

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

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The NERA Researcher

Volume 48, Issue 4

December 2010

The President's Message

The Power of Membership



Thanos Patelis

As I begin to write my first message for the newsletter as president of NERA, I am amazed that I am actually doing so. In my service to many organizations, I have been (and actually still am) a newsletter editor. While it is a lot of work to request articles and think about themes, and nicely cajole authors for their pieces, it's easier than writing this column. The task seemed even more ominous, as I reviewed columns from past presidents. The insight and thoughtfulness of the columns raised the bar for me and offered a significant challenge.

So, as I sit to write something for you all to read and feeling the pressure from our editors for my column, I of course put down the writing to witness the 40th Anniversary of the NYC Marathon—I never want to miss an anniversary. It reminded me of our 40th anniversary celebration of NERA last year in 2009! This year with the 2010 conference, NERA celebrated its 41st anniversary—we're one year older than the NYC marathon. While we don't have as many participants, NERA and the NYC marathon share the power of membership and offer the setting for individual talent and effort to shine in a welcoming, supportive environment.

At NERA, similar to the NYC Marathon, you hear many stories of individual triumphs of realizing an awesome presentation, overcoming adversity to attend or just trying one's best. Like the setting of NYC during marathon day, NERA offers that stage for individuals to present their research or research-in-progress in a forum that will launch, support, or invigorate careers and formulate research agendas and collaborations.

From the number of participants and the feedback that we received, this year's conference was another successful one. We had another record year of participants, and as the evaluation forms from the conference indicated, there were many high quality presentations, exceptional interactions among presenters and attendees, outstanding workshops by national leaders, and a wonderful setting for sharing and interacting. Please see the article in this issue that provides highlights from this past conference. In all, the one component that makes NERA such a wonderful place is all the people involved.

As our membership and attendance grow and more people participate in our conference and as we expand our reach, there is a need for two things to happen concurrently: (1) Develop a strategic plan and subsequent course of action to guide the future development and evolution of our organization and (2) Address some fundamental infrastructure needs and procedures that can support the growth of our organization and respond to the demand. I would like to present some steps to address these two needs.

First, to address the need to build a strategic plan for us, a few of our past presidents and leaders of our organization have proposed the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee. The goal of this committee is to develop a plan charting the future direc-

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Message from the Editors

Greetings NERA Members! We hope everyone enjoyed the 41st annual NERA Conference. Dolores Burton, Yanhui (Angela) Pang, and Thanos Patelis did an excellent job of organizing this year's event, and we extend our gratitude for their hard work.

In this issue of *The NERA Researcher* we hope you enjoy highlights and photos from this year's conference, profiles of award recipients, and the Presidential address given by Katharyn Nottis. You will also find informative committee reports, a first-hand account of the mentoring program, and advance information for next year's conference.

Make sure to note that NERA now has a presence on Facebook and LinkedIn! We hope you will take a minute to connect through these sites.

As Thanos Patelis shared in his President's Message, NERA is experiencing exciting growth, which necessitates strategic planning and infrastructure enhancements. The continued success of NERA depends on the active involvement of all members—please note the calls for participation and assistance.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The NERA Researcher*. Please let us know if you have ideas for improving this publication.

Christine and Kevin
The Editors

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NERA 2010

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NERA 2010

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The President's Message
(Continued from page 1)

tion of our organization and address issues that we face. As the committee develops ideas and initiatives that will help ensure our organization continues to realize its mission and serve our membership, they will share them with the Board of Directors and then the entire membership. So, the Board of Directors approved the formation of the Strategic Planning Committee with the chair of this committee being Kristen Huff, now with the Regents' Research Fund, with Barbara Helms, Education Development Center, David Moss, University of Connecticut, and Darlene Perner, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. We are very thankful for their initiative and look forward to hearing from them as they progress through their work.

Next, we are addressing two tactical needs. We are victims of our own success. Our membership is increasing, attendance at our annual meeting is increasing, the demand for feedback of proposals has increased and the need for more rapid conveyance of information is at an all-time high. So, one aspect of our work is to ensure that we have the appropriate site for our conference. A Site Selection Committee, chaired by me with Megan France, James Madison University, Barbara Helms, Education Development Center, Helen Marx, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Steve Sireci, University of Massachusetts Amherst, is working to select next year's site taking into account the feedback that we have received from our membership, ensuring the location is optimal for our membership, and ensuring the cost is the best to meet the needs and desires of our membership. The committee has been working since the summer and a recommendation will be made to the Board by our January Board of Directors meeting.

The other need involves developing a more efficient process to work through the volume of proposals to produce our annual program. Our membership has told us, loud and clear, that we must provide timely communications of the program each year. Currently, no system exists to capture and distribute the proposals for review, collect the ratings, disseminate the results, and produce the programs. The burden falls on the conference committee to manually process everything while still keeping their day jobs. Each year the process has to be re-engineered with a new conference committee. Therefore, in an effort to meet the demand placed on us by our membership, the Board is exploring a number of options that span the range of building a system to licensing one. We hope that this will increase the efficiency of the whole process and offer the conference committee the infrastructure needed to undertake the operational component of developing the program. This will offer them the time to focus on the substantive nature of the program and meet the demands of our membership. More on this will follow as we review options.

Soon (if not already) you will receive two requests for your participation from the Conference Committee co-chairs, Carol Barry, the College Board, and Abby Lau, College of the Holy Cross. One is a survey of our membership asking for input about things that can help improve the 2011 conference and realize the conference's theme of "Educational and Measurement Science for the Good of Society." The second is a participation survey asking for your direct involvement in the conference as a proposal reviewer, session chair and/or discussant and to request your interest in being involved in various committees that determine the direction of our organization and shape both the policies and operations of our organization. So, please look for these surveys. We encourage you all to participate, because the quality of our program and organization is dependent on our membership involvement. Thank you in advance for your time!

Finally, as we head into the holiday season, I want to wish you all the best. As we work to undertake all the activities above including the development of our conference next year, we are reminded that we cannot do anything without the active involvement of our membership. During this season of being thankful and reflecting on the past year, the fundamental element that seems to make NERA such a wonderful place is the people involved—you, our membership. So, I want to thank our membership and each of you who continue to contribute to making NERA a magical, exceptional place for educational research and collegiality. Many thanks and I look forward to fulfilling the responsibility that you have bestowed on me as president.

Many thanks and respectfully submitted, Thanos

NERA Presidential Address: Looking Through the Prism of Research Partnerships

By Katharyn E. K. Nottis

(Presidential Address delivered October 21, 2010 at the 41st annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association)

When I think back, research partnerships can be seen throughout my professional life and perhaps even earlier. What could be labeled as my first research partnership was with my father. He was always helping me with my science projects. He would listen to my ideas and inevitably, I knew something was going to be built from wood. It didn't matter what the idea was, there would be sawing, sanding, and painting involved! My father was a civil engineer and I guess it is also no surprise that the majority of my interdisciplinary research projects have been with either civil or chemical engineers!

Later, in graduate school, I felt a partnership with participants in a qualitative study I was doing when I heard how teachers impacted the way a group of females visualized their competency for pursuing non-traditional careers in mathematics and science. I remember one woman, advised to be an artist for Hallmark cards, who indicated that in her high school biology course:

“They came down really hard on the girls for things. Of course, the boys were running wild. You were just supposed to be perfect, in a way that no one could ever be...in high school most of the science teachers were men and they were extremely abrasive and they liked to shout, you know...They'd ridicule kids and things like that.”

Stories such as this one prompted me to include gender as a variable in most of my collaborative research projects.

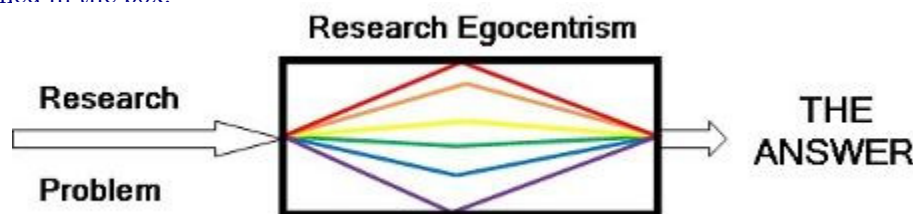
When collaborating with my Major Professor, Tom Shuell, I saw that teaching and learning needed to be envisioned in tandem as a process and that prior knowledge was an important research variable. I also learned that there is a limit to the amount of background research you need to cite in a manuscript! More recently, I have been fortunate to be a part of collaborative research projects in seismology, chemistry, and chemical engineering.

Throughout the past year, I have encouraged NERA members to consider collaboration between those utilizing different approaches to research across varying constituencies and disciplines. I have repeatedly challenged the membership to do this because the difficult questions which we as educational researchers must address are ultimately broader than methodological and disciplinary boundaries. Even questions that seem constrained by a particular situation or subject represent broader issues. They are the tip of the iceberg so to speak. What kinds of questions, you might ask? Let me provide an example. Stigler and Hebert (2009), citing the work of Wearne and Kouba (1999), noted that in a National Assessment of Educational Progress, “...only 38 percent of America's eighth-graders could figure out a 15 percent tip on the cost of a typical meal, even when given five choices from which they could select the correct answer” (p. 5). This finding was indicative of more than the need for a tip conversion card which is why Stigler and Hebert (2009) used it as an example of why teaching needed to be improved. It represented larger issues about learning and the educational system. For some of us, it might even prompt questions like the following:

- How can children taught mathematical concepts in an approved school curriculum still be unable to apply concepts to real life problems?
- How might researchers assess understanding of mathematical concepts in multiple ways to detect the *real* learning issues?
- How do students feel about what they are learning in math and its relevancy to their future lives?
- How might the educational system with its testing culture be encouraging compartmentalization, where school learning is detached from real life experiences?
- What value does American Society place on mathematical understanding and how might that impact learning in the schools?

Multiple lenses are needed to go below the “tip of the iceberg,” to go beyond why eighth graders couldn’t determine percents, and answer questions like those posed. We need quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and action research. We must have multiple disciplines working together. As Sir Karl Popper (1963), philosopher of science wrote, “We are not students of some subject matter but students of problems. And problems may cut across the borders of any subject matter or discipline” (p. 88).

When I initially considered research partnerships, I realize now that my understanding of them was fairly simplistic and linear. I envisioned a research problem, different researchers banding together to address that problem, with each contributing his or her slice to the study. The multiple perspectives would converge into one negotiated viewpoint that would result in a greater understanding of the research problem. The findings would be a synthesis of the multiple perspectives. THE answer would be revealed. Now that I think about it, this viewpoint seems reminiscent of what David Elkind would label concrete operational egocentrism (Muuss, 1982) only in this case it would be more aptly labeled concrete operational research egocentrism. My vision assumed agreement on the research problem, the pertinent literature, the method of analysis and interpretation of results that would lead all to the same conclusion, presumably mine because mine would represent reality. Those from different backgrounds would be there to provide additional support for that viewpoint. This can best be seen in the following linear model of research partnerships. Note how the discussions from multiple perspectives stay confined in the box.



Others have reflected on how their vision and practice of collaborative research has evolved over time. Forman and Markus (2005) noted that when they first collaborated they pursued separate research questions using the same data set and analysis. Their data collection, “...reflected a compromise rather than a synthesis of interests” (p. 84). They also wrote separately for very different audiences. So, their initial view of collaboration was a shared data set. This might be labeled a convenience or an efficiency model of collaboration.

In addition to a linear view where everyone eventually supported my conclusions, I also envisioned my role and that of my partners as stable in collaborative projects. As an educational researcher, I would contribute the methodological and statistical parts and as content specialists, my partners would provide an understanding of the concepts in their discipline, most recently chemical engineering. Education and content area researchers would work together so that the study and findings would reflect a balanced whole.

From my reflections about and exploration of collaboration this past year, I have begun to more deeply consider my role in a research project, and encourage you to do the same. This was spurred by Wagner’s (1997) description of one type of cooperative research arrangement between researchers and practitioners; what he labeled as, “co-learning agreements” (p. 15). In this model, the roles of researchers and practitioners are fluid. Each can be viewed as both, “agents of inquiry and as objects of inquiry” (p. 16). Wagner (1997) felt that the central research question for those engaged in this cooperative arrangement was, “What is the nature of education, schooling, and educational research?” (p. 17). Related to this was the consideration of the role of educational research within this arrangement. I had not previously considered what my “social location” (p. 16) might bring to the examination of learning in a content discipline for which I had no background. As I thought about my most recent research partnerships, I knew I had provided new and different perspectives to the chemical engineering projects examining the learning of heat, temperature, energy, and radiation. But, had I also had a background in chemical engineering, how might my contributions have differed? I realized that while I continue to partner with researchers in engineering, I do so having a rudimentary understanding of key concepts and an outsider’s view of how students in engineering learn and ultimately apply these concepts. As one of my research partners noted, “Few if any faculty in education truly understand engineering, engineering culture, engineering students or the environment in which engineering faculty work” (Prince, 2010). I could say the same about the engineers’ understanding of education and educational researchers as well.

But, the bigger question is, could my specific viewpoint be limiting me? Others (e.g., Forman & Mar-

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kus, 2005) have examined this. Burke (1984) (who attributed this concept to Keblen) identified a concept called, "trained incapacity," referring to the "...limits to our understanding of problems that result from training in a specific discipline with its necessary restrictions, namely, its underlying propositions, theories, and methodologies..." (Forman & Markus, 2005, p. 86). I have started to see, especially when a research partner poses a question that did not occur to me, that I might be limited by my disciplinary and methodological training. My background does make a difference in how I envision a study, what literature should be consulted, what research questions and variables are deemed most important, and how findings are interpreted. As Hall and colleagues (2006) noted, "...interdisciplinary scholarship requires the deconstruction of knowledge and identity which is then reconfigured into new forms of knowledge and action" (p. 764). I am still working on this!

Upon reflection, I was able to see how disciplinary blinders can affect interpretations of results through a past research collaboration with a chemist where the learning of plane and point group symmetry, and the impact of a computer software program on that learning, was examined (Nottis & Kastner, 2005a). Viewing the assessment scores, it became clear that some students did not seem to be improving in their understanding of plane and point group symmetry, even with the use of computer software. When I asked my partner why she thought some students might still not understand the concepts, her immediate response was that they did not have the ability to understand these concepts and should consider another major. She could see no other reason why they would perform poorly. I, on the other hand, wondered about the assessments that were used, especially those to evaluate the understanding of plane group symmetry. Let me explain.

In order to show an understanding of plane group symmetry, students were given a two-dimensional analog of a crystal. A pattern consisting of a single, simple motif, a house with an off-center door and a chimney on one side was reproduced multiple times consistent with the symmetry of one of the 17 plane group symmetries. Students were given three such patterns and a diagram showing the standard crystallographic symbols for all six symmetry elements found in plane group symmetry (2, 3, 4, and 6 fold rotations, mirror, and glide). They were then directed to indicate the location of a particular symmetry element (unit cells, glides, mirrors, 2-fold rotation, asymmetric units) by drawing the standard symbol at the appropriate location between symmetry related motifs. When I saw evaluations like the following, it looked to me as if good spatial skills like mental rotation and spatial visualization might advantage certain students over others on this assessment. In fact, I found I actually did pretty well on a trial of the assessment with no more than a high school understanding of chemistry and without understanding the concepts! I saw the patterns.

symmetry elements perpendicular to the plane of the page

rotation axis	mirror plane	glide plane
2 3 4 6	—	-----
● ▲ ● ●		

1) Use the symbols shown above to indicate the location of symmetry in the pattern below. Include all symmetry elements within the unit cell and as many more as you find useful.
 2) Outline and label the unit cell.
 3) Outline and label the asymmetric unit.
 4) Is the unit cell centered or primitive? Explain how you reached this conclusion.

symmetry elements perpendicular to the plane of the page

rotation axis	mirror plane	glide plane
2 3 4 6	—	-----
● ▲ ● ●		

1) Use the symbols shown above to indicate the location of symmetry in the pattern below. Include all symmetry elements within the unit cell and as many more as you find useful.
 2) Outline and label the unit cell.
 3) Outline and label the asymmetric unit.
 4) Is the unit cell centered or primitive? Explain how you reached this conclusion.

As part of this same study (Nottis & Kaster, 2005b), we administered the Group Embedded Figures Test designed by Oltman, Raskin, and Witkin (1971), to assess spatial visualization with results categorizing the person as either field independent or field dependent. The results of this assessment revealed evidence of both learning styles in the sample but perhaps more importantly, as seen in Table 1, those classified as field independent had significantly higher mean scores on the plane group assessment than those labeled as field dependent. Further analyses also showed a significant interaction between gender and learning style on as-

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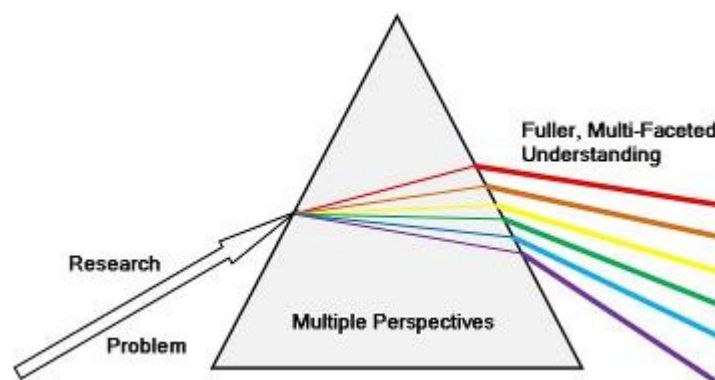
assessment scores. The way the concept was assessed did make a difference!

Cognitive Style	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mo</i>
Field Dependent	42.44	16.58	47.00	47.00
Mixed	47.93	19.99	47.50	28.00
Field Independent	62.06	14.94	61.00	58.00

Of course, the issue then became, how could the same concepts be assessed in such a way that one group was not disadvantaged, a question faced in many fields. The background of my colleague limited her vision of what poor performance may be indicating and what constituted an appropriate assessment; she could not see another way to evaluate the concept. While my background drew me to issues related to learning and assessment and caused me to question how plane group symmetry was being evaluated. But, I was unable to help with the development of alternative assessments because I was limited in my understanding of the concepts. I didn't know how those concepts could be assessed in an alternate way and still show conceptual understanding. I didn't understand how knowledge of these concepts would build to understanding other concepts. More importantly, I didn't really understand the culture of assessment within undergraduate chemistry. Both of us showed "trained incapacity" (Burke, 1984).

Research partnerships have caused me to reconsider my role when I collaborate and changed my understanding about learning and assessment as well. I have seen more than the tip of the iceberg and feel strongly that many of the answers we are seeking with educational reform need to be addressed with collaborative research. So, what's needed to continue and improve our research partnerships? First, as research partners we should consider the model we envision when collaborating. Is it the linear, egocentric view or the convenience model with one group taking the lead so only their visions are seen? Is it a "co-learning agreement" (Wagner, 1997)? Something else?

Next, we need to evaluate our role and that of our partners in our collaborative projects. Does our model allow each research partner to become fully involved? Are there multiple perspectives evident in the research? Are varied perspectives allowed to become a part of the project? I have considered other models, attempting to convey a different vision of research collaboration with each partner having a key role. In doing so, I kept returning to a prism. In this image, multiple perspectives not only interact during problem posing and data collection but stream out of the confines of the prism in the findings, the discussion, and the conclusions. New facets of the difficult problems we are challenged to address are illuminated and multiple answers or truths are revealed, not just one. This new vision can be seen here.



As we evaluate our model of collaboration and our role in shared projects, we must not only recognize the assets we bring to the research process but our limitations as well, whether from methodological training or lack of content knowledge. We need to repeatedly consider how our background might affect the research process. Finally, we need to be willing to really listen to those from other perspectives and be open to new possibili-

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Northeastern Educational Research Association 41st Annual Conference, October 20-22, 2010 Conference Highlights

Greetings, NERA members! We hope that you enjoyed the 2010 NERA conference! The 2010 Conference Committee would like to thank all of the participants and volunteers for making this a wonderful conference. This year, our program included 2 pre-conference workshops that included a full-day NVIVO training and a survey design workshop; 3 in-conference workshops on collaboration, mixed methods, and structural equation modeling; 2 keynote speakers; 107 individual paper presentations; 7 symposia; 30 posters; 4 working group discussions; 5 invited panels, including two GSIC-sponsored panels and one special session offered by the Ad Hoc Committee on State & District Consumers of Educational Research and sponsored by NERA, University of Connecticut and the College Board; 2 mentoring sessions; and 8 roundtable discussions. As part of the review process, we were fortunate and want to again thank the involvement of 62 reviewers who were listed in the conference program. The popularity of our conference continues with 352 registrants and attendees representing 15 states (Alabama, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Wisconsin), DC, Canada, Nepal, Spain and the Ukraine! The interaction, discussions, and collegiality of everyone involved was a realization of the conference's theme: "Building Research Partnerships."

The current president, Thanos Patelis, and the program co-chairs, Carol Barry, The College Board, and Abby Lau, College of the Holy Cross, have already hit the ground running, and next year's conference promises to be an exciting one with Governor Roy Romer and Diana Pullin, Boston College, as the keynote speakers. We are looking forward to it ourselves. An online survey asking for your feedback and another one requesting your participation as a proposal reviewer, conference chair and discussant will be coming out in the next few weeks. Please participate. The conference is only as good as your involvement.

We were fortunate to have two excellent keynote speakers, Burke Johnson, University of South Alabama and Elizabeth Williamson, US Department of Education. The pre-conference workshops led by Kelly Godrey, The College Board, on NVIVO and Katherine McCormick, University of Kentucky, on Survey Design were well attended and well received. The in-conference workshops on mixed methods by Burke Johnson, structural equation modeling by Sara Finney, James Madison University, and collaboration by Jan Stivers, Marist College, and Sharon Cramer, Buffalo State College, were wonderfully received and well attended. We thank all of the workshop leaders for providing valuable training that benefited all of our members and made the conference an outstanding value for the low cost.

Many thanks go to all of the invited speakers. We had five invited panels on a variety of topics that stimulated discussion, brought to life the theme of the conference in building research partnerships, and provided excellent, useful information. Many thanks to each of the participants in the following five panels offered throughout the three days of the 2010 conference:

1. Collaboration and Teaching
 - Valerie Jackson, Belmont (NY) Elementary School
 - Linda Catelli, Dowling College
 - Patricia Ann Marcellino, Adelphi University
 - Yaoying Xu, Virginia Commonwealth University
 - Elizabeth Mauch, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
2. Seven Years, Five Career Paths: Successes and Lessons Learned
 - Kristen Huff, The College Board
 - Lisa A. Keller, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
 - Michael Jodoin, National Board of Medical Examiners
 - Mary Pitoniak, Educational Testing Service
 - Mary Zanetti, University of Massachusetts Medical School

3. Beyond “Perform and Conform”: Earning Tenure in Today’s Academy
 - Darlene Perner, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
 - David Moss, University of Connecticut
 - Thomas Levine, University of Connecticut
 - Craig Wells, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
4. Practical Applications of Advanced Measurement and Statistical Methods
 - Betsy McCoach, University of Connecticut
 - Kurt Geisinger, The Buros Center for Testing, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
5. Common Core State Standards: Alignment and Implications
 - Danielle Luisier, The College Board
 - Beth Hart, The College Board
 - Elaine Carman, The College Board
 - Joanne White, Connecticut State Department of Education

Additional thanks go to Tom Levine, University of Connecticut, for continuing the mentoring program, which by all accounts was another great success. Additionally, we want to thank the roundtable facilitators: Michael Uttendorfer, New York Institute of Technology; Katharyn Nottis, Bucknell University; Dolores Burton, New York Institute of Technology; Janice Sawyer, New York Institute of Technology; Barbara Wert, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania; and John Michael Lee, The College Board. Additionally, we want to thank the Board of Directors for their support and particularly Helen Marx, Eastern Connecticut State University, for helping with the entertainment, snacks, advice with the hotel, and the budget; Allison Brown, George Washington University, for organizing the GSIC-sponsored sessions; Katharyn Nottis, Bucknell University, for her leadership, support, and wisdom during the many issues that arose; and Barbara Helms, Education Development Center, for her work on the website and providing advice and wisdom on many fronts.

We are also fortunate to have worked with Kevin Brewer, The College Board, who did all the hard work on the logistics of the proposal submissions, reviews, and program production. Kevin and four graduate students who volunteered their time, Christine McGlynn and Amy Startzel from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania and Sarah Nelson and Jenn Walter from Bucknell University, did a fabulous job greeting everyone at the NERA Registration table and we all extend our deepest appreciation for their joyful, energetic, and welcoming efforts.

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

We hope you enjoyed the great jazz music Wednesday night by the Shilanski Band and the wonderful performance by the Messickists Thursday night. We thank the band members for showcasing their talent and showing us a great time: Gil Andrada, Rob Cook, Katrina Crofts, Brooke Magnus, John Mazzeo, Mary Pitoniak, Steve Sireci (band leader) and Fraser Stowe.

Last, but certainly not least, we need to thank Katharyn Nottis, now our Past-President, for giving us the opportunity to put this conference together. She facilitated and lived by the word collaboration! Thank you!

Please look out for a web survey asking your feedback to help in planning next year’s conference, as well as a request for your participation in the 2011 conference. Please also keep an eye out for both the CALL FOR PROPOSALS and the CALL FOR ACTS for “NERA’s Got Talent”.

Please note that we have a new email address: programchairs@nera-education.org. Please email us if you have any comments or questions. See you next year!



Elizabeth Williamson



R. Burke Johnson



Katharyn Nottis



Kristen Helmer - Poster Session



Lindsey K. Le - Poster Session



Socializing at NERA



James Madison University Group



Messickists and the Distractors

2010 Recipient of the Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service to NERA



The Leo D. Doherty Award for Outstanding Leadership and Service is given to a member of long standing who has generously given of self to NERA, to advance its mission and to enable it to thrive.

This award, instituted by the NERA Board of Directors in 1981, honors the memory of Leo Doherty. He was instrumental in the development and growth of NERA as a regional professional association for educational research. His leadership qualities, which were both ethical and humane, encouraged others to pursue their goals.

I would like to thank the members of the Doherty Award Committee for the 2009-2010 year for their service on this committee: Barbara Helms, Cheryl Gowie, Diane Liebert and myself as Chair. Several NERA members were nominated and considered for the award this year. Since there were several qualified nominees to consider, it was not an easy decision.

Many scholars come to NERA—first to present their research, perhaps to network with colleagues in related fields, and then, if NERA is lucky, they get hooked on NERA and become active in the behind-the-scenes committee life that forms the rich infrastructure of this organization. This year's Doherty award recipient, Darlene Perner, has done that—and more—bringing careful and thoughtful clarity of vision along with gentle, efficient effort to every project and role. It is clear that she has figured out that “you get what you give” applies here—and sustains the vitality of NERA as it does those who engage in NERA work. Darlene also brings a welcoming warmth and respectful sense of community and collaboration in interactions with NERA colleagues—and I suspect outside of the NERA community as well.

Some of the contributions Darlene has made to NERA include:

- Program Committee and Proposal Reviewer each year from the 30th Annual NERA Conference, October 27-30, 1999 to the 41st Annual NERA Conference, October 20-22, 2010
- Session Discussant, October 20, 2005; 2009
- Co-Editor of *The NERA Researcher*, Newsletter of the Northeastern Educational Research Association, 1999-2002. – with Phil Archer.
- Program Co-Chair for the 34th Annual NERA Conference, October 22-24, 2003
- Elected NERA Secretary, Term of Executive Office, November 2006 - November 2009; Elected to the Board of Directors, Term of Office, November 2004 - November, 2007
- Communications Chair, 2010-2011

Dr. Perner has made many contributions outside of NERA, as well. She is a Professor with a specialty in Special Education at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, Bloomsburg, PA, where she has been since 1998. She is very well-published internationally (in several languages!), and is active in organizations other than NERA, as well. She has made important contributions to education through work in the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) where she served as President of the Council's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities and Pennsylvania CEC. She has been involved in international work with OECD and UNESCO. She spent many years on various projects and teacher trainings. One of those was with teachers, administrators and government officials from South Eastern Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, and she consulted with government officials in Bosnia, Montenegro, and Croatia. These trainings and government consultations were focused on Inclusive Education and UNESCO's Rights of the Child and Education for ALL.

(Continued on page 13)

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Her most memorable experiences—outside of NERA, of course—were playing a major role in a conference sponsored by the Government of Spain and UNESCO, which resulted in UNESCO SALAMANCA STATEMENT AND FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION. Ninety-two governments and 25 international organizations were represented at this conference and this statement was the impetus for the International Movement of: “Education for ALL.” She wrote a book for UNESCO on Differentiated Curriculum, which involved traveling and meeting with educators from a number of countries: Africa, India, Norway, Sweden, Brazil and France.

Darlene Perner is a skillful leader, an accomplished educator, and a valued colleague and friend. She encompasses the qualities of the Leo Doherty Award.

Gavrielle Levine
Chair, Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award

2010 Teacher-as-Researcher Award



The Teacher-as-Researcher (TAR) award, presented annually by the Northeastern Educational Research Association (NERA), was established in 1993 to promote educational research. The award focuses on recognizing teachers for outstanding efforts in conducting research and using the outcomes to improve teaching and learning. With this award, NERA honors a practicing teacher researcher, to support them in valuing the research elements of their daily work, and to encourage teachers to assess the impact of teaching strategies and procedures, to reflect on the outcomes, and to change and reform practice based on the results of their study.

The TAR award recognizes a teacher, or a team that includes a teacher, serving as a principal investigator, co-investigator, or collaborator who has conducted a classroom research project or has applied research findings to inform his or her own teaching in a K-12 environment. The teacher should have primary responsibility, but not necessarily be the sole person in its development, for the research design that includes the application of a theory informing the study or the development of a theory from the results of a study. The setting of the study should be part of the nominee’s regular professional responsibilities (not as a student teacher or part of a dissertation) and the findings should result in a change in practice. Evidence of the resulting change in practice should be documented by data presented by the nominee, and should show that the teacher has applied theory to practice and that practice has changed.

The Teacher-as-Researcher winner for 2010 is Pat Romano for her study, “Bio Buddies: Peer Tutoring as an Instructional Strategy.” Pat presented her study on October 21, 2010 at NERA’s 41st Annual Conference. Pat Romano, from Mount Kisco, New York, began her career in medicine and became interested in teaching science after she was a “guest scientist” in her daughter’s elementary school class. She presently teaches middle and high school science at Soundview Prep School, a small private college prep school in Upper Westchester. Pat looks forward to going to work each day and feels that (on most days) teaching is a rewarding experience. According to Pat, “What I enjoy most about teaching is curriculum development, creating lessons and activities in which my ‘science phobic’ students will engage, and (just maybe) appreciate that science can be interesting and rewarding to learn.” When Pat is not preparing or delivering lesson plans, she enjoys cooking, knitting, reading novels, and attending her daughter’s soccer games.

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Pat is finishing her special education certification at PACE University. Her university mentor, Dr. Joan Walker, nominated Pat for this award. Under Dr. Walker's tutelage, the action research project "Bio Buddies: Peer Tutoring as an Instructional Strategy" has documented that through peer-tutoring, students learn to collaborate to improve content understanding.

In her study, Pat explained that peer tutoring is an instructional strategy where peers act as "instructional agents" for fellow students. Through peer-tutoring, students learn to collaborate to improve content understanding as students with lower academic abilities are paired with students of higher ability. In this study, 10 high school (9th-10th grade) biology students (typical students and students with learning/behavior disabilities) participated in a ten day peer-tutoring intervention to determine whether peer tutoring would 1) facilitate student academic success, 2) enhance student focus as well as engagement in biology class, and 3) favorably affect students' behavior in class leading to fewer off-task behavioral problems. Baseline data included scores on academic tasks, student surveys, student reflection journal entries, teacher observation field notes, and behavior checklists. Similar data types were collected for ten days after peer-tutoring was initiated. Student scores on most academic tasks were higher after peer-tutoring, with the exception of scores on the unit assessment. More students completed homework after peer-tutoring. After peer-tutoring, off-task behavior in class was reduced. Most students "agreed strongly" that working with peers led to greater understanding, better focus on tasks, and more enjoyment in studying biology.

As in the case of Pat Romano's study, the Teacher-as-Researcher Committee reviews submissions for the award from teacher researchers nominated by themselves and others. NERA members should encourage teachers they consider worthy of the award to submit a proposal. Applications will be available on the NERA website in early spring 2011. Information about applying for the 2011 award will also be available in a future online *NERA Researcher*. Special thanks to this year's hard-working TAR committee members: Brian Evans, Pace University; Cara McDermott-Fasy, Rhode Island College; Brian Evans, Pace University; Ellina Chernobilsky, Caldwell College; and Brian Preston, Lower Hudson Regional Information Center.

Susan Eichenholtz
Chair, Teacher-as-Researcher Committee

An Award of Special Recognition



At our 41st annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association, Dr. Barbara Helms (Educational Development Center, Inc) was the recipient of an Award of Special Recognition for her longstanding dedication to educational research and our organization. Unanimously approved by the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of NERA, the award was presented by past-President Dr. Kristen Huff along with Drs. Helen Marx and David M. Moss, who noted that "This once in a generation honor is given to acknowledge the impact that Dr. Helms has had on virtually every NERA member, and that we as NERA members are in a better position to advocate

for educational policy and practice because of her commitment to the highest standards of our profession." Dr. Helms has been previously honored by NERA, but this special recognition was bestowed to acknowledge her longstanding leadership and impact in NERA.

2010 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring




Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Sireci for being the 2010 recipient of the Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring. Steve is currently a Professor in the Research and Evaluation Methods doctoral concentration and Director of the Center for Educational Assessment in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author of over 100 publications and conference papers and has served on numerous advisory boards, sharing his professional expertise in psychology and psychometrics. He is known for his research in evaluating and facilitating test fairness particularly involving issues of test bias and cross-lingual assessment.

Steve was NERA President in 2006-2007 and has been an active member of NERA for more than 20 years. Just as he was once mentored by others at NERA, Steve has continued that tradition and has consistently brought his students to conferences to further their professional development.

Steve's commitment and talent as a mentor goes much beyond NERA. As a professor he is praised by his students for focusing on their strengths, always providing sound advice and support for their work and holding them to very high standards. Steve's commitment to his students, though, is not just about their academic growth. He has helped them find housing, navigate in a new culture, and opened his home to them so that they feel like members of his family. Former students commend Steve for affecting so many lives in a positive manner, both as they pursue their dreams in a career and by helping them to be "more human and live happier" lives.

As Steve's own former mentor describes him, "While Steve has developed professionally and has risen to the top of his profession, internally he has stayed the same kind, generous, friendly, and energetic person.... I can imagine no better recipient of this award than Professor Stephen Sireci."



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Advanced Announcement of the 2011 Conference

NERA 2011: Educational & Measurement Science for the Good of Society

Abby Lau (College of the Holy Cross) and Carol Barry (the College Board), NERA 2011 Conference Co-chairs

Hello from the 2011 NERA Conference Team! We trust that everyone arrived safely back home after this year's conference. Although memories of the 2010 conference are still fresh in our minds, we have been busy planning another memorable NERA conference for 2011. Be assured that NERA 2011 will have many of the same features that made NERA 2010 so wonderful: professional development workshops, research presentations, symposia, theme-based panels, and mentoring sessions.

In addition, NERA 2011 will offer us all the unique opportunity to hear keynote speeches from Governor Roy Romer and Dr. Diana Pullin. **Governor Romer** served three terms as the governor of Colorado, was the superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District for six years, and is currently a senior advisor to the president of the College Board. **Dr. Pullin** brings an interdisciplinary perspective as a professor at Boston College's Lynch School of Education who also has a law degree. Several of her research interests relate directly to the theme of the 2011 conference including equity issues in testing, education law and policy, and rights of students with disabilities.

Keep reading the *NERA Researcher* for the latest developments in the 2011 conference. We will continue to post information about our plans for the conference throughout the year. Watch for the Call for Proposals and the Call for Acts in "NERA's Got Talent" in the Spring issue. In the meantime, if you have ideas for the program for NERA 2011, feel free to share them with us by sending an email to programchairs@nera-education.org.

NERA is now on

LinkedIn and **facebook**

Join our pages at:

<http://www.linkedin.com/groupRegistration?gid=881287>

and

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/NERA-Northeastern-Educational-Research-Association/173051016042611>

Use these to follow NERA updates and post articles, research opportunities, and any questions for the NERA community.

Institutional Memberships

Twelve universities and organizations became institutional members this year:

The College Board	\$1,000
Educational Testing Service	1,000
University of Connecticut	1,000
James Madison University	750
Johnson & Wales University	750
Bloomsburg University	500
Bucknell University	500
Buros Center for Testing/ University of Nebraska-Lincoln	500
Pace University	500
University of Massachusetts at Amherst	500
William Paterson University	500
Westfield State College	1,700

The Woollatt Distinguished Paper award committee received 8 submissions, and we are working to complete reviews. Committee members are preparing to select a winner for the Dec 1 award announcement date.

Membership Highlights

This year's conference attendance continued the strong growth we have seen over the last five years.

This year's attendance was 320 with an overall membership of 337 (2009 was 362, 2008 was 320). The attendance of graduate students remained strong at 112.

	Professional	Retired	Graduate Students
Membership	219	5	113
Conference	204	4	112

This year's conference welcomed 130 new members and 158 returning members. Conference attendees represented more than 85 institutions and education agencies.

Member News

Data from the ongoing research projects regarding cyberbullying by NERA members Robert Gable and Stacey Kite from Johnson & Wales University were referenced in the October 18 issue of *Time* magazine in an article entitled "Bullied to Death."

Nicholas Daniel Hartlep, a graduate student member of NERA, will be chairing a roundtable session titled, "Promoting student (dis)engagement: We're really not that bad," presenting a poster titled, "Just What Is Response to Intervention and What's It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education? A Critical Race Theory Examination of RTI," and presenting a multi-authored paper titled, "FUBU (ForUsByUs) Style: Researchers of Color Documenting the Lives of Students of Color in Majority White Suburban Schools," at the AERA Annual Meeting to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, April 8-12, 2011.

January Board of Director's Meeting

The January Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for January 21 – 22, 2011. The location has not been determined, yet. The site will be based on the results of the Site Selection Committee due in late November 2010.

The Graduate Lounge

By Katrina Crotts, University of Massachusetts Amherst

This year's conference was another success! The Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) hosted two sessions for graduate students. The first session entitled *Seven Years, Five Career Paths: Successes and Lessons Learned* was packed with ambitious graduate students. This interactive, panel-based session included five 2003 graduates from the Research and Evaluation Methods Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst including: Kristen Huff, Lisa A. Keller, Michael Jodoin, Mary Pitoniak, and Mary Zanetti. Another UMass grad, April Zenisky, lead the panel discussion. Each of these UMass graduates discussed how their career paths have played out over the past seven years, providing perspectives from industry and academia as well as giving advice on lessons learned as they have developed their careers.

Our second session this year was entitled *Practical Applications of Advanced Measurement and Statistical Measurement*. Dr. Betsy McCoach of the University of Connecticut and Dr. Kurt Geisinger of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln discussed their careers, including opportunities for practicing advanced measurement in applied settings, how to apply for grants, and sought after skills in the field of measurement. Each panelist also discussed what they believed to be important methods in statistics and gave advice on writing a dissertation. Thank you again to all of our presenters! Your knowledge and advice to all the graduate students was extremely beneficial.

In addition to the two sessions this year, GSIC also hosted a Graduate Student Social with complimentary appetizers. We had a great turnout at the social, and it provided graduate students the opportunity to meet students from other programs. This year we also handed out "Graduate Student" pins to help graduate students better identify each other and once again encouraged graduate students to interact with students from different schools and programs.

This year we plan to continue working on our mission of supporting the development of NERA graduate students. We will also continue to reach out to new graduate students to increase the diversity of institutions represented at NERA. We have four members of GSIC completing their service this year including: Megan France, Marissa Cohen, Melissa Smythe, and Allison Brown. Thank you all for your contributions to GSIC over the past few years and good luck with everything as you finish up your graduate work. We look forward to selecting new members for the upcoming year. The current members of GSIC include:



Katrina Crotts (Kcrotts@educ.umass.edu) is in her second year of the Research and Evaluation Methods Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her current research interests include validity theory, computer based testing, and practical applications of item-response theory. She is also interested in assessment of students with learning disabilities and English Language Learners. Katrina is serving as the 2010-2011 chair for the GSIC.



Daniel Jurich (jurichdp@jmu.edu) is in his second year of the Psychological Sciences Quantitative Psychology Concentration Program at James Madison University. His research examines the effects of cheating on test equating procedures. Additional interests include practical applications of item response theory, cognitive diagnostic modeling, and techniques for handling missing data. He is also interested in statistical programming and comparing the effectiveness of currently available software programs. Daniel is serving his second year on the GSIC.

NERA provides mentoring for graduate students

By Thomas H. Levine, Brian Evans, and Christine Clayton

At this past October's conference, NERA's mentoring program matched seven graduate students with four NERA mentors. The program invites graduate students to apply over the summer, to submit up to twenty pages of work in progress to a mentor, and then to meet for 30 minutes with their mentor to discuss their work. NERA thanks Tom Schram (UNH), Craig Wells (UMass), Kerri Ullucci (Roger Williams University), and Scott Brown (UConn) for serving as mentors.

The spring issue of the NERA Researcher will include instructions for how graduate students may request mentoring at our 2011 conference. The account below, by one of this year's mentees, suggests why graduate students and their advisors should take advantage of this opportunity.

A Community of Practice: 2010 NERA Mentoring Program

By Darcy A. Fiano, doctoral candidate, University of Connecticut

Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death ~ Albert Einstein

The decision to continue one's education at the graduate level demonstrates a commitment to life long learning. As a doctoral candidate at UCONN I continually seek out opportunities to challenge my thinking and foster my academic growth. When the opportunity presented itself to participate in the 2010 NERA Mentoring Program I enthusiastically accepted the invitation. Although I have received tremendous support and valuable feedback on my dissertation proposal from the members of my committee and outside readers, I relished the chance to receive additional feedback from yet another experienced researcher. Once introduced to my mentor, we connected both academically and personally. We had already begun to establish a relationship prior to the session as we had exchanged emails several times. He began the session by asking me to articulate my proposed dissertation study then thoughtfully crafted his comments and guidance from there. We both shared an interest in the theoretical framework I based my research on. My mentor had vast knowledge of this theory as well as with a particular researcher's work within it; he had even brought with him the researcher's recently published edition to share with me. His verbal and written reflections as well as our discourse on my research will prove invaluable as I continue on with my study. I also look forward to sending him revisions of my work as he was amenable to follow-up reviews.

Although the session seemed to go by quickly, my mentor shared a considerable amount of knowledge. I felt my mentor had a vested interest in not only my research study but also in me as an emerging researcher. He was not only helping me to develop the content of my dissertation proposal; he was also helping to develop me as a researcher. I left the session with a fresh perspective on my work as well as a renewed sense of affirmation in my work and myself as a researcher. I have always been someone who is receptive to collegial sharing and comment. I have found that you need to be willing to open your work and yourself up to the critique of those with more experience in order to grow and develop. I would recommend the NERA Mentoring Program to all graduate students. The experience is positive and constructive. It is meant to support and encourage scholarly aspirations, not dampen them. There is no judgment or criticism; mentoring creates a safe environment facilitating and fostering the continued growth of novice researchers. I very much appreciated this learning experience and I know other graduate students will continue to benefit from this program in the future.

CALL for NERA Programs

We are in need of NERA Programs and newsletters from previous years. Once received, we will scan and either post on our web site or keep an electronic archive. We need programs from the following years: 2002, 2001, 1999, 1995, 1994, 1992, 1991, and 1983 through 1969. If you're willing to part with the programs and newsletters, please send them to Thanos Patelis, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10023. Please put your name on them and we'll return them if you like. We'll also pay for postage – contact Thanos at tpatelis@collegeboard.org Thank you!!

(Continued from page 7)

ties, to viewing research differently. As Locker (1994) noted, “Interdisciplinary research requires tolerance” (p. 5 of 7). I would say that any research partnership requires tolerance. If we are able to do all of this, we will move beyond examples like that of the eighth graders unable to determine a 15% tip, listed in a book about teaching improvement, and gain a fuller understanding of the real teaching and learning issues with which we are faced. That will truly be educational reform!

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Communications Committee Report

The NERA Communications Committee has accomplished a lot over the past few months and has some great plans for the coming year. The 2010 committee, composed of Darlene Perner, Pete Swerdzewski, Steven Holtzman and Allie Brown, was successful in molding the roles and responsibilities of this newly-formed committee. It was established that our role is to align communications by ensuring consistency in representing NERA through all of its communications venues. Over the past few months, we reviewed NERA's mission statement, logo and tagline and provided recommendations to the Board of Directors as to how we should proceed in order to present a strong and consistent image. The committee also developed a style guide for NERA which establishes branding and formatting standards for all printed and online materials. This guide will be helpful in maintaining consistency throughout all documents and can be helpful to members in providing guidelines for their writing. We have also initiated discussions with the *NERA Researcher* editors as well as the website editor as to how we can work with them in assisting with their communications. Additionally, we have thoroughly reviewed the numerous benefits of NERA entering the realm of social networking and drafted proposals to create a LinkedIn group and a Facebook fan page for our association.

The 2011 committee has plans to continue this work over the coming months. The committee has proceeded in creating the LinkedIn group and Facebook fan page. Members are encouraged to join the LinkedIn group at <http://www.linkedin.com/groupRegistration?gid=881287> and the Facebook fan page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/NERA-Northeastern-Educational-Research-Association/173051016042611>. These pages can be used both to spread NERA news as well as for members to share any information that may be of interest to the NERA community. This could include links to interesting articles, opportunities in educational research or questions that other members could assist with. We are hopeful that these web-pages will facilitate communication between members outside of the annual conference, helping to build invaluable relationships. Other objectives for this year include revising the NERA style guide so we can present a final version in late 2011, considering how we can make NERA more visible, and working with the *NERA Researcher* editors, website editor, membership committee, and the 2011 Program Co-chairs in helping with their communication needs. The Communications Committee is currently seeking new members, so please contact us if you are interested in helping with these tasks.

Call for 2011 NERA Participation and Committee Membership

The quality and strength of NERA is dependent on the involvement of our members. We need your involvement, expertise, and contributions. In early December 2010, we will be sending out an online survey asking for your participation in the 2011 conference as a proposal reviewer, chair and/or discussant. Additionally, we will ask your interest to become a member of one of our committees. The role of our committees varies, but in general is charged with some aspect of our organization. The results of the committees help shape the organization, establish policies and protocols, and confer awards. A fuller description of each committee will be provided with the survey. So, please look for the survey. We look forward to your involvement!

NERA RESEARCHER
Dr. Helen Marx, Treasurer
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