

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

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# The NERA Researcher

Volume 46, Issue 4

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## The President's Message



**Kristin Huff**

### A New ERA for NERA

As I consider what to pen for my first NERA presidential message, I'm flooded with a profound sense of hope and enthusiasm about our organization and what we can do to support and further our mission to *encourage and promote quality educational research and to create a venue for experienced and new researchers*. It sounds simple doesn't it? But NERA always has and always will rely upon the time, energy, thoughtfulness and innovation of its members and volunteers to make this organization a dynamic, worthwhile, and beloved endeavor. And it is the membership –

both current and potential – that is the source of my hope and enthusiasm. This is why I must start my first message by noting how deeply grateful I am to the 2008 Executive Committee, Board and Program Chairs for their superb and unprecedented achievements. To name just two: Through David's leadership and the Board's support, in 2008, NERA officially obtained our not-for-profit status. This was a tedious task that had been hanging in limbo for years, and now that it is done we can all breathe a sigh of relief. Second, through the tireless efforts of Helen, Tom and Meg, our 2008 Program Chairs, this year's conference saw a number of registrants – over 300 – that exceeded anything we've seen in collective memory. Bravo! The 2009 team has a tough act to follow, but I am confident that we can by leveraging the momentum we all witnessed in Rocky Hill just a few short weeks ago.

We've heard a lot about hope and setting new precedents these last few weeks, and regardless of political affiliation, one has to acknowledge the optimistic expectations that are ushering in the Obama-Biden administration. As educators, we don't need to be told by politicians, no matter how well-meaning, what work lies ahead for us in the coming years. However, I am pleased on what our new administration has chosen to focus for their education platform: *"Their vision for a 21st century education begins with demanding more reform and accountability, coupled with the resources needed to carry out that reform; asking parents to take responsibility for their children's success; and recruiting, retaining, and rewarding an army of new teachers to fill new successful schools that prepare our children for success in college and the workforce".* They will face many obstacles in obtaining the support and funding to carry out their vision, but no matter what their path, they – along with their adversaries – will turn to the evidence required to support their positions (at least we hope that they do). That's why educational research is so critical: Our work, in no small way, shapes the policies that directly impact our educational system, and, in turn, our future. It is this realization, I think, that sparks the fire of determination we see in the eyes of so many NERA members.

I feel strongly that it is NERA's job, as an organization, to kindle this spark -- in our new members as well as our more experienced membership. One way to ensure that our research is of the highest quality is to ensure that our annual conference -- our primary venue for exchanging ideas, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and building a shared understanding of the advances in our field -- is reflective of the region we

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Postcards From Oviedo Lynn M. Shelley

The 2008 annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association was a significant one for me and Steve. For the first time in our professional lives we were active members of the same organization – Steve was out-going NERA president, and I was on the Board of Directors. The conference was in a beautiful location, and we were surrounded by lots of friends – some of whom we have known since the last millennium when we were graduate students and were just starting to date, some friends made at our respective institutions, and of course our countless NERA friends.

Also accompanying us was our friend Professor Jose Padilla from the University of Granada. He spent his sabbatical in Amherst last semester. And in part, as a result of that friendship, we will spend spring semester 2009 in Spain. We will be in the northern part of the country, in Oviedo, but plan to visit Granada for several weeks.

In our interactions with NERA members, we frequently shared our plans for the spring. The responses were numerous, and varied. Why? With your kids?! Are you out of your mind? Do you speak Spanish? That sounds like a lot of work. I could never do that! What about your house? What will you do? What about your dog? I'm so jealous! Can I come?

Here are our responses to those questions: Why not? Yes, our three sons, aged 12, 8, and 5 will be joining us, and yes, we are crazy. You'd have to be slightly unbalanced to take three children to a foreign country where you don't speak the language. As of now, we have no idea where they'll go to school once there, nor do we know where we will live. Our host tells us

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### Thomas Donlon Mentoring Award

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### Teacher-as-Researcher Award

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he operates on "Latin Time," and everything will be settled once we get there. We have no idea who will house-sit for us – hopefully someone willing to watch our dog. Once there, our only plans are to read, write, relax, eat, and drink. You

are welcome to visit, but since we have no idea where we will be living, please make your own hotel reservations.

Wish us luck, and we'll let you know how it all goes in the next issue.

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

serve. To this end, we will continue the phenomenal outreach efforts of the 2008 team to include more representatives from the myriad northeastern schools of education that have yet to participate in NERA (or that haven't in quite some time). Also, with unanimous support from the Board, two task forces have been established: one led by Board member Thanos Patelis and one led by Steve Sireci. These task forces have been charged, respectively, with making actionable recommendations to the Board ways in which we can ensure that NERA membership is reflective of the northeast in terms of (1) consumers of educational research, such as district and state educational policy-makers, curriculum designers, and accountability/testing coordinators, etc. and (2) under-represented minorities who are researchers, faculty, students, and other practitioners. Stay tuned for periodic updates from these two task forces, and be sure to thank Thanos and Steve for undertaking such timely and important endeavors on behalf of NERA.

The theme of the 2009 conference is *Using Educational Research to Improve Student Learning for 40 Years, and Still Going Strong*. You'll be hearing a lot about this conference right here in the NERA Researcher from the 2009 Program Chairs Maureen Ewing, Elizabeth Stone, and Peter Swerdzewski, who have already been hard at work pulling together a terrific program for next year. Although we have big shoes to fill, we stand on the shoulders of giants.

With that, I'll close with wishes to you for a healthy, happy and productive new year.

<sup>1</sup>Downloaded on 11/10/08 from: [http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/education/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Education\\_Reform\\_Speech\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/education/Fact_Sheet_Education_Reform_Speech_FINAL.pdf)

**“we will continue the phenomenal outreach efforts of the 2008 team to include more representatives from the myriad northeastern schools of education that have yet to participate in NERA ”**

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**Message from the Editors**

Hello NERA Members! We hope that you enjoyed the recent NERA conference. In this issue of the *Researcher*, we share highlights and pictures from the conference that we hope you will enjoy. As we approach the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our organization, it is wonderful to see how much NERA has grown. At the conference, past-president David Moss gave an inspiring address that offered a challenge to change our organization from the “best kept secret in the northeast” to an organization that is visible and ready to lead in the public domain. We are looking forward to another great year under the leadership of our new NERA

President, Kristen Huff.

This issue honors the recent NERA award winners for the Teacher-as-Researcher award, the Leo D. Doherty award for outstanding leadership and service, and the Thomas F. Donlon award for distinguished mentoring. Congratulations to all of the winners for their hard work and service to NERA.

Also, look for information on our new NERA Diversity Task Force, and upcoming events for graduate students at NERA and AERA. NERA Board member Lynn Shelley gives us the first in a series of articles describing the Sireci family's upcoming sabbatical in Spain.

We are always looking for volunteers to write book reviews or education-related commentary for future issues. And as always, please don't hesitate to send us your thoughts and suggestions for improving the *Researcher*.

Best wishes for the upcoming holidays!

Jennifer and Kevin  
The Editors

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## Policy, Practice and Scholar Activism

By David Moss

(excerpts from the Presidential Address delivered October 23, 2008 at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association)

As an organization we do many things well, perhaps nothing more so than mentoring. We are a very special community of scholars who share many common values. We enjoy a long history of supporting our colleagues and friends across the professional continuum. In particular, we have made significant strides in supporting graduate students with recent changes to our conference registration policy – beginning with the 2008 annual meeting, any graduate student can attend NERA at no cost – including our methodological pre-session workshops. The Board and Officers of NERA acutely understand that strategically investing in our organization is necessary to meet our membership goals. Clearly, NERA members are our greatest asset as an organization.

Beyond mentoring, we have a well defined mission stating that we should promote the sharing of professional information through publications and other types of communications. Why did a previous generation of NERA members articulate this notion of disseminating information as central to our charge? In their forward-thinking stance, they understood that publication is a powerful means to impact policy and practice – an idea that is also central to our organizational mission. It helps bring purpose to research beyond the sharing of ideas and constructive feedback at our annual meeting.

NERA, like many institutions and organizations, is essentially a compartmentalized entity. We enjoy a remarkable depth of expertise across a wide range of areas – especially given our size. Interestingly, outsiders beyond educational research do not see nor understand the distinctions between the “measurement” folks and our “ethnographers.” Beyond that, they may not even understand why there is an educational research community in the first place. Rightly, individuals may inquire as to what are our value-added contributions to the larger field of education. We simply cannot afford to allow this lack of understanding to persist if we are to thrive as a community of scholars in the upcoming decades. Even given our compartmentalized nature we manage to share many common values,

such as mentoring, but beyond our current commonalities I propose that the notion of *scholar activism* can further serve to reach past our methodological distinctions and provide a much needed public face for NERA. To operationally define this idea I hark back to our mission of promoting the sharing of professional information through publications, and thus I propose the consideration of the idea a peer-reviewed journal sponsored by NERA.

The timing is perfect. There appeared to be a conspicuous lack of discourse regarding educational issues in the national election (although the election results portend a new day for education in America). Why did NERA not add its voice to the national stage during the election season? I am not advocating the endorsement of certain political parties or individual candidates, but we missed an opportunity to bring issues pertaining to equity and education to the forefront of public debate. An organizational research-based publication, such as a journal to be adopted by libraries and disseminated to policy makers, would have potentially afforded us the opportunity to have added our voice to the election milieu by sharing our relevant and timely research, editorials, and the like with others beyond our closed network. Closer to home, the value of such a publication seems obvious when we consider the various professional needs of our members.

NERA needs to be a more unified, public advocate for the role of educational research and what findings tell us about policy and practice. Sadly, we are the best kept secret in the northeast and lack a visible identity beyond our annual meeting. Research matters, and with our membership up and our finances stable we are in an excellent position to consider taking our mission to the next level. We have a responsibility – a moral imperative – to seriously consider the notion of advocacy or activism to directly and explicitly address the many challenges facing education and society. NERA stands as an organization ready to lead in the public domain – but do we have the resolve and purpose to do so?



## Report on NERA's 2008 Conference

By Tom Levine & Helen Marx

NERA's 39<sup>th</sup> annual conference ran from October 22 through 24 at the Marriott in Rocky Hill, CT. This year's conference broke NERA's record for conference attendance, with 308 attendees; the conference also pulled our overall membership numbers to 317. We credit these large numbers to the outstanding recruitment efforts of Meg Monaghan, who spread word of our organization and conference actively to graduate students and institutions we may not have previously reached. The strength of the program, the quality of the facilities, and the opportunity to get papers published in conference proceedings also attracted members. As conference co-chairs, we'd like to thank NERA members and all of our sponsors again for the multiple contributions they made this year, allowing us to have what Phil Archer termed NERA's "best conference in its almost forty years of existence." (Phil should know!)

Past-AERA President Marilyn Cochran-Smith, addressed our conference theme of "Strengthening Educational Research." She offered her top ten list of lessons learned regarding how we improve educational research. Cochran-Smith's advice included calling for collaboration to improve the rigor of our research, and emphasizing the importance of passion and commitment in order to do research we believe will make a difference.

The passion and collaboration that improves research was evident in this year's poster session. Conferees filled our large poster rooms with lively discussion as members shared research in progress, literature reviews, and products of teacher research. We're also grateful for the passion and commitment of our workshop leaders. This year's conference boasted a host of special pre- and in-conference workshops led by talented researchers and teachers of research skills. These sessions, aiming to build skills in educational research, addressed qualitative data analysis, issues in item response theory, ways of reporting large scale test results, grantwriting, issues in teacher education, and growth curve modeling using HLM. At the heart of the conference, NERA members presented their work in 41 symposia, paper sessions, and working groups across the three days.

If you missed our yearly conference, you didn't just

miss the chance to interact with fellow researchers and leaders in the field. While renewing old acquaintances and making new ones, we feasted on salmon, lobster bisque, and a delicious mix of vegetarian options. Both evening receptions found NERA members connecting in a welcoming salon atmosphere, swaying to a hip jazz band one night and the warmth of a singer-songwriter's band the next. Members enjoyed the option of playing board games Wednesday night and an open-mic Thursday night. The hotel provided excellent service, support, and value, especially for grad students who took advantage of the new quad rate; free internet access at our new internet café was an added bonus. Our conference schedule and facilities gave us the time and space to deepen the conversations and connections that sustain us as individuals and as an organization.

As conference co-chairs, we were delighted to serve NERA this year, and enjoyed the chance to know this organizations and its members from the inside. Helen is staying on the board, taking over the role of Treasurer from the very able hands of Barbara Helms over the coming year. Tom will continue to help NERA develop a more formalized program of mentorship at NERA next year, building on our pilot effort at this year's conference. Our incoming program chairs have already recruited outstanding keynote speakers as we prepare for NERA's 40<sup>th</sup> year and conference. The 2009 conference promises to build on and exceed our successes this year. We look forward to seeing you all for another outstanding conference in 2009!

Thank you to our very generous sponsors of the 2008 NERA Conference!

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## Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008

### Conference Photos



Hariharan Swaminathan and Jane Rogers



Helen Marx and Tom Levine



Abi Leibovitch presents a poster.



Jessica Brown presents a poster.



Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith



Thanos Patelis and Lynn Shelley-Sireci



## Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA) 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, October 22-24, 2008

### Conference Photos



JMU Group and David Moss



Pace University Group



NERA Socializing



April Zenisky  
and  
Ron Hambleton

## 2008 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentor Award



**Rochelle Goldberg and David Moss**

Congratulations to Dr. Rochelle Goldberg for being the 2008 recipient of the Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring. As Director of the M.Ed. program at William Patterson University of New Jersey, Rochelle has recruited the best and the brightest educational professionals to pursue graduate degrees. She has encouraged and supported each of them to go beyond their roles as public school teachers and engage in reflective and rigorous educational research. Under Rochelle's guidance, many of the graduate students made their debut research presentations at NERA.

Not only has Rochelle been a mentor to numerous education students, but she has also shown the same support for new faculty. She has chaired two departments and as current chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Professional Studies, she continues to mentor new faculty in their scholarship pursuits. She also helps direct them toward rewarding areas of service within the department, college, and university. Over the years, Rochelle has continually promoted, urged, counseled and supported junior faculty at William Paterson to excel in their teaching, their research, and their service to the university and to the educational research community. As an important part of her mentoring, Rochelle strongly encouraged her colleagues to become active members of NERA. She continues to model an ongoing commitment to quality teaching, research, and service at both the university and professional level, and has assumed leadership positions in NERA for many years.

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## Sharon F. Cramer - the 2008 Recipient of the Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service to NERA



**Sharon Cramer**

The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is given to a NERA member who exemplifies the qualities which Leo Doherty brought to NERA, as well as to his colleagues, friends and students. Four characteristics were clearly identified: leadership, ethics, humanity and service to professional organizations. The recipient of the 2008 Leo Doherty award is Sharon F. Cramer. Sharon has demonstrated the characteristics of Leo Doherty in many ways. She received her Ph.D. in Human Relations and Social Policy at New York University in 1984, and was a member of the Harvard Management and Leadership in Education Institute at Harvard University in 2001.

Sharon was Chair for four years (1995 – July, 1999) and continues as Professor of the Exceptional Education Department at Buffalo State College at the State University of New York (SUNY). She provided leadership to the Exceptional Education Department faculty and as Chair, she conceptualized and implemented an annual awards event to recognize student award winners of departmental awards (similar to Leo's recognition of others).

Recently, as Chair of the governance committee of the SUNY Faculty Senate, she proposed a project called "Empowering Governance Leaders" to design and deliver resources for use by SUNY campuses to recruit, support, and plan for campus governance. As Executive Director of the SABRE Project for 5 years at Buffalo State College, Sharon managed a five-year, \$5.5 million project, involving a team of 15 student services specialists and support staff to implement a Web-based student information services system. In 1992, she was a finalist for the Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship, and in 1993, she received the university's President's Award, for excellence in academic advisement. In 2005, she was

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promoted to the title of Distinguished Service Professor in the Exceptional Education Department, a rank awarded by the SUNY Chancellor for those who demonstrate substantial distinguished service, both at the local campus or regional level; and at either the state or national level.

Even though this award is not about publications, this recipient has not only demonstrated the four traits in her professional behavior, but has written about every one of them. Sharon's extensive resume has over 25 references to published articles and presentations about leadership. Like Leo, Sharon has personally demonstrated how staff should work collaboratively within the institution. The word "collaboration" appears about 50 times on her long resume and she has published books, articles and made many presentations about collaborations within institutions and collaborations regarding special education.

In the area of humanity, Sharon received the *Exceptional Children Service Award* in 1989 from the New York Federation Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children; in 2003 she was the recipient of the *Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award*, for lifetime achievement from the Division on Developmental Disabilities, Council for Exceptional Children. Like Leo, this year's recipient has encouraged others to achieve their goals. She conceptualized and was co-leader of *Write On!* a campus-wide program to facilitate professional writing.

And finally, in the area of professional associations, Sharon is a member of five professional or-

ganizations and like Leo, she encourages participation by others. As a member of the Council for Exceptional Children since 1986, she served as both President, secretary and conference coordinator of the NY Federation. She was the founding President of the NY Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Division and that division's nominee for the Council for Exceptional Children's Outstanding Leadership Award.

Most important of all is Sharon's contribution to NERA. She has been a member and on the Program Committee since 1990, chaired the Membership Committee from 1992 to 1996, and was a member of the Woollatt Distinguished Paper Committee from 2003-2007. Sharon was on the Board of Directors twice, first appointed to fill a vacancy in 1994-96 and then elected to serve from 1999-2002. In 2002 she was elected President of NERA and served in 2003. As President she demonstrated outstanding leadership and was responsible for several important initiatives including the "Honor a Mentor" campaign, which led to novel fund-raising for the organization and raising over \$6,000. As a member of the Board, Sharon assisted in re-conceptualizing the work of the organization, through the development of the organization's first strategic plan (2001), and then as President, monitored and revisited the plan.

In recognition of these personal characteristics and contributions, and especially for her outstanding leadership and service to NERA, the Doherty Award Committee selected Sharon Cramer as this year's recipient. Congratulations Sharon!

### Membership Committee Report

The membership committee is so pleased to have reached our goal of 300+ members. Welcome to all our new members! But, our work has only just begun. Please help spread the word about NERA, "the best kept secret in educational research"! We look forward to welcoming even more colleagues at the 2009 annual conference.

-Meg Monaghan

	NERA Membership	NERA Conference
Professional	183	173
Retirees	8	7
Graduate Students	126	125

### NERA Members News and Announcements

In September, 2008, Dr. Dolores Burton was promoted to Chair of Teacher Education at New York Institute of Technology.

## 2008 Teacher-as-Researcher Award



### Jamie Kijowski

Jamie Kijowski received his B.A. in Philosophy with a concentration in Environmental Studies from Denison University in Granville, OH. After moving to New York City, Jamie was accepted to the NYC Teaching Fellows Program and received his M.S. in Special Education from The City College of New York, graduating with honors. He was selected to the Pace University School of Education Teaching and Research in Autism (TARA) Program in 2006, and received his Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Autism and New York State Annotation in Severe and Multiple Disabilities in January 2008. Jamie's study was done at his school in Brooklyn, New York. A surfer in his spare time, Jamie is a supporter of the Surfer's Healing Foundation, which hosts free surf camps for children with autism. Jamie lives in Brooklyn, NY with his wife Jenny and their pit bull, Iggy.

While Jamie was a Unit Coordinator and Special Education Teacher Support Services provider of an inclusion program within his school, he faced the challenges of addressing an array of stereotypical behaviors exhibited by students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Such behaviors served to distract peers and teachers, disrupt class, and isolate and ostracize the student with ASD. In extreme cases, these behaviors resulted in the child being displaced in a far corner, alone with an educational assistant, or removed from the general education setting altogether. More often, the results of these behaviors were counterproductive in terms of the child being included in meaningful educational experiences with typically developing peers.

Based on anecdotal data and informal observations, the researcher determined that many of the stereotypical behaviors exhibited by students with ASD in his school occurred during periods of high anxiety and/or frustration, oftentimes in an attempt to self-regulate an overload of sensory stimuli. Children who display poor sensory modulation exhibit an over- or under-response to normal levels of environmental stimuli (Miller and Lane, as cited in Schaff & Miller, 2005). Theories of sensory integration suggested that many of the maladaptive behaviors exhibited by the inclusion students mentioned above were the direct result of sensory processing disorders. In order to address the students' need for such sensory integration and regulation, the intervention focused on replacing targeted maladaptive behaviors with more appropriate self-regulating techniques attained through yoga exercises.

The study was a case study of a student, K., a 12-year-old child diagnosed with autism, one of three inclusion students inside a fifth-grade general-education classroom. The subject was selected for this project based on the specific maladaptive behaviors he exhibited. The data collected informed the answer to the research question, "Will sensory integration experiences utilizing yoga and music therapy reduce targeted maladaptive behaviors and increase focus and attending in a child diagnosed with ASD?"

A series of yoga sessions were implemented by the researcher over a two week period. The yoga sessions were 30 minutes in duration (from 12:00 to 12:30) and were conducted in a ratio of 1:1 involving only K. and the yoga instructor/researcher. Yoga sessions took place in a quiet location in the school auditorium

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with the accompaniment of music created by Janalea Hoffman (1997, 2001), specifically metered at 50 to 65 beats per minute (bpm) to replicate the human heartbeat in a state of maximum relaxation (Orr, T.J., Myles, B. S., & Carlson, J.K., 1998). The sessions involved the yoga instructor/researcher directing K. to participate in particular breathing exercises and physical postures (poses). Verbal directions were given along with visual cues in the form of modeling.

Baseline data were collected over three days. Quantitative data were collected via direct, passive observation conducted by the researcher during lessons involving direct instruction. Quantitative data represented the frequency and interval time sampling of targeted behaviors. For interval time sampling, ten 1-minute intervals were observed. Qualitative data were collected via teacher and educational assistant interviews and anecdotal information, as well as a student questionnaire. Post-intervention data were taken using the same methods, in the same setting to ensure valid and reliable results.

Quantitative and qualitative data collected during baseline suggested that the targeted maladaptive behaviors were exhibited. Post-intervention data is presented below in Table 1, where it is compared alongside baseline data in terms of averages for the frequency data of the targeted behaviors. A change in the observed frequency of targeted behaviors was expressed, supporting the hypothesis of the study. Each of the targeted maladaptive behaviors presented a decrease in frequency to some degree, suggesting that the intervention of yoga and music therapy was helpful. Behaviors indicative of focus and attention to task have increased, with the exception of attending to the teacher, which actually decreased during the post-intervention observations.

Table 1 *Comparison of Baseline and Post-Intervention Frequency Data*

Targeted Behavior	Average Frequency (Baseline)	Average Frequency (Post-Intervention)
Flaps arms/hands	8	.3
Fidgets fingers	14.7	6.3
Talks/hums/sings	6.7	6
Leaves seat	.7	.3
Attempts to leave room	.7	0
Requires verbal redirection	8.3	8
Attends to teacher	.7	.3
Follows directions	2.7	8.3
Anticipates routine	.3	.7
Exhibits comprehension	1	4.7

The limitations of the study are its single subject design and the length of data collection. Upon the success of the interventions described in this paper, an action plan has been implemented that entails a school-wide yoga program for students with ASD. Future data collection will focus on a wider array of maladaptive behaviors exhibited by a larger number of students of varying chronological and developmental age levels.

Based, in part, on the success of this project—particularly, the reduction of maladaptive behavior exhibited by K. during class time—an organization-wide yoga program has been added to the daily curriculum for all self-contained students with ASD at the study site.

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A full-time teaching position has been utilized for a yoga instructor, and a yoga/sensory room has been established. All classrooms also implement some sensory movement exercises and utilize rhythmic entrainment music therapy. Information and training on yoga exercises have been provided to the parents of the organization to be incorporated in home environments. The school has also been selected to pilot the Get Ready to Learn Program (Buckley-Reen, 2008), through which current data will be collected on the frequency of targeted behaviors, as well as indications of relaxation and preparedness for learning.

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We thank you for your continued support of this important recognition of teacher practice. The call for nominations for 2009 will be posted on the website shortly and you are encouraged to share the application and flyer posted on the NERA website with your professional networks. Please feel free to send questions or comments regarding the Teacher-as-Researcher award to [dburton@nyit.edu](mailto:dburton@nyit.edu).

Dolores Burton, Chairperson  
Teacher-as-Researcher Award Committee

## The Diversity Task Force: A New NERA Initiative

During the 2008 NERA Annual Conference, a group of members gathered for the first meeting of one of NERA's new initiatives--the Diversity Task Force. The Task Force's goal is to recruit and retain NERA members from underrepresented minority groups so that the membership reflects the cultural diversity of the Northeastern region. The Diversity Task Force will strive to reach out to cultural groups that are not well represented in the NERA membership, including African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian members. Activities of the Task Force will include outreach, recruitment, support, and the development of activities that will make NERA receptive to diversity at every level.

In light of these goals, we are reaching out to the general membership to assist with this important endeavor. The best way to get new people to NERA is through personal contacts. In addition to inviting our colleagues from underrepresented groups to come to the conference, we can also invite them to present or to collaborate on NERA presentations. We would like you to spread the word about NERA to your students, colleagues, and others interested in education-related research. Also, if you have ideas for helping the Task Force to achieve its goals, please feel free to contact Rochelle Michel ([rmichel@ets.org](mailto:rmichel@ets.org)), Jennifer Randall ([jrandall@educ.umass.edu](mailto:jrandall@educ.umass.edu)) or Melda Yildiz ([YildizM@wpunj.edu](mailto:YildizM@wpunj.edu)).

## Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA)

Highlights of the NERA Board of Directors' Meetings October 22 and 24, 2008

Submitted by Darlene Perner<sup>1</sup>

NERA Secretary (2006-2008)

**Present:** David Moss, Kristen Huff, Brian Preston, Kevin Meara, Thanos Patelis, Andri Ioannou, Megan France, Lynn Shelley-Sireci, Steve Sireci, Barbara Helms, Katharyn Nottis, Dolores Burton, Barbara Wert, Helen Marx (Conference Co-Chair for 2008), Maureen Ewing (Program Co-Chair for 2009) and Peter Swerdzewski (Program Co-Chair for 2009)

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m.

1. **Introductions:** David began the meeting with welcome comments and introductions.

2. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from the January 26, 2008 meeting were approved.

3. **2008 Conference Report:** Helen reported that the co-chairs received approximately 146 proposals and 18 symposia. As a result seven to eight concurrent sessions were scheduled for each time period. To date, 135 professionals have registered for the conference; 270 members have pre-registered. Sponsorship funding has reached \$6,750. Westfield State University was recognized for covering the program costs.

All agreed that a great job has been done with planning for this conference and with negotiating complimentary rooms and services such as the internet room/café for conference attendees. Helen shared other aspects of the conference such as social activities including the entertainment for the two evening events (a contemporary jazz group and games night, and a blue grass/western music group and an open microphone night). Thanks were expressed to the conference team, Helen, Tom and Meg and to Rich Schwab for his support. Helen shared a number of strategies that helped to increase proposal submissions and conference attendance.

4. **Election Results:** The results of the election were reported: Katharyn Nottis, President Elect; and April Zenisky and Sara Finney, Board of Directors.

5. **Graduate Student Issues Committee Report (GSIC):** Andri reported that Megan France will be

the new GSIC chair for the year 2008-2009; Andri will remain as a committee member. The committee is planning awards and working on new procedures to make sure that papers are reviewed expediently. The GSIC organized two sessions this year specifically for graduate students: 1) a session to discuss what graduate students would like to see in future NERA conferences; and, 2) a presentation about job interviews and vitae preparation. Activity level for graduate students has increased and there was discussion about having discussants inform graduate student presenters about GSIC's Best Paper Award opportunity. Kristen thanked Andri for her leadership, which has been exceptional and thanked Megan France for taking on the role of chairperson. Lynn will act as board liaison to the GSIC. It was also noted that graduate students have been encouraged by the waiver of graduate conference fees.

### 6. **NERA Award Recipients**

Thomas Donlon Mentoring Award – Rochelle Goldberg Kaplan, William Patterson University

Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award – Sharon Cramer, Buffalo State College

Teacher as Researcher Award – James Kijowski, Pace University

Graduate Student Award – Peter Swerdzewski, The College Board

Lorne H. Woollott Distinguished Paper Award – Mark Fenster, UMass Lowell and Diane Judd, Valdosta State University

7. **Technology Committee Report:** Brian reported that purchasing LCD projectors was evaluated by the committee. Because of the costs and other factors, the committee recommended that presenters bring their own LCD projectors and these be shared whenever possible. Barbara H. was thanked for her support of the NERA Web site including having registration on-line.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

### **8. Teacher as Researcher Committee Report:**

Dolores distributed revisions to the TAR award and committee description. She requested the board review these and give her suggestions. Some concern was expressed regarding the reduction in submissions for the TAR award. It was suggested that the description of the TAR award on the Web site be reviewed and also a quick link be placed to access the TAR award application. Dolores will e-mail a flyer to board members for their distribution to help generate interest in the award. Suggestions were made on how NERA can make connections to school districts and having sessions/symposium devoted to K-12 issues. The TAR committee has a scheduled meeting today at 5:30 pm.

### **9. Membership Committee Report**

It was reported that the committee will need a new chair. A number of strategies were introduced this year and were highly successful. A total of 282 members joined or renewed their membership for the 2008-09 year and 270 members are in attendance for the 2008 conference as of this meeting. Meg was thanked again for her contributions.

### **10. The NERA Researcher Report**

Jennifer and Kevin reported on three issues. They have: 1) updated the appearance of the researcher and added new sections and items (e.g., book reviews); 2) worked on producing a timely newsletter; 3) continued to use PDQ Printing and Graphics Co. which takes several weeks to get the newsletter published and delivered. Thanks were expressed to Jenn and Kevin for their active involvement in the newsletter and the quality produced for this publication.

David has invited a colleague (via a conference session) to help us look at additional electronic formats and technologies for *The NERA Researcher*. Discussion focused on the pros and cons of having paper versions, electronic versions, or both. David also introduced the idea of NERA producing an on-line journal. These issues will be discussed further at the January board meeting.

### **11. Incorporation and Tax Status of NERA**

Barbara H. and David reported on NERA incorporation which has officially given NERA tax exempt status. Purchase of insurance for the NERA Board was approved.

### **12. Treasurer Report**

Barbara H. distributed her Treasurer's Report on Membership and Finance. As reported there were a number of sponsorships this year; conference registration is strong, currently at 275. Membership was at 282 and increasing. A motion was made to accept the Treasurer's report. Motion carried. Barbara was thanked for her great service to NERA.

### **12. New Business**

#### ***2009 Conference and Presidential Initiatives.***

Kristen announced the Program Chairs for the 2009 NERA Conference: Maureen Ewing, Elizabeth Stone and Peter Swerdzewski. The theme is committed for next year's conference as well as the keynote speakers (Mary Kennedy and George Pruitt). Kristen also expressed her thank you for approving the two task forces and to Thanos (K-12) and Steve (diversity) for leading these task force initiatives. Kristen also wants to look at committee structures in terms of providing more support and organization. She indicated that she will reach out to find guest article writers for each issue of *The NERA Researcher*. Kristen requested that the Board share the highlights of the 2009 conference and encourage all attendees to come back next year.

Steve and Brian were thanked for their service on the board.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

**Date: October 24, 2008**

**Present:** Kristen Huff, David Moss, Sara Finney, Thanos Patelis, Megan France, Barbara Helms, Katharyn Nottis, Dolores Burton, Helen Marx, Lynn Shelley Sireci, and Barbara Wert.

The meeting began at 12:30 p.m.

### **1. Introductions**

Kristen welcomed the board and introductions were made. New board members, April Zenisky and Sara Finney, were recognized.

### **2. January Board Meeting**

A number of potential agenda items for the January meeting were discussed. These included: electronic voting, and on-line journal proposals; updates on the task forces, K-12 consumers, and diversity; final 2008 conference budget; 2009 conference budget; update on NERA Board insurance;



(Continued from page 14)

committee survey information and updates on committees and participation; GSIC - budget line, handbook description, and issues; and, update on handbook. Kristen appointed John Young as the new Chair of the Membership Committee.

### 3. Teacher as Researcher Award

Dolores reported that she has a draft of the TAR award that includes the recommended revisions. It helps to clarify who is eligible for this award. There were changes to the committee which include its function (to choose from the nominees

that are teachers or a team) and composition (minimum of 4 members: 3 from the previous year and 1 new member appointed by the president). Kristen appointed Thanos to the TAR committee to help keep continuity between GSIC and the TAR committee. The TAR changes were adopted by consensus.

Meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

<sup>1</sup>A heartfelt thank you is extended to Barbara Yingling Wert who took the October 22 and 24, 2008 minutes while I was on leave.

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## NERA Mentoring Roundtable: Reflection from a Mentee

By Aja LaDuke

Upon entering my doctoral program, several professors told me that attending and presenting at educational research conferences was the most important practice to adopt throughout my graduate career. At the time, I may not have understood (wouldn't that mean missing class!?) but in retrospect the value of this is clear. These meetings provide opportunities for graduate students to network with others in our fields, to get a feel for the work that is being done, and to further our thinking about what our original contributions may be. Often these opportunities manifest themselves in informal ways – a conversation that continues after a session or a colleague introducing you to another researcher in your field in the coffee line. The organizers of this year's NERA conference successfully created a space for these interactions to happen, and took one step further to ask – What is the potential of setting up more formal meetings between senior scholars and graduate students whose interests align?

At NERA this year, I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Tom Schram of the University of New Hampshire about my work. I had sent the paper from my NERA session on students' perceptions of bilingualism to him over email the week prior to the conference. Upon introducing myself to Dr. Schram before attending his pre-conference session on Qualitative Data Analysis, I learned that he had read my paper three times and was looking forward to our meeting later that afternoon. I was both flattered and a little anxious to learn that Dr. Schram had spent so much time with my writing.

After Dr. Schram's very informative pre-conference session, I anticipated some of the feedback I would receive in terms of my methodology. Dr. Schram addressed these issues and other specifics about the paper itself, but more importantly expressed his interest in me as a researcher. What was my passion? My burning question? As I described my potential dissertation, Dr. Schram listened intently and quietly decoded my words. His follow-up questions led me to the realization that my true research interests, i.e. the process of identity negotiation among culturally and linguistically diverse students in predominantly white schools, were disguised within a study focused on their literacy and biliteracy practices and development. Identity issues, not literacy practices, were "driving the bus" as he said. Here I was in my own process of identity negotiation, feeling the need to make my study about literacy given that I was a "literacy person," and not even aware of it. In the matter of an hour and a half, Dr. Schram was able to help me uncover this and in essence give me the green light as a researcher to pursue what I truly want to find out.

For me, this mentoring experience was a profound one. Perhaps these meetings will not all take the same shape, but we never know what we can gain from these exchanges until they happen. As a mentee, I thank Dr. Tom Levine, and others at NERA for setting the stage and encourage others to take advantage of this opportunity.

## The Graduate Lounge

The year 2009 marks the third year of NERA's Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC). The GSIC members are excited to continue working toward the committee's mission, which involves supporting the professional development of NERA graduate students and reaching out to new graduate students in an effort to increase the diversity of institutions represented at NERA.

At the NERA 2008 conference, the GSIC organized two sessions specifically for graduate students. One session was designed for graduate students to meet and provide ideas/suggestions to support the involvement and professional development of NERA graduate student members. In the second session, Asil Özdoğru talked about stressors and coping mechanisms in the lives of graduate students. Dr. Christine Harmes from James Madison University and Andy Leibowitz from Educational Testing Service provided valuable information on preparing one's curriculum vita and the interview process for job applications. GSIC thanks our presenters for a very interesting and informative session.

This year the GSIC will welcome two new members. Currently, the GSIC consists of five members:



**Carol Barry** (barrycl@jmu.edu) is in her second year of the Assessment and Measurement program at James Madison University. She is interested in a variety of topics in applied measurement and statistics. These interests include applications of structural equation modeling, growth modeling, and mixture modeling. At a broader level, she is interested in the test development and validity process. Her substantive research interests include motivational topics such as self-efficacy, help-seeking, and achievement goal orientation.

**Megan France** (francemk@jmu.edu) is in her first year of the Assessment and Measurement program at James Madison University. Her substantive research interests include variables related to college students' relatedness with their peers and the university environment such as university belonging, attachment, and mattering. She is also interested in applications of structural equation modeling, instrument development, and validity studies. Megan is serving as the 2008-2009 chair for the GSIC.



**Andri Ioannou** (andri.ioannou@gmail.com) is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Technology program at the University of Connecticut. Currently, she is working on her dissertation titled "Supporting Collaborative Learning in Online Environments: The Promise of Wiki Technology". Her interests include computer-supported collaborative learning, online learning, and Web 2.0 technologies for learning, networking, and collaboration.

**Christine Shea** (cshea@educ.umass.edu) is a doctoral candidate in the Research Evaluation Methods Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Currently, she is working on her dissertation titled "Using a Mixture IRT Model to Understand Second Language Learner Performance on Large-scale Assessments". Her interests include equity issues that arise when measuring student achievement and school success, and validity theory and its application to accountability at the local, state and federal levels.



**Asil Ali Özdoğru** (<http://www.albany.edu/~ao7726/>) is a doctoral candidate in educational psychology at the University at Albany, SUNY and a program associate in Policy Research Associates. His research looks at out-of-school time across cultures, humor in learning, educational technology, and issues in criminal justice and mental health. A member of NERA since 2004, Asil has served in various capacities including proposal reviewer, conference volunteer, membership committee member, and the founding chair of GSIC.

For more information about GSIC and past Graduate Lounge sections, please visit our blog at <http://neragsic.blogspot.com/>

## Announcement

AERA Division D is seeking graduate students who are interested in sharing their in-progress research (non-dissertation) with an audience of interested researchers, including a panel of reviewers who will provide feedback on the research. Research proposals will be reviewed, with the top 50 being in the Gala and the top 3 being honored at the Division D Business Meeting. The overall best proposal will receive conference registration fee for the 2010 conference. All participants in the Division D In-Progress Research Gala will have the opportunity to network with researchers in the field of measurement and research methodology, including senior scholars whose work shaped the field and representatives from higher education and industry. More information about the In-Progress Research Gala and the proposal guidelines are available on the Division D announcement page ([http://aera.net/divisions/Default.aspx?menu\\_id=70&id=492](http://aera.net/divisions/Default.aspx?menu_id=70&id=492)). Important dates to keep in mind are

**December 2** – statement of intent due (available from link above)

**December 16** – summary of research project due

These can be submitted to [DivD.gradstudent@gmail.com](mailto:DivD.gradstudent@gmail.com).

We hope you will consider taking advantage of this professional opportunity to share your research plans, to receive feedback from scholars in the field, and to network at the research gala.

We also invite all NERA scholars to come to the Gala at the AERA Annual Meeting. During this session, which is a networking, mentoring, academic, and social event, measurement and research methodology graduate students share posters of their in-progress research. They will be available to discuss their studies, including the conceptual framework, their research questions, and their research design and methodology. We encourage you to attend to provide participants with feedback and new perspectives that could influence the in-progress research as well as to be renewed by the many creative projects being designed by new researchers. Refreshments will be provided.

Jill L. Adelson and Dubravka Svetina - AERA Division D GSC Representatives

## NERA '09: Using Educational Research to Improve Student Learning for 40 Years...And Still Going Strong!

By

Maureen Ewing (The College Board), Elizabeth Stone (ETS), and Peter Swerdzewski (The College Board), NERA 2009 Conference Co-Chairs

Wasn't the 2008 NERA conference great? Come help us celebrate NERA's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday at the NERA '09 Conference. To be held in the beautiful northeastern United States in October 2009, the conference will include all of the great elements you have come to expect: pre-conference and in-session workshops; poster, individual paper presentation, and theme-based sessions; and keynote and presidential addresses. In addition, we are planning some new surprises to ensure that NERA's next 40 years do not disappoint.

NERA '09 is proud to present two excellent keynote speakers: Mary M. Kennedy, Professor of Education at Michigan State University; and George A. Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College since 1982. **Mary M. Kennedy's** scholarship focuses on defining teacher quality and on identifying the things that most influence teacher quality. She has examined the influences of teacher education, research knowledge, attitudes and beliefs,

credentials and school context. From 1986 - 1994 she directed the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. In addition to being President of Thomas Edison State College, **George A. Pruitt** is Past Chairman of the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce, Trenton, New Jersey; a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, United States Department of Education. He has served in an advisory capacity to four Secretaries of Education under three Presidents of both parties.

Additional details, including planned pre-conference workshops and the conference's call for proposals, will be advertised to NERA members in the coming months. For more information, check the NERA Web site at <http://www.nera-education.org>, or e-mail the NERA '09 conference planning team at [neramembers@gmail.com](mailto:neramembers@gmail.com). Be sure to get on the mailing list to receive updates as they become available!



## A Very Abbreviated History of NERA – 40 Years, Plus, Plus – and Still Going

Mary D. Horan

New York State Education Department, Retired

NERA President 1984-1985

The following is an accumulation of information gleaned from four papers in my possession written over the past years (Morrison, 1955; Johnson, 1969; Clark, 1980; and Egelston and Cromack, 1984), the *NERA Governance Handbook*, and my own recollections and observations from 1967 to the present.

NERA's parent organization, the Educational Research Association of New York State (ERANYS), began in December 1929 in Syracuse, NY. A group of 25-30 people attending the annual conference of the Associated Academic Principals "formed an organization devoted to the promotion of educational research in [New York] State." (Johnson, 1969). From 1929-1954, personnel from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) were the stabilizing block along with some city directors of research, research-minded educators, and college professors. The first President was Warren W. Coxe from NYSED in 1930 and 1931, followed by Harry P. Smith from Syracuse University in 1932, and Julian E. Butterworth from Cornell University in 1933. The annual meetings continued to be held in Syracuse through 1959.

Efforts to hold a statewide research conference in conjunction with the annual New York State Regents convocation resulted in the initial Annual Convocation on Research in Education on November 14-15, 1960 in Brubacher Hall, State University of New York at Albany. It was one and one-half days with 173 attendees, and consisted of an opening welcome, two keynote speakers, six group sessions with discussion periods, a dinner meeting, and a general session the following morning to discuss the preceding day's recommendations (Egelston and Cromack, 1984). By 1963, the annual conference program evolved to include 68 paper and symposia sessions with over 300 participants and Invited Reviews of Research (five topics reviewed cyclically to cover the preceding five years). The convocation remained in Albany through 1967, having moved to hotels in downtown.

For the 1968 and 1969 convocations, ERANYS moved to the Concord Hotel in the Catskill Mountains. By this time, the NY State Education Department was no longer financially or otherwise officially supporting the association and its publications (newsletter and Proceedings). Additionally, the membership was increasingly affiliated with organizations outside New York State. In 1969, a floor debate on the eligibility for the position of Director developed. Nominations and elections were traditionally held at an evening Business Meeting. Some members considered the process "closed" in that only those attending the conference could vote and a Director position was perceived as a right of succession to Vice President and then President. The debate was settled based on the constitution, but election procedures were subsequently changed to an open-nomination slate and ballots mailed to all members. Most significantly, the membership voted to change the name to the Northeastern Educational Research Association. Thus, in 1969, NERA was born.

For the next two years (1970 and 1971), the annual convocation was held at Grossinger's Hotel in the Catskills. In the meantime, another association, the New England Educational Research Organization (NEERO), had been organized under the leadership of John Schmitt, a former ERANYS/NERA member, and held its first meeting at Boston College in Spring 1969 (Egelston and Cromack, 1984). In 1972, the NERA conference, likely in an effort to attract New England-area members, moved to Newton, MA near Boston with an attendance of 145, significantly fewer than in previous years. The next year the NERA annual conference moved back to the Catskills and continued there through 2006 at various hotels, i.e., the Fallsview, the Nevele, the Granit, and the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa. A prominent consideration for holding the conferences in these locations was the relative geographic isolation of the area with self-contained hotels. Attendees met together and ate together (in the early days the hotels followed the Kosher dietary rules), with ample opportunities for formal and informal conversations between colleagues,

professors/mentors and students, and new or longtime friends. (A personal recollection is that in the late-1960s to approximately the mid-1970s, evening attire was long formal gowns for women and suits and ties for men.) In 2007 and 2008, the annual conference was held at the Marriott Hotel in Rocky Hill, CT near Hartford, with the attendance of 236 and just over 300, respectively.

Over the years, NERA developed and instituted several important features in its growth and development as an organization. In the early 1980s, the NERA Governance Handbook was developed by Richard Egelston (NY State Education Department, and 1982-1983 NERA President) and me with significant input from then current and past Board of Directors members and committee chairs. (The earliest dated page in my copy of the Handbook is September 30, 1983.) It was born out of the need to codify the activities of the Board and related committees, thereby reducing time and energy unduly wasted at Board meetings discussing what, why, and when certain activities were required. It contains the current and past constitutions and other important organization documents; duties and responsibilities of elected and appointed officers with calendars of activities to carry them out; functions of standing and ad-hoc committees with appropriate calendars; topical reviews of important Board discussions and decisions (thus giving an historical perspective); current and past strategic plans; and an appendix with chronologies of elected and appointed officers, program cochair, committee members, award recipients, invited speakers and reviewers of research and their topics, publication editors, etc. It is an evolving document, its update being the responsibility of each Immediate Past President. It is available on the NERA website ([www.nera-education.org](http://www.nera-education.org)).

A second series of developments has been the institution of awards to members in recognition for outstanding scholarship or service to the organization. The Leo D. Doherty Award was first given in 1980 to Lorne H. Woollatt (NY State Education Department), the Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award in 1981 to William Trochim (Cornell University), the Teacher-As-Researcher Award in 1983 to Tracey Frank (Westchester School for Exceptional Children), and the Thomas F. Donlon Award For Distinguished

Mentoring in 2000 to Robert K. Gable (University of Connecticut, Emeritus). All four awards are continued based on merit.

The third piece in the growth and development of NERA has been its continually increasing diversity. The first female President of NERA was Laura Harckham in 1980-1981, 52 years after ERANYS began and 12 years into NERA's existence. A list of the current Board, committee members, and editors reflect the membership as a whole. From a handful of people exclusively from New York State in 1929, the 2008 Annual Conference had participants from many states and at least two foreign countries.

This has been a somewhat sterile history of NERA and its parent organization, ERANYS. But, there is so much more than just facts and figures to the life and vibrancy of an organization. It is the people, individually and collectively, each doing his/her part, whether as a committee member, presenter, proposal reviewer, registration table staffer, listener, editor, or elected or appointed official, who make an organization relevant and useful to those it serves.

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# **The NERA Researcher**

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