was up more than 10% from last year's attendance. Ultimately, the program included 6 pre-conference and in-conference workshops, 13 symposia, 32 research paper presentation sessions, 2 poster sessions, 9 research roundtables, and an array of invited panels and speakers.



2014 Conference Co-Chairs Javarro Russell, Ross Markle (left) and Pamela Kaliski (far right) with Keynote Speaker Jonathan Alger, President, James Madison University

Among our distinguished and honored speakers was Dr. Andrew Ho, who delivered an engaging talk on student growth modeling Wednesday evening. On Thursday, our keynote speaker, President Jonathan Alger, challenged the NERA membership to be more engaged in the discussion of the value of higher education. A new session format – our Keynote Interview – allowed Dr. Kristen Huff to tap the vast experiences and valued perspectives of Dr. Kurt Geisinger. During the annual Presidential Address, Dr. John Young focused on the conference theme, giving the audience a stark reminder of the important role of education in increasing economic opportunity. Finally, Dr. Michael Kane discussed validity issues with the perspectives, insight, and experience that only Michael could. We would like to thank all of the speakers for their part in making the NERA conference a success.

The six workshops offered this year covered a range of topics, including statistical programming in R and jMetrik, the use of think-aloud protocols and interview methods, and hierarchical linear modeling. Additionally, Dr. Thomas Levine and Dr. David Moss put together a series of workshops and special sessions targeted at teachers and teacher-educators, continuing NERA's tradition of outreach to those in the classroom. We sincerely thank all of our workshop facilitators for the very important role they played in the success of this year's conference.

Another tradition that is very important to NERA is the development of graduate students. Once again, the Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC), chaired by Kristen Smith from James Madison University, did an excellent job of coordinating outreach, programming, and networking for NERA's graduate student members. Two GSIC-sponsored sessions — an interview with Michael Kane and a session on creating and maintaining a professional online presence — targeted issues that were key to the GSIC membership.

There are many other volunteers who are integral to this conferences' success. We would like to thank the dozens of NERA members who reviewed conference proposals, as the reviews were informative and helped maintain the high quality of the NERA conference proceedings. Many reviewers were unable to attend the conference, but still volunteered their time to help NERA. We also thank the chairs and discussants who play two vital roles in the NERA experience. While the discussants provide valuable review and feedback for the authors — hopefully allowing them to continue and improve their research — session chairs ensure that each session, and thus the conference as a whole, run smoothly. Given the importance of reviewers, chairs, and discussants, we would greatly urge you to participate in one of these roles in the future (or continue to do so if you have in the past).

NERA

NORTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL
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Perhaps the most unsung of NERA heroes are the graduate students who volunteer to work the desk during the conference. We co-chairs particularly appreciate their help because, as they're helping the rest of the NERA membership start their conference experience, we are freed up to make sure that the rest of the conference runs smoothly. Our conference registrar, Molly Faulkner-Bond, also deserves special thanks for donating so much of her time and overseeing registration.

Of course, so much guidance and support came from the NERA leadership and officers: 2014 NERA President, John Young; our NERA Treasurer, Elizabeth Stone; our NERA Communications Committee Chair, Jonathan Steinberg; our GSIC Chair, Kristen Smith and the previous Conference Co-chairs, Steven Holtzman, Jennifer Randal, and Carol Barry. Each of them provided invaluable guidance and we are incredibly grateful for their assistance.

We would also like to thank all of the conference sponsors, as the conference wouldn't have been possible without their help. Many of the sponsors also provided projectors for the conference and we are thankful for their support in ensuring that NERA's technological needs are met. Additionally, we are grateful to the wonderful staff of the Trumbull Marriott, led by Linda Klein, for ensuring that everything went smoothly throughout the NERA conference and supporting our transition to the new venue.

This has really been a fun, exciting, and rewarding experience for us as co-chairs. This message has been filled with thanks, as we are truly grateful for all of the time and effort that so many people provided leading up to the conference, and the continued encouragement and support that everyone gave during and since. We look forward to the exciting program that the 2015 NERA Conference Co-Chairs, Katrina Roohr, Amanda Soto, and Kimberly Colvin, are planning with April Zenisky, the 2015 NERA president and, of course, seeing all of you at the 2015 conference!

Pamela Kaliski, Ross Markle, Javarro Russell
2014 Conference Co-Chairs



James Madison University faculty, students, and alumni with Keynote Speaker and JMU President Jonathan Alger

2015 NERA Conference Announcement

October 21-23, 2015
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.

Planning is well underway for the 2015 conference. We are pleased that Dr. Ronald Ferguson from Harvard University and Dr. Nancy Streim from Columbia University Teachers College will be our keynote speakers. Dr. Ferguson's research focuses on the racial achievement gap and he is the author of *Toward Excellence with Equity: An emerging vision for closing the achievement gap*. Dr. Streim coordinates the Teachers College's activities in NY public schools; her research interests lie in university-school collaborations and science education in urban schools.

The results of the 2014 post-conference survey are guiding our planning, so we want to share the highlights of the survey results with the membership: 174 individuals responded to the survey, including 77 first time attendees (and 12 individuals who have attended more than 10 NERA conferences). Individuals primarily contributed during the conference as presenters and proposal reviewers, reflecting the active and involved NERA community. This past year, participants enjoyed the professional development and networking opportunities, as well as workshops and the invited speakers. An overwhelming majority would encourage a colleague to attend next year's conference!

In planning for the 2015 Conference we're looking forward to engaging workshops (both pre- and in-conference) on research and statistical methods and ongoing webinars on a variety of topics identified by the membership. Based on survey feedback, we'll be working on expanding the types of sessions available for presenters to include specific sessions for in-progress research (including working groups or collaborations) and continuing to invite speakers and panelists that will address the broad interests of NERA members.

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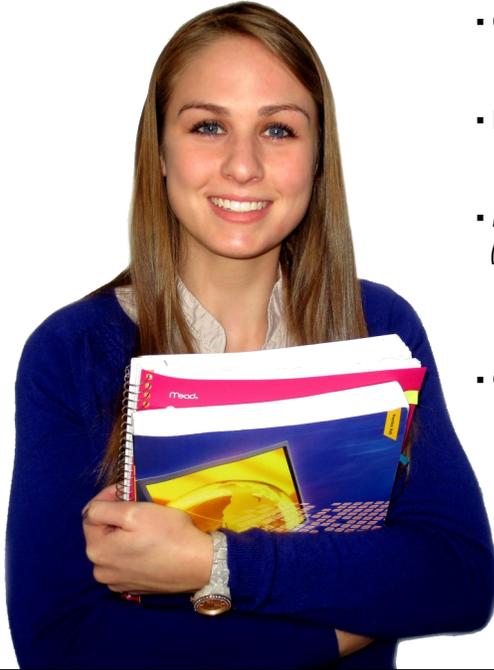
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2014 Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award For Outstanding Leadership and Service



The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award committee and the NERA Board are pleased to honor **Dr. Stephen Sireci** as the 2014 recipient of this prestigious award. The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is presented to a longstanding NERA member who “has generously given of self to NERA, to advance its mission and to enable it to thrive.” The award, instituted by the NERA Board of Directors in 1981, honors the memory of Leo Doherty who was instrumental in the development and growth of NERA as a professional association for educational research. His leadership qualities, both ethical and compassionate, encouraged others to pursue and achieve their goals. Thus, this award, not given annually, is presented to a NERA member who has exhibited outstanding leadership and service to our organization—an apt description of Steve’s more than 20 years as a member of NERA.

Steve is a Professor in the Research in Educational Measurement and Psychometrics (REMP) program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He attended his first NERA conference in 1990 and, since then, has been Program Chair (1996), Board Member (1996-1999), chair of many committees, and an active program participant as presenter, session chair, discussant, and panelist. Steve was elected president for 2006-2007.

In 2006 as president-elect, Steve chaired the site-selection committee that brought NERA to Connecticut—the beginning of an increase in attendance from 113, at the time, to 236, a number which has continued to grow each year.

While president, Steve further invigorated NERA membership by launching the new NERA website and introducing online registration and payment. He has been bringing graduate students to NERA since 1992; including our current president, Dr. April Zenisky and a former president and Doherty Award recipient, Dr. Kristen Huff. He has also brought such remarkable NERA members as: former president and Donlon award recipient, Dr. Thanos Patelis; former president, Dr. Lynn Shelley; current board member, Dr. Craig Wells, and former conference co-chair, Dr. Jennifer Randall, both from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

According to a colleague, “NERA is never far from Steve’s thoughts and words, in his conversations both at UMass and at professional meetings and other conferences. I have seen him time and again bring up NERA in a wide range of contexts, offering collaborations, suggesting ideas, and highlighting the advantages of coming to NERA for members both new and old, and far and wide (indeed, well beyond the Northeast, stretching even to international destinations such as British Columbia, Malaysia, and Spain — just to mention a few places where Steve has recruited for NERA).”

In addition to outstanding service to NERA, Steve has contributed an outstanding record of scholarship in the field. He is a fine scholar, who has published literally dozens of papers in the most important journals in the field: *Educational Researcher*, *the Journal of Educational Measurement*, and *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, and the like. He edited the electronic journal for the Association of Test Publishers, served as associate editor of the *International Journal of Testing*, currently co-edits that same journal, and serves on or has served on the editorial boards of a score of journals, including the journal, *Applied Measurement in Education*.

The list of Doherty Award recipients is a long and distinguished one, indeed. The addition of Dr. Stephen Sireci to that roster, by presenting him with the 2014 Leo D. Doherty Award, firmly and formally honors him for his generosity of self to NERA through his professional life, in the model of Leo Doherty.

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2014 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring

Dr. Lisa Keller, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Policy, Research, & Administration at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, is the 2014 Thomas F. Donlon Mentoring Award recipient.

In her 12 years at the University, Lisa's work in the Research Evaluation Methods Program (REMP) has engendered her to many students, faculty, and colleagues. Nomination letters reflect a common and compelling theme. She is an individual who is passionate about her work and dedicated to her students. She makes each person feel special and valued. As one nominator expressed, "She exemplifies what it means to be a true teacher, lifelong mentor, and selfless character."

As a teacher, Lisa is described as carefully customizing her instruction to meet every student's individual intellectual growth. As one letter states, "she is an extremely popular instructor among students of all backgrounds ...(and)...she effortlessly relates to her students, which in turn, helps her identify their strengths and weaknesses and tailor her instruction...her passion for her subject was, and always has been, contagious." In a similar vein, Professor Keller is noted for her "genuine interest in producing, guiding, and advising students to become intellectual thinkers." One nominator captured the essence of her style by saying "she brings real-world examples to the classroom and successfully utilizes the varied experiences and concentrations of her students to stretch their abilities, to apply learned methods to new situations, and to balance personal interests within the classroom."



Lisa's qualities as an exemplary teacher extend to her mentoring skills. "Lisa's care and concern for her students and the quality of her mentoring has become a constant refrain with the current students and recent graduates about how things are going at UMass." Another individual emphasized her supportive and nurturing style: "I can say with certainty that I would never have been a psychologist were it not for her guidance, encouragement, and friendship. For this, I owe her a great debt."

Many letters noted Lisa's ability to powerfully connect her teaching, advising, and mentoring, personalized for each student. "What distinguishes Professor Keller from other scholars and mentors ...is her deep investment, not only in the products produced by her students but also her investment in their personal development..."; another individual echoed this perspective: "Professor Keller's approach to teaching and advising encourages students to think through problems and develop possible solutions independently, not in place of providing feedback, but by coaching and shaping further thought on the topic." As one nominator indicated, "as an advisee, you will get a phone call or an email asking you about your progress and whether you need any additional support." "Her approach and general attitude sets Professor Keller apart from many, as she takes an active role in modeling self-reliance and confidence." Many supporters shared their experiences as Lisa followed their careers post-graduation: "Professor Keller made it clear that her mentoring did not end when I graduated, ...while I always knew she would be 'in my corner', I never expected such continued and specific support." Her mentoring always includes supporting students and colleagues in their professional advancement; "Lisa's mentoring ...includes giving advice about teaching, publishing research, and work/life balance...I could not have asked for a better friend and advisor." Extending this plethora of comments is the following summation: "With Professor Keller, you have a mentor and friend for life."

Professor Keller's personal attributes were noted by all who wrote to support her: "Her personal character should not be left uncommended...her interpersonal skills are such that everyone she works with feels valued." As noted by a supporter: "Though Professor Keller is certainly a gifted teacher and is eager to share her knowledge with students, her gifts extend far beyond the classroom. (She) has been instrumental in developing a professional community and collegial environment among both her own advisees and all the students in the ...program. Her professional attitude, positivity, and perseverance set her apart from (others) I have worked with...and her high expectations and supportive attitude have shaped my approach to my professional identity. I am fortunate to have such a mentor and role model in both my personal and professional life."

Lisa continues to touch the lives of so many, in significant and far-reaching ways. She understands and acts on the true meaning of mentoring, extending herself to support others in their personal and professional growth and development. In this regard, Lisa demonstrates her ability to encourage, motivate and support students and colleagues, alike. As one nominator declared, "It is absolutely a pleasure to support Dr. Keller's nomination for this award – she is a tremendous mentor, ...generous with her time, energy, and wisdom."

Congratulations to you, Lisa, for your mentoring and commitment to your students and colleagues!

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Ensuring Equality of Opportunity: The Role of Education and Research

2014 NERA Presidential Address

John W. Young, Ph.D.

Introduction

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor,
it cannot save the few who are rich."

- President John F. Kennedy,
Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

These words were spoken more than fifty years ago, but they are as true today as they were then. The theme for this conference and for my talk is equality of opportunity, a topic that has been in the news a great deal over the past year. But this has been a topic of personal and professional interest for me for much longer than that. Inequality in the United States has now become so extreme that it is damaging our economy; according to the International Monetary Fund, high inequality in this country is slowing our economic growth. Furthermore, many health outcomes, everything from life expectancy to infant mortality to obesity, can be linked to the level of economic inequality within a given population. It is not surprising that poverty and poor health go hand-in-hand. But high levels of inequality negatively affect the health of even the affluent, mainly because, researchers say, inequality reduces social cohesion, which leads to more stress, fear, and insecurity for everyone. Epidemiological studies show that people who live in economically unequal places live harder lives, not just poor people in those societies but everyone. But, at the most fundamental level, we should recognize that extreme inequality is a waste of human resources as low-income families and students are denied the opportunities to fully realize their talents and skills.

Most importantly, some believe that inequality of opportunity threatens the very foundations of our democracy. Democracy in America is not just one citizen, one vote, but a promise of equal opportunity. Economic and educational inequality has given rise to a system of political inequality, where the wealthy and the well-connected are sometimes able to exert corrupting influences and operate under a different set of legal and societal rules from the rest of us. Thus, we should all be very concerned about the insidious effects of the inequalities of opportunity on our society and we should consider what we can do to ensure equality of opportunities for all.

Therefore, what I would like to do is to describe for you the state of economic and educational inequality that exists in the United States today; to discuss the role of education in reducing inequalities of opportunity; to advance an agenda for research from birth to age 25 that will help to reduce inequality; to provide several examples

of highly effective, yet inexpensive programs; and to conclude with some final thoughts on this topic.

Economic and Educational Inequality Today

By some economic measures, we are now living in unprecedented times. Among the developed countries of the world, the United States is currently the most unequal place on earth in terms of the distributions of income and wealth. Not only is the United States the most inequitable society among industrialized countries, it is now the most inequitable it has ever been in our country's history. One of the most influential books of this decade is likely to be "Capital in the 21st Century" by French economist, Thomas Piketty. In his book, he reports that almost all of the gains in income in the U. S. during the past decade have gone to workers in the top 10% of the salary distribution. In 2012, the top 10% of U. S. workers took home more than half of this country's total income, the highest level ever recorded since the federal government began collecting this data a century ago. In contrast, during the past 15 years, the median household income, the very definition of being a member of the American middle class, has declined by almost 9%.

But disparities in income pale when compared with the disparities in wealth that exist in the United States. Today, the wealthiest 1% of Americans is now worth more than the entire bottom 90% combined. Here is an even more extreme example: Currently, the wealthiest family in the United States is the Walton family, the descendants of Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart. According to Forbes magazine, the six heirs to the Walmart fortune are estimated to be worth more than \$150 billion, or as much as the bottom 42% of all Americans combined. Think about that for a moment: These six individuals have more wealth than 130 million of our fellow citizens. Yet, in stark contrast, we have the highest child poverty rate among all industrialized countries, with nearly one in four children living in poverty, and many communities where that proportion is more than one in three. A recent UNICEF report found that the United States is among the worst countries in the world when the health, education and well-being of its poorest children are measured against its median. And yet the long-term global forces that are creating ever greater inequality seem to be accelerating rather than weakening.

Economic mobility in the United States has also declined. More than eighty years ago, the phrase, "the American dream," was first used to describe the possibility that

one could overcome the economic and social barriers caused by the circumstances of one's birth. But today, studies show that a child born in the bottom 20% economically is less likely to rise to the top in America than a child of similar socioeconomic background in Europe. The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz, noted in a recent speech that, "America has become the advanced country not only with the highest level of inequality, but one of those with the least equality of opportunity."

One form of economic inequality is reflected in the widening gulf in income between college-educated workers and those without a four-year degree. A study published two years ago by Avery and Turner found that the "earnings premium", the difference in total income over the course of a lifetime, between having a four-year degree versus not, was nearly \$600,000 for men and about \$370,000 for women. Over the past fifty years, the real weekly earnings for those with a post-graduate degree have nearly doubled while barely changing for high school graduates, particularly for men.

The differences in earnings between college graduates and those without degrees would not be of concern if access to higher education and college completion rates were uniformly high for all demographic groups. However, we know that among the major educational problems we face today are the low rates of college attendance and completion, especially for students from low-income families. So even as the overall share of Americans entering and completing college has increased, the disparity in college attendance and graduation across income groups has grown larger. Among Americans who are now in their early thirties and from families in the highest income quartile, 80% went on to higher education, and of those, more than 50% completed a four-year degree. In contrast, if you came from the lowest income quartile, the corresponding figures are not as encouraging. Of these individuals, less than 30% went on to higher education and only 30% of those who did, completed a four-year degree.

Some colleges, such as Vassar, Grinnell, and Smith have succeeded in increasing the number of students from low-income families who attend, but in general, at the nation's most selective colleges and universities, low-income students are only slightly more likely to enroll than they were a generation ago. It is clear to me, then, that the most direct solutions to the profound disparities caused by inequality of opportunities are those that can produce sustained levels of human capital development across all segments of our society, particularly through increased educational attainment, specifically into higher education and beyond.

The Role of Education in Reducing Inequality

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

- President Nelson Mandela,
University of the Witwatersrand, July 16, 2003

What then are the potential solutions to the pervasive and persistent barriers to equality of opportunity? Not surprisingly, many of the best solutions are based on improving the quality and increasing the quantity of education that all of our students receive. Now, it is true that for the past 60 years, U. S. research universities have been the very best in the world. The current Times Higher Education World University rankings include four U. S. universities among the world's top five and 18 of the world's top 25 universities are in the United States. Unfortunately, however, the overwhelming majority of American students are not enrolled at these top universities and the knowledge and skills of these students are less than stellar. In fact, international comparisons show how poorly the United States compares against other advanced countries. A recent report from OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, found that for those in the age group of 16 to 24, Americans ranked last among rich countries in numeracy and technological proficiency. The United States once led the world in the percentage of adults finishing college but that is no longer true, and many of the students that now graduate from college are ill-prepared for the global competition of the 21st century.

This report also points to another disturbing trend, and that is the persistent and growing gap in the test scores between the rich and poor. Among 15-year-old test-takers, socioeconomic background explains 15% of the variation in performance among American students, a much higher percentage than in high-achieving countries such as Finland, Japan and Norway. Currently, the life prospects of an American child are more dependent on the education and income of his or her parents than for children in almost any other advanced country. The report also notes that, "socioeconomic disadvantage translates more directly into poor educational performance in the United States than is true in many other countries." Today, the achievement gap between students from poor and wealthy families is twice as large as the gap between African-American and White students. As a result, low-income students still drop out of high school at about the same rate as a generation ago.

Clearly, then, unless the current trends in educational attainment are reversed, the problems of inequality are likely to become even worse. What then can we do, as educational researchers, to try to solve the problems caused by inequality and to increase equality of opportunity for all? Let me now turn to the next two portions of my talk, to articulate an agenda for research and to describe some highly effective, yet affordable, programs that show promise but are in need of further research and evidence of effectiveness.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

An Agenda for Research: Birth to Age 25

“All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop those talents.”

- President John F. Kennedy,

Commencement Address at San Diego State College,
June 6, 1963

As educators and researchers, what is it that we can offer? What we can contribute to the efforts to reduce inequality is research that will increase the likelihood of equality of opportunity for all children, students, and citizens. Thus, what I am proposing is an agenda for educational research to cover the lifespan from birth to age 25. The cognitive and non-cognitive demands of school and of the workplace continue to increase dramatically. By one estimate, the majority of today’s elementary school students will work in occupations that have yet to be created. In order for our students to succeed, we need to prepare them for jobs that do not yet exist, using technology that has yet to be invented, to solve problems that have yet to be identified. But the burden for their success cannot all be placed on early childhood education and the early years of schooling. The preparations for success for students and workers need to cover approximately the first one-third of life, from birth to age 25, because it is those high levels of education and training that are required for success in the 21st century.

To organize the research needed across this 25-year span, it is useful to think of the important transition points that occur during this time frame. From birth to preschool, research should focus on the theories and practices that will enhance children’s cognitive and social-emotional development, which in turn, will ensure that they are adequately prepared for schooling and lifelong learning. In the elementary and middle school years, research should focus on the theories and practices that will ensure that all students are able to develop mastery of content, and as importantly, can learn how best to learn. The transition to high school can be difficult for many students, particularly for students who attend schools in large and impersonal settings. Here, the research should concentrate on identifying ways to best prepare students for the challenges of higher education. This includes academic preparation but also the development of traits such as motivation and resilience that become increasingly important as one transitions into adulthood.

In colleges and universities, we need to develop a better understanding of how best to prepare students for the workforce and graduate school. What are the skills and competencies that students need to be successful in the 21st century? And how can we ensure that all graduates are well-prepared for an ever-changing work environment or to succeed in graduate school? As a measurement specialist focusing on higher education, I clearly see

an urgent need for identifying and assessing the skills of successful students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. But, just as importantly, we also need effective and sound interventions for those students who are not fully-prepared for higher education, so that they are provided with the resources necessary to succeed in college and beyond.

Examples of Effective Programs

Taking this research agenda, which focuses on the first 25 years of life, and translating it into concrete actions is challenging. Fortunately, however, high quality, low cost programs already exist that have shown promise in increasing human capacity in one form or another. Let me briefly describe some of these programs. Remember that there is a critical need for educational researchers to conduct rigorous studies that can provide evidence about the efficacy of these programs on a large-scale basis and for different groups of individuals.

We can actually begin even before birth: Several recent studies confirm that fish is indeed brain food. Greater fish intake among pregnant women has been shown to be associated with better child cognitive test performance. However, large-scale studies like the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children in Bristol, England are observational in nature. We do not yet know the effectiveness of interventions designed to increase the consumption of seafood among pregnant women and the effects on their children’s development, particularly since there are some known risks in certain types of seafood.

Next, we know that infant brain development is greatly improved through high-quality verbal interactions with parents and caregivers. According to one study, a child from a high-income family will experience 30 million more words within the first four years of life than a child from a low-income family. “Too Small to Fail” is a program designed to encourage mothers to engage their young children in conversation. It is currently being used in Providence, Rhode Island and is aimed at that city’s poorest residents in order to reduce the knowledge gap long before children even begin school. But we do not yet know how well this program works for families at other income levels or for bi-lingual children.

The Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland have been experimenting with an early warning indicator system that potentially can identify students as early as first grade that are in danger of dropping out of high school. Their research shows that first-grade students who have high absentee rates, are suspended multiple times, or score below grade level in reading and/or mathematics, are much more likely to drop out of high school later on. But, at present, we do not yet know how well these early warning indicators function in other types of school districts. Similarly, researchers at the Stanford Graduate School of Education are working with eight California

school districts to adopt new measures of student success. In addition to traditional academic indicators, the School Quality Improvement System evaluates social and emotional indicators of success, since research shows that personal qualities such as conscientiousness and resilience are good predictors of future success.

The summer achievement gap is another area in need of rigorous research; many studies show that low-income students suffer learning loss during the summer months, primarily because of an increase in television viewing and a decrease in conversations with adults. The National Summer Learning Association collects information on research documenting the learning loss among low-income students. However, little is known about the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce or eliminate the summer achievement gap.

Another type of intervention is a school-community partnership known as Communities in Schools, which has been in existence for nearly 40 years and currently serves more than one million students. Communities in Schools engage community partners and volunteers to address the academic and human services needs of students. A national evaluation found that the program leads to improved attendance and fewer behavioral problems as well as higher retention and graduation rates. But, at present, not enough is known about how the different components of this program effect change among students and how effectively this program would work among schools with different demographic compositions.

The last program I would like to mention is Expanding College Opportunities, with which our ACT and College Board colleagues are probably familiar. Expanding College Opportunities is a collaborative research initiative involving a number of highly selective universities, ACT, and the College Board. As I mentioned earlier, one of the main problems we face today is that low-income students are not attending and graduating from selective four-year colleges and universities in high enough numbers. Students who enroll in more selective institutions have access to greater educational resources, are more likely to graduate, and to become leaders in their field. High-achieving students from low-income families do not apply to or enroll in selective colleges and universities at the same rates as similarly qualified students from wealthy families, because these students often do not have access to the same information and cultural capital regarding higher education. Additionally, other research shows that students who graduate from selective institutions are more likely to succeed, on a variety of dimensions, in graduate school.

Expanding College Opportunities provides high-achieving, low-income students with semi-customized information on the college application process and the net costs of higher education as well as fee waivers. A randomized experiment by Hoxby and Turner found that this

intervention, which costs only about \$6 per student, led to significantly more of these students to apply, be accepted into, and enroll at selective colleges and universities than similar students who were in a control group. More importantly, these students are earning similar grades and persisting at similar rates as they would if they had attended less selective colleges and universities. Replications of the Hoxby and Turner study are needed as well as longitudinal studies that inform us of the long-term benefits and outcomes of this program.

Conclusions

To conclude, I hope that I have convinced you that inequality of opportunity in this country is one of the most serious problems that we face today. I also hope that you have found this talk to be informative and inspirational, as your skills and talents are needed to find solutions to the inequalities that we see all around us now. As educators and researchers, we can and should contribute our efforts to increasing the likelihood of equality of opportunity for all children, students, and citizens. Positive change means a quality education for all of our students, particularly for those from low-income families, one that prepares them well for higher education and beyond. This needs to be accompanied by rigorous research that informs about the theories and programs that will lead to better-prepared students and workers.

Let me leave you with one last quote, this one from Charles Vest, the former president of MIT, who said, "The enemy I fear most is complacency. We are about to be hit by the full force of global competition. If we continue to ignore the obvious task at hand, our children and grandchildren will pay the price." So, unless we act, the global forces that are already in place will lead us to a future of even greater inequality of opportunity.



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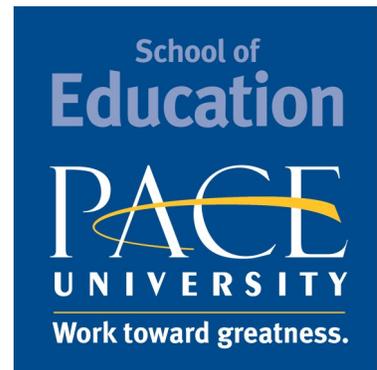
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NERA has a (New) Plan!

On behalf of NERA's Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, I am pleased to share the 2014 NERA Strategic Plan with our membership. This significant update to the previous Strategic Plan, provided in its entirety below, was developed to outline NERA's goals in the areas of Strategic Operations and Strategic Ambitions, and the ideas presented here offer NERA leadership guidance in planning for the future.

The 2014 Strategic Plan was developed by the 2013-2014 Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of Barbara Helms, Kristen Huff, David Moss, Thanos Patelis, and Lynn Shelley (Chairperson). I am grateful for the tremendous amount of work and the careful reflection on NERA past, present, and future that went into the development of this document by the committee.

The 2014-2015 Strategic Planning Committee (Chair John Young, Barbara Helms, Kristen Huff, Thanos Patelis, Darlene Perner, David Moss) is currently working with NERA's leadership to identify ways by which the goals of this Plan can be put into practice through governance policies and association activities. You'll note that our membership has already passed the constitutional change recommended by the committee at the October 2014 Business Meeting, where a vote was held to allow for electronic voting for constitutional changes.

If members have any comments, questions, or thoughts about NERA's Strategic Plan, I encourage you to contact me (NERA President April Zenisky) at azenisky@educ.umass.edu. I look forward to engaging in conversations with you about NERA!

NERA Strategic Plan 2014

Mission

The mission of the Northeastern Educational Research Association is to encourage and promote educational research by:

- Sponsoring an annual conference at which formal presentations, feedback, and professional interchange about research occurs.
- Promoting the sharing of professional information through publications and other types of communications.
- Encouraging the development of research expertise among junior researchers.

Strategic Operations

These are needed for a healthy and viable NERA.

Goal 1: Support and promote high quality educational research.

In order to meet this objective, we will:

- Maintain an annual conference where members can share high quality peer reviewed research.
- Ensure that the organization encourages the use of various research methods and the study of diverse populations.
- Encourage and support collaborative relationships across institutions, disciplines, and career levels to advance educational research.
- Continue to honor and bestow awards for outstanding research and leaders in the field.

Goal 2: Keep members up to date on emerging trends and issues in the field of educational research.

In order to meet this objective, we will:

- Maintain an annual conference where members have numerous opportunities to share expertise and learn from each other (both formally and informally) and from invited keynote speakers and panelists.
- Provide members with professional development workshops.
- Provide NERA members with regular publications and other types of communications, such as *The NERA Researcher*, and social media.
- Make NERA resources available to the membership and public (e.g., post videotaped special sessions, workshops, keynotes, and webinars; encourage members to upload accepted work to Digital Commons).

Goal 3: Develop and nurture the future leaders of the field of education, and encourage current leaders to interact with and mentor junior NERA members.

In order to meet this objective, we will:

- Maintain, or expand membership in terms of numbers and breadth.
- Reinvigorate outreach to current and past NERA members to ensure continuity in a diverse membership and the inclusion of leaders representing various disciplines in education.
- Maintain a welcoming and nurturing environment for graduate students by having an active and supportive Graduate Student Issues Committee whose chair serves on the NERA board.
- Foster an environment of mutual trust and respect which enables current and future members to easily and comfortably exchange information and develop partnerships.
- Provide members with opportunities for mentoring, career development and participation in NERA's inclusive governance.
- Create opportunities to identify and promote new leadership, administrative expertise, and increase diversity among NERA members and in the field of educational research.

Goal 4: Maintain an effective, financially viable professional organization with inclusive governance.

In order to meet this objective, we will:

- Ensure a robust membership. Maintain or grow current membership.
- Maintain the services provided to our members, and encourage the enhancement and adaptation of these services as technology changes.
- Continue to support NERA's current institutional members.
- Seek additional academic and corporate sponsors of the conference and ones in support of the organization.

Strategic Ambitions

These are suggested to move NERA forward.

Goal 5: Purposely cultivate leadership.

In order to meet this objective, we could:

- Charge each board member with identifying one individual to target for potential leadership.
- Encourage board members to take on leadership tasks and develop initiatives.
- Encourage development among committee chairs and members.
- Target graduate students and professionals at the beginning of their careers to educate and cultivate their leadership skills, thus preparing them for leadership roles in the field of educational research and within NERA.
- Provide a non- or pre/post-conference leadership meeting.

Goal 6: Begin formal outreach to other professional organizations.

In order to meet this objective, we could:

- Work with other SRERA organizations to establish cooperative relationships and events such as conferences, webinars, and publications (e.g., referred journal).
- Reach out to AERA for advice and connections with their central office.

Goal 7: Increase internationalization and/or broaden stakeholder (e.g., state and district leaders) participation in NERA.

In order to meet this objective we will:

- Provide workshops at the conference, as well as outside of the conference. This could create a small revenue stream for NERA.
- Explore webinars and other technological means of disseminating NERA activities.
- Encourage NERA members to join research networks (e.g., Research Gate and Academic.edu) to post their NERA papers.
- Provide the option for an electronic vote if a change in the constitution is needed prior to the annual general meeting.

Submitted by the 2013 NERA Strategic Planning Committee: Barbara Helms, Kristen Huff, David Moss, Thanos Patelis, Lynn Shelley (Chairperson)

Revisions by the 2014 NERA Board completed April 22, 2014

Approved by the 2014 NERA Board on --May 19, 2014



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NERA Communications Committee Report

Jonathan Steinberg
Educational Testing Service

Hello NERA Members! It was great to see and meet so many of you at the recent annual conference, and I hope you will consider staying involved and attend again next year. As the new calendar year begins, the Communications Committee will be rolling out some changes, some of which I would like to share with all of you.

First, as I mentioned during the conference, I have asked Bo Bashkov, current *NERA Researcher* Co-Editor, to handle posting of NERA content on our social media sites. This has already had immediate positive impact for informing the membership of upcoming events and learning opportunities. We will be establishing a coordinator role to handle all e-mail communications that need to be sent and Joshua Marland, one of our current committee members, has agreed to take this on. Tia Sukin in her supporting role for the committee has agreed to coordinate the posting of content on the NERA website.

A second and related planned change is to change the current e-mail request form into a general request form and migrate this to the NERA website. This will allow committee chairs, conference co-chairs, the NERA President, and others who may need to send communications and post content to access this form from a centralized location. More will be coming out about this soon.

Finally, I want to announce that Jeanne Horst from James Madison University will be taking over as the new committee chair starting in January. She has been actively involved with the committee since she joined, so I know she will do a great job. I was happy to run things for the last two years and I will continue to serve on the committee in a supporting role. We hope you will consider joining us as we would like to have back-up support for our committee members and strengthen our internal committee pipeline. As always, if you have any suggestions about how the Communications Committee can better serve you as NERA members, please feel free to contact Jeanne at horstsj@jmu.edu.

Jonathan Steinberg
Immediate Past Chair, Communications Committee

This year we had two winners of our "Bring-A-Friend" program, Dr. Jess Gregory from Southern Connecticut State University, who brought the most new members, and Dr. Steve Sireci from University of Massachusetts Amherst, who brought the most new graduate students. Congratulations to them and thanks so much to everyone who participated in the program!

We partnered with the Ambassador Committee this year in the annual conference to reach out to new members. We identified ourselves as "ambassadors", wearing brightly colored lanyards throughout the conference. It was a great experience to get to know new members and help them integrate into the NERA family faster.

For the upcoming year, we have three new members joining the committee: Andrew Wiley from Alpine Testing, Tabitha McKinley from the New Jersey Department of Education, and Francis Rick from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. We are excited to have them and look forward to their great work in 2015. Meanwhile, three members are completing their service and leaving the committee: Jennifer Merriman from College Board, Whitney Zimmerman from the Pennsylvania State University, and Kara Smith from College Board. We are very grateful for their important contributions to the committee during their service. Lastly, we are particularly thankful to Darlene Perner for her valuable support and contribution as a broad liaison during the past year.

Jason Kopp,
Immediate Past Chair, Membership
Committee

Nina Deng,
Incoming Chair, Membership
Committee

Membership Data Report

In 2014, we had 412 people join NERA or renew their membership, with 368 members attending our conference. This marks a significant increase from 2013, when 346 people comprised the NERA membership with 322 attending. Graduate student membership also increased substantially, from 113 in 2013 to 174 in 2014. Overall, these numbers show excellent growth and highlight the great work by the conference team to promote NERA.

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NERA Ambassadors Committee Report

Rochelle S. Michel
Educational Testing Service

Greetings to my fellow NERA members!

First, I would like to thank everyone who served as a NERA Conference Ambassador for the 2014 Annual Conference (Jason Kopp, Nina Deng, Jessica Flake, Teresa King, Kate Marino, Darlene Perner, Cathy Wendler, and Whitney Zimmerman). This year we had a significant increase in the number of new members, as well as the number of total meeting attendees. The volunteers who served on this committee helped to make the 2014 Conference a huge success!

If you attended the 2014 Conference, you may have spotted us around the conference with our brightly colored lanyards. For 2014, the NERA Conference Ambassadors Committee's primary responsibilities were to:

- Email new conference attendees, welcoming them to NERA and the 2014 Conference. This provided us with an opportunity to make a personal connection with new conference attendees, so that they were able to start the conference with a NERA contact, outside of their existing network.
- Serve as a resource throughout the conference, welcoming new members and conference attendees into their "NERA circle," in addition to introducing them to other NERA conference attendees.
- Enjoy meals and social events with new members, while sharing information about their experiences within the NERA organization.

While the NERA Conference Ambassadors Committee is currently an ad-hoc committee, with time, I hope that this committee will become an integral, long-standing committee within NERA (We're working on that!). In the meantime, I again want to thank all of those who volunteered their time in support of the committee. These networking activities are beneficial to the new members, returning conference attendees, as well as the ambassadors themselves. I hope that when the call for volunteers goes out for the 2015 Conference, you will accept the call to serve NERA and join us. See you at the 2015 Conference, if not sooner.

Respectfully,

Rochelle S. Michel
Chair, NERA Conference Ambassadors Committee
NERA Board of Directors

The NERA Infrastructure Committee would like to welcome Amanda Soto of the National Board of Medical Examiners, Patrick Meyer of the University of Virginia, and Masha Bertling of Educational Testing Service to our committee this year. We look forward to the valuable contributions that they will make to the committee's work. Over the past year, the Infrastructure Committee was excited to establish new innovative technology to manage NERA's website, proposal management system, e-mail distribution system, and membership database. This year, the committee plans to build upon this work to help the NERA community.

The 2015 Infrastructure Committee is beginning to work on the various tasks we plan to accomplish including:

- Using feedback from our first year of working with Vieth Consulting to improve various pieces of our infrastructure system in order to make the membership and conference registration processes more efficient.
- Working with Vieth Consulting to finalize their customized NERA program development system.
- Comparing numerous payment gateway options to see if alternatives to PayPal may be more beneficial to NERA.

These tasks will help improve NERA's infrastructure and have a lasting impact on the organization.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to reach out to me at sholtzman@ets.org.

Thank you,
Steven Holtzman
NERA Infrastructure Committee Chair

NERA 2014 Business Meeting Wrap-up

Mary E. Yakimowski
Sacred Heart University

We had a super productive annual business meeting on Friday, the 24th of October, in conjunction with the NERA Annual Conference. The meeting was facilitated by President John Young. A synthesis of the comments of the meeting is presented below, and the minutes of this meeting will be presented and voted on at the January 2015 meeting of the Board.

President-Elect April Zenisky provided an overview of the four proposed modifications to the Constitution in order to make the rules clearer and/or to clarify what is currently happening. Zenisky shared that the Constitution is meant to be a resource for NERA members. Among the modifications were that it is the selection committee, not the Board, who makes the decision of the location for the NERA conference. Additionally, the electronic vehicles for communication, and reduction in costs (distributing materials via first class mail) could be realized. The participants voted affirmatively on each of the four amendments.

Javarro Russell and Pamela Kaliski, the NERA Conference 2014 Team serving with Ross Markle, announced that the 2014 Conference was one of the largest in the history of NERA. A survey was disseminated for all those in attendance to provide feedback, especially since this was the first time at the Marriott in Trumbull, CT.

The Nominations Committee Report, provided by the chair, Darlene Perner, extended appreciation to the five other members of the committee (Helms, Huff, Moss, Patelis, Shelley). There were a total of 23 nominees, in what is believed a record nominations season. She also thanked all who ran on the slate for President-Elect, Secretary, and the Board. Charles DePascale will now be the President-Elect, Carol Barry and Felice Billups were elected to the Board, and Mary Yakimowski was elected Secretary.

President Young shared appreciation for the Awards Committees (Thomas Donlon Mentoring Award, Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award, Teacher-as-Researcher Award, and Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguish Paper Award committee members for their service).

The Membership Committee, according to Chair Jason Kopp, implemented a number of initiatives this year, one of which was "bring a new member to NERA." Most noteworthy was that over 100 new members joined.

In the Communications Committee Report, Chair Jonathan Steinberg announced that there will now be coordinators for social media and e-mail, and that Jeanne Horst will now be taking the lead. Additionally, Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) Chair Kristen Smith provided updates from the GSIC and noted the web presence, the special presentation by Michael Kane, a record number gathering, and then encouraged submission of student papers for the distinguished paper award. She thanked the other six committee members (Fisher, Wang, Newton, Pinder, Harris, and Gerstner).

The Board liaison to *The NERA Researcher*, Rochelle Michel, shared that this publication is transitioning to all online. Going fully online will reduce costs and add flexibility. President Young then noted that he was pleased of Ellina Chernobilsky's service as Diversity Committee Chair, as this committee was inactivate for the last few years. Chernobilsky began her report thanking the other three committee members (Crouse, Randall, and Terrwilliger). With the Board's guidance, they created a statement and are now working to draft an action plan.

Nine individuals served as Conference Ambassadors, according to Chair Rochelle Michel. Michel thanked those individuals serving as ambassadors and the Membership Committee for all of their efforts.

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

The treasurer, Elizabeth Stone, indicated that 287 individuals (as of the last Saturday) were at the conference, and that there were 376 paid members. This included 247 professionals, and 120 students. The total income, to date, was \$46,705. A total of

\$5,493 was spent for infrastructure, \$2,261 for operating expenses, \$765 for Board insurance, \$736 for *The NERA Researcher*, and \$500 for awards. She explained that the most expenses are generated as part of this conference. At the time of the business meeting, the total "cash" was \$60,367, and about \$30,000 in expenses will be incurred from the conference.

President Young was then presented the "Past President" pin and acknowledged for having a vision and always "making it happen." In turn, President Young shared his appreciation of the support from the membership and jokingly announced that he would wait a year to sell the pin on eBay. Finally, Zenisky shared her belief that the 2014 Conference Committee set new standards as she introduced the 2015 Conference Co-Chairs: Kimberly Colvin, Katrina Roohr, and Amanda Soto. Zenisky promised to announce the theme (collaborative partnerships) at the lunch this afternoon.

Mary E. Yakimowski
Incoming Secretary

Teacher-as-Researcher Award Committee Update

Salika Lawrence
St. John's University

The committee consists of six members, two returning and four new members (indicated below).
Welcome to our new members!

Salika A. Lawrence, chair – St. John's University – Lawrens1@stjohns.edu

Francine Falk-Ross – Pace University – ffalkross@pace.edu

Irene VanRiper (new member) – William Paterson University – vanriperi@wpunj.edu

Kate Zimmerbaum (new member) – Caldwell College, NERA 2014 TAR Winner – kzimmerbaum@ctsd.k12.nj.us

Konstantina Tsiokris (new member) – St. John's University Doctoral Student – konstantina.tsiokris07@my.stjohns.edu

Lisa Bajor (new member) - St. John's University Doctoral Student - lisa.bajor12@my.stjohns.edu

2014 TAR Winner - Kate Zimmerbaum, an 8th grade Language Arts Teacher

Her research question was "Will the Introduction of a Critical Questioning Technique and the Toulmin Model Improve the Argumentative Essay Writing Scores of Students in an Eighth Grade English Language Arts Class?"

The study explored students' ability to examine and analyze data in order to come to conclusions for argumentative writing. The teacher-researcher implemented instruction in a critical questioning strategy and the Toulmin model of argument in order to help nine eighth-grade English language arts students develop the requisite skills to develop logical, reasoned arguments based on analysis of data. Over a six week period, students read a number of texts in a variety of genres and developed written arguments in response to their readings. It is suggested that this approach to teaching argumentative writing can increase student proficiency in producing well-reasoned arguments. Data were collected through pre- and posttest writing scores and a simple scaled student attitudinal survey. The results of this study indicated that critical questioning strategies and the Toulmin model can, indeed, be an effective strategy when trying to improve the quality of students' argumentative writing.



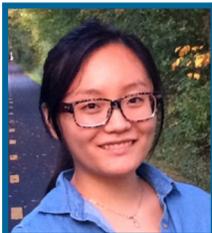
The Graduate Lounge

Xi Wang

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Our Mission: The mission of the Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) is to support the involvement and professional development of NERA graduate student members and to reach out to new graduate students to increase diversity of institutions represented at NERA.

New Members: The Graduate Students Issues Committee (GSIC) has elected five new members: Hongyu Diao, Joshua Marland, Kate Marino, Thai Ong, and Elisabeth Pyburn! Welcome to the GSIC!



Hongyu Diao is a first year doctoral student in the Research, Educational Measurement, and Psychometrics Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her current research interests include multistage-adaptive testing, Item Response Theory, and educational data mining analysis.



Kate Marino is a third-year doctoral student in Penn State's educational psychology program with a minor in statistics. Her current research interests involve investigating the consequences of ignoring multilevel data structure on factor analytic and IRT models, as well as projects concerning international assessments and instrument validation.



Joshua Marland is in his second year of the Research in Educational Measurement and Psychometrics program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His research interests are in K-12 accountability systems and measures, with a focus on growth and mixed models.



Thai Ong is a first year masters student in the Psychological Sciences Program (Quantitative Concentration) at James Madison University. His current research interests include factor analysis of change scores, longitudinal data analysis, and instrument development.



Elisabeth Pyburn is a second year masters student in the Psychological Sciences Program (Quantitative Concentration) at James Madison University. Her research interests include scale development, measurement, mixture modeling, and cluster analysis.

Summary of Results from the 2014 NERA Graduate Student Survey: This year, we received nine responses to the GSIC survey. The feedback we received on the survey is helping us plan the GSIC sponsored in-conference sessions for the 2015 conference and the GSIC student social. Here are two highlights from the survey:

- We received positive feedback about both GSIC in-conference sessions: "Validity & Fairness: An Interview with Dr. Michael Kane" and "Creating and Maintaining a Professional Web Presence".
- We also received positive feedback about the GSIC student social. Some respondents suggested we plan some events at the social so that students from different institutions can better make connections to each other.

Call for New GSIC Members

Serving on the GSIC is a great way to get involved with NERA and build relationships with other graduate students! GSIC members collaborate with students from various institutions to plan GSIC-sponsored sessions and events. New members are selected each year after the NERA Conference.

For more information on how to apply and get involved, please contact: neragraduatestudents@gmail.com.

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