The 2010 Annual Meeting—Transitions, Change, and a New Look

On the basis of changes approved by the AERA Council in July 2008 and January 2009, the 2010 Annual Meeting is the first to make the transition to new quality enhancements for AERA Annual Meetings. Those who come to Denver are encouraged to participate fully in a new range of opportunities and to provide feedback to the AERA Joint Annual Meeting Policies and Procedures Committee and Research Advisory Committee (hereinafter called Joint Committee). Since August 2008, the Joint Committee has been leading the reform effort with extensive input from the AERA membership and Annual Meeting attendees.

Key to the Annual Meeting reforms is to produce a higher quality meeting experience for both attendees and presenters. The introduction of new session formats and a reduction in the number of concurrent sessions will provide more opportunities for discussion, interaction, and networking for attendees. The first-time implementation of peer review panels to evaluate submissions for the 2010 Annual Meeting further enhanced the ability of each division and SIG to select and offer papers and symposia of high quality and interest throughout.

Transformed Session Formats for Papers

Paper Sessions

With a reduced number of paper sessions this year, the program committees worked on creating sessions with accepted papers that were more integrally related. Considerable attention was paid to limiting the number of papers at any one paper session and identifying discussants and chairs with domain expertise. Limiting the number of presenters at any one session is key to providing quality time for session attendees to ask questions and for presenters and attendees to learn from the experience.

Roundtable Sessions

In a brand new format for roundtable sessions, each roundtable features three to five research papers on shared topics or issues being discussed at tables with attendees. Each table has a chair acting as moderator to keep the discussion moving forward. Attendees are encouraged to select tables of interest and to join in discussion and exchange with benefit of brief orienting remarks from presenting author-experts. These roundtable sessions are not only new structurally but also will be well located to engender attendance, in large rooms with the tables arranged to maximize discussion and interaction. In each session, there will be far fewer tables than in prior years to allow enough space between tables to accommodate more participants. Tables will start with 10 chairs, and additional chairs will be available around the room to be readily added to popular discussions.

Poster Sessions

Poster sessions are a prominent feature of the 2010 Annual Meeting—with high-quality

Paper Upload and Online Repository

Authors of individual papers accepted for presentation in a paper, poster, or roundtable session must upload their final paper to the online Annual Meeting submission system. This final paper should include any research findings and conclusions added since the time of submission. It should address the elements required for submission in greater detail and should expand upon the initial 2,000-word paper. There is no word limit for the final paper. If you do not upload a final paper, the initial paper uploaded during the submission process will constitute the final paper.

All presenters of accepted session submissions for symposia, structured poster sessions, working group roundtables, and demonstration/performance sessions must prepare and upload a presentation or commentary paper to the online system. A presentation or commentary paper is limited to a maximum of 1,000 words and must address all of the following elements required for paper submissions:

- Objectives or purposes
- Perspectives(s) or theoretical framework
- Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry
- Data sources, evidence, objects, or materials
- Results and/or substantiated conclusions or warrants for arguments/point of view
- Scientific or scholarly significance of the study or work

Authors may upload papers to the AERA online system through April 9, 2010. All authors may also elect to have their papers, presentations, or commentary papers included in the AERA online paper repository. Many elected to do so at the time of submission, but the option remains available at the time of uploading their final paper (see story on page 167).
papers presented using this format. This year’s poster sessions will be located in rooms close to the Presidential sessions so that attendees can move easily between one-on-one discussions of individual scholars’ work to Presidential symposia featuring aspects of the 2010 Annual Meeting theme. The poster sessions, featured on Days 2, 3, and 4 of the Annual Meeting, will be a focal point for gathering and exchanging ideas this year and in future Annual Meetings to encourage the greatest participation.

Planned Sessions Bring Innovations Too

Innovative formats to be introduced at this Meeting will present opportunities for exchange in nontraditional settings. Attendees are encouraged to attend such sessions, which can be found in the online program by searching by session type.

Working Group Roundtables

The working group roundtables are designed to bring individual researchers or teams of researchers together for discussion where there is potential for new substantive gains and research communication or cooperation. In addition to an innovative format, the room setup will be conducive to open exchange and collaboration, much like a committee meeting. Attendees will sit around a large hollow rectangular table with the presenters on one end and all of the presenters and attendees facing one another to encourage substantive exchange and interaction.

Structured Poster Sessions

Structured poster sessions will offer an opportunity for visual and graphic presentations and individualized discussions with presenters. This innovative session type brings together researchers whose poster presentations are conceptually linked in terms of research issues and themes. The format combines elements of poster and paper sessions. It allows time for brief oral presentations to an audience gathered as a group and for direct discussion between the presenters and audience.

Online Paper Repository

With the introduction of AERA’s online repository, authors have the option to locate their papers in the repository for future use and reference by researchers. The repository extends access to Annual Meeting presentations on a virtual online platform and provides for continuous scholarly exchange. Authors may upload final papers to the online Annual Meeting submission system and at the same time opt to be included in the online repository.

Continuous Feedback and Evaluation

The Joint Committee put in place a process of data gathering that started with the 2009 Annual Meeting. The Committee has already taken steps to obtain feedback from program chairs, division vice presidents, SIG chairs, and samples of reviewers and submitters about their experiences with the process of building the program for the 2010 Annual Meeting (from submission and peer review through session creation). During the 2010 Meeting, session chairs and attendees of selected sessions will be surveyed. This ongoing data collection and analysis will enable the Joint Committee to monitor the effectiveness of the enhancements that Council approved for the Annual Meeting. The Joint Committee will be reviewing the survey responses at its next meeting in April at the 2010 Annual Meeting and at its other meetings throughout the year. The Joint Committee members are eager to receive attendees’ feedback and to learn about the Annual Meeting from different perspectives. Attendees and participants are encouraged to participate in this process in a number of ways:

- First and foremost, a large sample of sessions will include a brief evaluation. The evaluation forms are to be distributed at the sessions during the Annual Meeting. A high rate of completion from session attendees is essential to learning about the impact of the Annual Meeting reforms as experienced by those attending sessions of various types.
- All session chairs will receive and are asked to complete an online information form immediately after the Annual Meeting.
- This year, a number of focus groups will be held by members of the Joint Committee to gain additional insights about the Annual Meeting experience.
- After all attendees return home, they will be asked to complete a post-Meeting survey. A survey report on the 2009 Annual Meeting appears in this issue of Educational Researcher (p. 172).

The Meeting as a Time of New Discovery for All

With the transformation of the Annual Meeting comes an abundance of opportunities, from more interactive session formats to innovative ways for researchers to exchange ideas, to participatory collection of feedback. The 2010 Annual Meeting promises to be a worthy experience for learning and interaction, as well as a time to reconnect with colleagues and network with new friends.