



# The NERA Researcher

## The President's Message



*Ross Markle*

These unprecedented times have seen all of our lives disrupted. Some of us are fortunate, with those disruptions limited to an adjustment to working from home, the struggle to find certain items at the grocery store, or perhaps a canceled trip. Others are more notably impacted, with many of our members dealing with job loss, financial challenges, or directly facing this disease, either personally or through a loved one. Before I go further, I do sincerely hope that, in the spectrum of disruption, you are among the fortunate.

At a time when lives and livelihoods are threatened, it might seem absurd to be worrying about a conference that's still almost six months away. What's more, so much will change in the next few weeks, let alone the next few months, that contingency planning seems foolhardy. However, Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan." I would adapt this axiom to say that it also takes as much energy to worry as it does to plan, so the NERA leadership has elected the latter of those two options.

I wish that this could be a message of certainty and decisiveness. I would love to present you with firm deadlines by which we will know how objective criteria will inform specific actions. However, I do not feel that we are in that position at this time, specifically in relation to the NERA 2020 Conference. This may change in as little as the next few days or weeks, but as I write this, I do not think we are in a position to make this choice. While I cannot assure you of what NERA will look like come October, I can assure you that we are working very hard to fulfill NERA's mission, serve our members, and navigate these difficult times.

First, the Conference Team—Thai Ong, Madison Holzman, John Rubright, and Andrew Jones—has been working diligently since November to plan for NERA 2020. This was incredibly helpful when news of the Coronavirus began to break because when AERA was canceled, NCME postponed, and the status of NERA 2020 put into question, they were already a functional team. What's more, the NERA Officers and Board of Directors have been incredibly active and responsive to requests as we have weighed our options. The Conference Team will provide an update later in this issue, and I would encourage you to read that to understand where we sit, how we are working, and where we hope to be in October.

As for NERA as an organization, the Conference remains a large part, but there are other factors to consider as well. Tia Fechter and Steven Holtzman—NERA Treasurer and President-Elect, respectively—have continued efforts to

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## The NERA Researcher

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

### Message from the Editors

Dear NERA Members,

First, we would like to send our best wishes to all our NERA family at this unprecedented time and hope that you and your families, friends, and loved ones are all safe and well.

We also would like to take this opportunity to say "thank you" to Katrina Roohr for her outstanding work over the past three years as content editor of *The NERA Researcher*. I have had the great pleasure of working with her as an "extra pair of eyes" but now I will try to fill her shoes as the new content editor. I look forward to working with Kate Nolan to make the newsletter serve our members as always.

While our conference co-chairs—Jonathan, Thai, Madison, and Andrew—continue to plan a great 51<sup>st</sup> annual NERA conference, they are faced with looking at alternative strategies. This issue contains their call for proposals and outlines their plans. Please consider submitting your work to present at the conference. In the coming weeks, you will receive emails from the co-chairs with additional information about the conference. With the cancellation of AERA and the postponement of NCME and other conferences, consider recommending the NERA conference to colleagues and fellow students in your network.

This issue also contains the call for nominations for NERA awards as well as for the executive committee and board of directors. All deadlines are June 30, 2020. Please read the award descriptions and consider nominating a current NERA member. We should note that we have a good deal of member news, so be sure to check it out and see what your colleagues have been up to recently.

We are sure that you are all looking forward to gathering together in Trumbull in October, and we look forward to seeing you and having a great conference.

Stay safe, well and healthy,  
Barbara J. Helms & Kate Nolan  
The Editors

## Executive Committee

### President:

**Ross Markle**  
*DIA Higher Education Collaborators*

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*Educational Records Bureau*

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*Educational Testing Service*

### Treasurer:

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*Independent Research Scientist*

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**Marcia Delcourt** (2019-2020)  
*Western Connecticut State University*

**Juliette Lyons-Thomas** (2019-2021)  
*Educational Testing Service*

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*American Board of Internal Medicine*

**Nina Deng** (2017-2020)  
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**Francis O'Donnell** (2019-2022)  
*National Board of Medical Examiners*

**Beth Perkins** (2019-2020)  
*James Madison University*

## Appointed Positions

### 2020 Conference Co-Chairs:

**Andrew Jones**  
*American Board of Surgery*

**Jonathan Rubright**  
*National Board of Medical Examiners*

**Madison Holzman**  
*Curriculum Associates*

**Thai Ong**  
*National Board of Medical Examiners*

### The NERA Researcher Co-Editors:

**Barbara J. Helms**  
*Independent Research Consultant*

**Kate Nolan**  
*Curriculum Associates*

### NERA Webmaster:

**Jerusha Henderek**  
*National Board of Medical Examiners*

### NERA Conference Proceedings Co-Editor for Digital Commons:

**Alejandra Garcia**  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

### Mentoring Program Co-Chairs:

**Katrina Roohr**  
*Educational Testing Service*

**Tanesia Beverly**  
*Law School Admissions Council*

### STANDING COMMITTEES

#### Communications Chair:

**Bo Bashkov**  
*American Board of Internal Medicine*

#### Membership Chair:

**Rory Lazowski**  
*College Board*

#### Nominations Chair:

**Rochelle Michel**  
*Educational Records Bureau*

#### Graduate Student Issues Chair:

**Beth Perkins**  
*James Madison University*

### AWARDS COMMITTEES

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**Jody Piro** (2019-2020)  
*Western Connecticut State University*

#### Thomas Donlon Mentoring Award Chair:

**Marcia Delcourt** (2019-2020)  
*Western Connecticut State University*

#### Leo D. Doherty Memorial

### Award Chair:

**Steven Holtzman**  
*Educational Testing Service*

### Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Chair:

**Rochelle Michel**  
*Educational Records Bureau*

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#### Conference Ambassadors Chair:

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**Steven Holtzman**  
*Educational Testing Service*

#### Strategic Planning Chair:

**April Zenisky**  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Given everything that's going on, I can understand that, to some, receiving a request to renew your membership, or a survey about a potential conference in the fall may seem strange, silly, or even insensitive. Believe me; I can understand because I have felt that way at many points in the last few months. However, there is another quote from one of my favorite movies: "Until such time as the world ends, we will act as though it intends to spin on." Those of us who have elected to serve NERA have accepted a responsibility to continue the excellence of this organization. If we did not continue with these activities, we would be negligent, subsequently threatening the health of NERA. We hope to be understanding and supportive through this pandemic, and we hope that you feel the same way as we work to continue NERA's work.

## Member News cont'd

## Member News

Please submit your accomplishments to [theneraresearcher@nera-education.org](mailto:theneraresearcher@nera-education.org).



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## Renewal of Membership

Dear NERA Members,

Just as your lives are wrapped in uncertainty, change, and adaptation, we at NERA have been working to face the same challenges for the organization. NERA's Officers, Board of Directors, and 2020 Conference Planning Team have been working collaboratively since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to determine how we can best maintain NERA's organizational health, serve our members, and fulfill our mission.

We understand that many factors may be affecting your ability to renew at this time. However, we do hope that you can renew, and would like to emphasize a few benefits of membership. Some are continued benefits that you have experienced in the past, while others have been added or modified to adjust to our current environment.

- NERA introduces you to a community of educators who are interested in all aspects of educational research including experienced researchers, junior faculty, and graduate students
- NERA offers periodic organizational communications through *The NERA Researcher*
- NERA is working to provide timely content for our members to help connect and learn about how the pandemic and subsequent issues are impacting education. As such, NERA will be providing a webinar series in the coming months to address pandemic-related topics. Available for members only, these webinars will address:
  - Educators and the Pandemic – Stories, issues, and impacts of in-class teachers and how they've adapted to the pandemic and subsequent policies.
  - Testing in a Pandemic – How remote proctoring is becoming an increasing reality in a socially distanced world.
  - Intentional Online Education – What might education look like if we accept virtual environments as the default educational setting?
  - NERA is exploring all of our options, including hosting our traditional, in-person meeting, or a virtual conference if that will not be possible. In either case, being a NERA member will grant you access to a rich program of educational research and opportunities to connect with some of the top people in educational research fields.

There are a few things we'd like for you to know about renewing your membership.

1. Within your renewal notice (received by email), you will see a link to obtain and choose a payment method for your invoice.
2. Membership voted at the NERA business meeting in October 2019 to increase membership dues. Thus, you will see your invoice reflect a cost of \$50 for professionals, \$25 for students, and \$25 for retirees. This increase was needed to fill the operational budget gaps that were projected to exist annually without an increase. The operational budget has increased from previous years due to a few factors: 1) the NERA Board of Directors' approval of allocating \$2,000 annually for Vieth customizations, 2) our yearly accountant fee, and 3) more committees appropriately using their allocated and approved budgets.
3. We have been notified that some members are receiving NERA communications in their "JUNK" email folders. One way to remedy this is to add "\*@[nera-education.org](mailto:nera-education.org)" and "\*@[memberleap.com](mailto:memberleap.com)" to your email address book. The asterisk adds all emails from these domains as safe users to your address book. This may help prevent some email messages from going into your junk folder. If you notice that your emails from NERA are still going to your junk folder, please let us know by emailing [treasurer@nera-education.org](mailto:treasurer@nera-education.org).
4. Anytime your email address changes, please remember to update your NERA online account with the new and correct information so you don't miss out on notifications and exciting opportunities NERA has to offer.

We thank you for being a NERA member, and hope that you choose to continue to be a part of our community.

Sincerely,  
Ross Markle, NERA President  
Tia Fechter, NERA Treasurer



## 2020 NERA 51<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*“Say it Loud, Say it Clear: Communicating Results and Driving Change”*

October 14–16, 2020

Marriott Hotel, Trumbull, Connecticut

Dear NERA members,

We know there is much uncertainty as we look ahead to summer and beyond, and frankly, nobody knows what the coming months will bring. We are, however, certain of one thing: we hope to engage with you in Trumbull, Connecticut, in October. At this time, we are making every effort to host an in-person NERA experience from October 14–16. However, it's also quite possible that restrictions prevent us from meeting at Trumbull, so we are also actively considering alternative options for the Conference. While we cannot be sure what form the Conference will take, we are committed to planning and executing a meaningful experience for you all.

In the coming weeks, we will be releasing more information on confirmed speakers, sessions, and workshops on the [NERA website](#). We recognize that many of you are **likely** juggling new schedules, unfamiliar remote work, data challenges, new project timelines, additional responsibilities of teaching children, and the mental and emotional space taken up by COVID-19. As such, we will be decreasing the requirements for this year's proposal submissions. We hope that by only requiring 500-word abstracts, we will make the submission process easier. We will release the formal submission guidelines soon, as well as the call for volunteers to review submissions.

Finally, as we have all said many times, NERA is its members. As the 2020 co-chairs, we are here to serve you and bring you a meaningful NERA experience. To understand the potential impacts to the Conference, we ask that you take a moment to give us your thoughts regarding NERA 2020. This will be incredibly helpful in understanding the various direct and indirect impacts to you, your ability/interest to travel, and the viability of an in-person meeting in October. To complete the survey, [click here](#) — it should take fewer than 3 minutes to complete. We hope you will share feedback with us as we continue to navigate conference planning.

We wish you well and sincerely hope you are staying healthy and sane during these trying times. We look forward to connecting with you and engaging for NERA 2020.

Sincerely,

NERA 2020 co-chairs  
Madison Holzman, Curriculum Associates  
Andrew Jones, American Board of Surgery  
Thai Ong, National Board of Medical Examiners  
Jonathan Rubright, National Board of Medical Examiners

## Communications Committee Update

Bo Bashkov, *American Board of Internal Medicine*

Happy spring, everyone!

I hope everyone is staying safe and keeping their physical distance while staying socially engaged online. In this update, I would like to provide an update on some transitions within the Communications Committee, highlight some of the work we have been doing recently, and share our plans to serve our members in the coming months leading up to the NERA 2020 conference.

### Communications Committee Transitions

Although most of our committee members haven't changed since the last issue of *The NERA Researcher*, there is one notable transition I would like to share with you. Chi Hang Au of James Madison University is no longer serving as Webmaster, and our new committee member, Jerusha Henderek of the National Board of Medical Examiners, has graciously agreed to step into this role. Jerusha is already making updates to NERA's website, and I am very glad to have her on the team. Please join me in thanking Chi for his service and welcoming Jerusha to her new role!

### Recent Work by the Committee

There are two new initiatives we've undertaken this spring. One has to do with the NERA Board of Directors' effort to highlight the great leadership and mentorship taking place at the NERA conference each year, as well as year-round. Specifically, every month we'll be sharing little blurbs on past award recipients curated by Caroline Prendergast of James Madison University. Look out for those posts on all of our social media channels, and don't forget to like, share, and follow us there.



The second initiative is a new approach to working with the Conference Co-Chairs. Namely, Madison Holzman, one of the Co-Chairs for NERA 2020, will be in charge of streamlining all their conference-related communications with our committee. We believe this approach will ease the work of both the Co-Chairs and Communications and look forward to keeping you all informed and engaged before, during, and after the conference.

### Communication Request Procedures

As a reminder, all official NERA business that needs to be disseminated to the membership needs to follow NERA's Communication Committee guidelines, as documented in the [NERA Handbook](#). A [Communications Request Form](#) must be submitted to [bo.bashkov@gmail.com](mailto:bo.bashkov@gmail.com) at least two business days prior to the requestor's target date for dissemination to ensure sufficient time for the request to be reviewed/approved and information to be sent out to members or posted on social media. We hope all members, including NERA leadership, will follow these procedures.

Best,  
Bo Bashkov  
Chair, Communications Committee



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## **Winner of the 2019 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award**

Congratulations to Rebecca Kang McGill-Wilkinson and co-authors on the paper entitled, *"Bullying Experiences of Non-Binary Secondary Students: The Protective Role of Relationships with School-Based Adults,"* for winning the 2019 Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award.

The Lorne H. Woollatt Distinguished Paper Award is an award named in honor of Lorne Woollatt, a distinguished New York State educator and NERA member.

Rebecca Kang McGill-Wilkinson is a Coordinator of Program Evaluation for the Baltimore County Public Schools. Her co-author Christine W. Koth also works for the Baltimore County Public Schools.

The award-winning paper reports on the bullying experiences and school belonging of non-binary students in Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). It examines whether positive relationships with school-based adults may protect students from bullying and a low sense of belonging at school. Results showed close to two percent of BCPS secondary students selected a non-binary gender option on a systemwide survey. Non-binary students reported higher rates and more frequent bullying and lower school belonging compared to male and female students. However, social support from school-based adults reduced the risk of bullying and low school belonging of non-binary students.



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

The Leo D. Doherty Memorial Award is given to a longstanding NERA member who exemplifies the qualities that Leo Doherty brought to NERA members, his colleagues, and students throughout his career. The award, instituted by the NERA Board of Directors in 1981, honors the memory of Leo Doherty. He was instrumental in the development and growth of NERA as a professional association for educational research.

His leadership qualities, which were both ethical and humane, encouraged others to pursue and achieve their goals. Thus, this award is presented to NERA members who have exhibited outstanding leadership and service to our organization.

Nomination letters should be sent as an email attachment to **Steven Holtzman** at [sholtzman@ets.org](mailto:sholtzman@ets.org) no later than **June 30, 2020**. Nomination letters should explicitly name the nominee and offer a concise and compelling case for the candidate in terms of their leadership and service to NERA.

For information, please check out [https://www.nera-education.org/leo\\_d\\_doherty\\_memorial\\_award.php](https://www.nera-education.org/leo_d_doherty_memorial_award.php) or e-mail Steven at [sholtzman@ets.org](mailto:sholtzman@ets.org).



## Call for Nominations for the 2020 Thomas F. Donlon Memorial Award for Distinguished Mentoring

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

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

Nominations are again being sought for this annual award. Nominees must be NERA members and may be nominated by any member(s) of NERA to whom they served as mentors. If you would like to see a member of NERA who was your mentor be recognized for his/her contributions to your success, send your nomination to Dr. Jody Piro via email at [piroj@wcsu.edu](mailto:piroj@wcsu.edu) by **June 30, 2020**. In addition to the nomination letter, all nominations must be accompanied by at least three letters of support indicating how the nominee distinguished her/himself as a mentor. Up to five separate letters of support can be sent for each nominee. The award will be presented at the 2020 NERA conference. Please contact Jody if you have any questions about the Donlon Award or the nomination process.



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## Update from the NERA Mentoring Program

Tanesia Beverly, *Law School Admissions Council*

Katrina Roohr, *Educational Testing Service*

The NERA Mentoring Program would like to thank Jerusha Henderek for her dedicated service as a co-chair over the past few years. We welcome Katrina Roohr from the Educational Testing Service as our newest co-chair!

The Mentoring Program strives to facilitate meaningful connections for NERA participants through two key approaches: 1) conference-based connections and 2) an online message board through the NERA website.

The conference-based Mentoring Program has existed since 2012 and serves as a focused, hand-selected match-making process. Each year, the Mentoring Program co-chairs collect information from members who volunteer to be a mentor or want to be mentored. Mentor-Mentee pairs are matched based on research interests, career goals, or areas of desired growth. Pairs are encouraged to communicate before and meet during the annual NERA Conference. Participants in this process benefit from receiving a structured and informed match, having dedicated time to meet during the Conference, and being able to make new connections outside of their existing social networks.

The other approach that is offered is the mentoring message board. This service is available 24 hours a day and can be accessed via the *Mentoring Board* link listed in the *Mentoring* dropdown tab on the [NERA site](#). From there, members can sign up to be a mentor, or potential mentees can view the contact information for mentor volunteers. Using this approach, members can sign-up or reach out at any point throughout the year and have the freedom to form their own mentor-mentee relationships. This may be especially useful to members who cannot attend the annual NERA Conference or would like to set up a time to meet at another professional meeting.

The co-chairs will be sending information this summer about how to participate in the conference-based Mentoring Program. Please feel free to reach out to Tanesia ([tanesia.beverly@uconn.edu](mailto:tanesia.beverly@uconn.edu)) and Katrina ([kroohr@ets.org](mailto:kroohr@ets.org)) should you have any questions or suggestions for improving the Mentoring Program. We are looking forward to working with the NERA membership over the coming year!



## Membership Matters

Rory Lazowski, *College Board*

At the start of 2020, the Membership Committee was focused on two primary projects. First, we have been expanding a potential member database to recruit new NERA members. This project was started last year, and after having initial success, we have decided that it would be advantageous to continue in 2020.

Second, we wanted to contact previous NERA members who have let their memberships lapse to a) encourage them to renew their membership, and b) to better understand why they let their membership lapse in the first place. To do so, we've created a survey and hope to collect data from this sample later in 2020.

Of course, the deadlines for these projects have been impacted by recent events, though we are staying resilient and continuing our work as best we can. The expansion of the prospective member database has continued, and we are still building this out at the time of this newsletter. Further, the survey for previous members is finalized, and we are working with other NERA committee members and leadership to determine the best date to deploy the survey. We previously targeted this spring to send out communication for both of these efforts. Given that so many people are unsure about funding these days, especially for travel, conferences, and membership dues, added to the fact that their normal day-to-day has shifted substantially, it makes sense to hold off outreach efforts until this summer.

In closing, the Membership Committee would like to extend our thoughts to each of you as you navigate these difficult times and hope that you are all staying safe and doing well.



## Committee Report for Teacher as a Researcher (TAR) Award

NERA's Teacher-as-Researcher (TAR) Award is being reimagined for 2021 to include a greater scope of NERA teachers who are conducting research. Therefore, we will not solicit TAR nominations for 2020. The TAR Committee will provide more details in an upcoming newsletter. We hope that all of you have a productive spring, and we wish you well for the coming months.

TAR Committee Interim Chair, Marcia Delcourt, Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT




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## **Call for Candidates — NERA Needs You!**

We are seeking nominations for the following open, elected positions:

NERA President (3-year term as President-elect, President, Past President)

NERA Secretary (3-year term)

NERA Board Members (3-year term) – (2 positions)

NERA Board Member (1-year term) – (1 position)

Descriptions of these positions can be found in the NERA Handbook, available [here](#).

We have many great members who can serve as NERA's next leaders, but we need nominations from you to put together the slate for the 2020 election. Please send your nominations for President, Secretary, and Board Members to Rochelle Michel, NERA Past President, at [rochelle.michel@gmail.com](mailto:rochelle.michel@gmail.com) by **June 30, 2020**. Note that all nominees must be current members of NERA.

**Consider nominating yourself or a colleague for one of these important positions!**



## The Graduate Lounge

Beth Perkins, *James Madison University*

Hello, NERA graduate students! I hope that you are all doing well as we welcome in spring! Many aspects of our daily lives have changed a great deal in a very short time. These changes have impacted graduate students in many different ways. I would like to take this moment to welcome anyone to reach out to the Graduate Student Issues Committee (GSIC) at [neragraduatestudents@gmail.com](mailto:neragraduatestudents@gmail.com). Whether you have ideas about how the GSIC can help support fellow graduate students, need someone to commiserate with about the current situation, or want to see a friendly face via a virtual chat. The connections we have with each other are invaluable as we continue to navigate changes in our lives.

## Update from the GSIC Committee

### Benefits of Serving on the Graduate Students Issues Committee

Serving on the GSIC is a great way to get involved with NERA and build relationships with other graduate students and professionals. Responsibilities include collaborating with students from various institutions to plan GSIC-sponsored in-conference sessions, and the GSIC student social. GSIC members also work with members of other NERA committees to help with additional tasks as needed. Members typically serve a 2-year term. If you are a graduate student and have questions about how to get involved with NERA, contact [neragraduatestudents@gmail.com](mailto:neragraduatestudents@gmail.com).

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

Like us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/neragsic>

### Plans for NERA 2020 GSIC-Sponsored Conference Sessions

The GSIC is currently selecting the topics for two in-conference sessions for the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual NERA Conference in 2020. While the sessions will be aimed toward graduate students, we hope the sessions will appeal to a wide range of NERA attendees. If you have suggestions for the topics you would like to see addressed by these conference sessions, feel free to contact us at [neragraduatestudents@gmail.com](mailto:neragraduatestudents@gmail.com).

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



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