

Fall 2009

Vice President's Message For Your Information -- [Susan Twombly](#)



(photo: greg dubrow)

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Editor: [Greg
Dubrow, UC, Berkeley](#)

Ed note – I received many wonderful submissions, and could not fit them all in this issue. A theme emerged around research in international settings. I'll do a special winter issue and include the excellent essays I could not fit in the Fall issue.

From the VP

It has been a quiet, quick and somewhat somber summer for Division J. We sadly lost two of our prominent members: Barbara Townsend and Len Foster. After the rather sad beginning, the summer flew by.

The AERA June Council meeting was dominated by discussion of the new Annual Meeting review and session allocation procedures, the Fellows Program, and AERA participation in the World Education Research Association (WERA). Regarding the first item, Mike Bastedo and his program committee did their best to implement the new system. Stay tuned for a report from Mike. We are working to encourage more Division J Fellow nominees. AERA is playing a leading role in the development of WERA, which led to a productive conversation about what individual divisions do to promote international participation/outreach. Many other divisions have program sessions, committees and other sorts of international outreach. I have appointed a small task force to look at what other divisions do and make recommendations to the Division J Council. AERA is also planning to look more closely at the various mentoring activities conducted by AERA and its divisions to see where there is duplication and to identify holes. We also have a group of scholars considering the possibility of a division-sponsored research handbook similar to the Handbook of Education Policy Research.

The Division begins this academic year in good shape. My 2009 report is available on the Division webpage. I will just note a few highlights here. As of May 2009 our membership was 1826, down by 26 members from the previous year. In general AERA experienced a decline in membership; we were on the low end of division membership drop. Council approved our bylaws and members will vote on them as part of the general AERA ballot. The bylaws are on the website. We provided 5 travel grants to assist graduate students to attend the San Diego Meeting.



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Vice President's Message – continued...

The Emerging Scholars Workshop hosted 46 advanced graduate students and new professionals. Bryan Gopaul was chosen as the new graduate student representative replacing Lisette Montoto. Maricela Oliva joined the Division Council as Member-at-Large. Several committee chairs have reports in this edition of the Pen. Jerlando Jackson, our Affirmative Action chair, will attend the annual Brown Lecture and represent the division on the AERA Affirmative Action Council. The division's Affirmative Action report will also be posted on the webpage.

This is a transition year for the Division. I complete my three-year term as VP in May and Laura Perna takes over. Laura and I have been working closely together to ensure a smooth transition. She attended the program committee meeting in Ann Arbor and is working with current committee chairs to identify future committee chairs. The Division will be in good hands.

In closing, I wish you a healthy and productive fall semester.

Susan Twombly

Division J Emerging Scholars Workshop April 29-30, 2010 in Denver

Mark your calendars now to be in Denver for the 2010 Division J Emerging Scholars Workshop, an early annual conference event focused upon the career development process for emerging scholars in Higher Education. Along with a planning committee, co-chairs Amy Wells-Dolan (University of Mississippi) and Bridget Turner Kelly (Loyola University Chicago) will develop sessions for the mentoring and guidance of early academic career professionals and advanced graduate students by established scholars in the field. The workshop will begin at 1 p.m. on Thursday, April 29 and conclude at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, April 30. Watch the AERA Division J website for more information about the application process and deadlines. Stay tuned!

Announcements

New books:

Trudy Banta, Elizabeth Jones, and Karen Black completed a new book this summer that offers 49 detailed current examples of good practice in planning, implementing, and sustaining assessment. Jossey-Bass published *Designing Effective Assessment: Principles and Profiles of Good Practice* that can help college and university campuses put in place an effective process for determining what works and which improvements have an impact on improving the curriculum, methods of instruction, and student services.

Neumann, Anna. *Professing to Learn: Creating Tenured Lives and Careers in the American Research University*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

New faces in new places

Christopher Morphew is now Professor in and Chair of the Department of Educational Policy and Leadership Studies at the University of Iowa

Casey Ozaki (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is an Assistant Professor at the University of North Dakota. She joins her four colleagues (Margi Healy, Myrna Olson, Jeffrey Sun, and Deborah Worley) in the higher education academic cluster, which bridges both the Departments of Educational Leadership and Teaching & Learning. Casey's research and teaching focuses on the individual development of students in relationship to persistence, particularly in the community college setting.

More Announcements

2010 Division J Awards

The deadline for nominations for the 2010 Outstanding Dissertation, Publication and Exemplary Research Awards is December 7, 2009. The call for nominations and the award nomination forms can be found at the Division J website.

[Outstanding Dissertation Award](#) (pdf) [Outstanding Publication Award](#) (pdf) [Exemplary Research Award](#) (pdf)

East African Higher Education Leaders Meet At University Of North Texas To Craft Long Term Goals For Advancing Higher Education In The East African Region

-- Marc Cutright, Ed.D. Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Higher Education The University of North Texas

In August 2009, eight higher education leaders from East Africa met at the University of North Texas (UNT) in Denton, Texas to collaborate with UNT scholars and senior administrators and to craft a statement of the group’s long-term goals for strengthening higher education in the East African region. At the conclusion of the conference, the group began crafting “the Denton Statement,” which will be a broad statement affirming the East African universities’ commitment to exploring several major initiatives in the coming years.

The group identified five areas of common interest:

1. Professional development for East African scholars and administrators in the areas of university administration and management and cutting-edge strategies for enhancing teaching and learning. The group hopes to sponsor a series of workshops in the summer of 2010, with participation by East African universities, UNT, and other American universities.
2. A master’s degree program in higher education leadership and management for promising East African administrators to be initially offered by the University of North Texas but potentially developing into a degree program offered by a university in the East African region.
3. Continued investigation of the feasibility of adapting the American "work college" model to East Africa.
4. Exploration of the possibility of developing community colleges in the East African region on the American model.
5. Long-term partnerships between East African universities and specific academic disciplines at UNT to develop and strengthen academic programs at East African institutions.

5. (cont’d) As a direct result of the August meeting, the UNT departments of Political Science, Counseling, and Accounting began collaborating with East African institutions around common academic and research interests

UNT’s hosts for the East African conference were Marc Cutright, Associate Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Center for Higher Education; Richard Fossey, a Professor in the Higher Education program at UNT and Associate Director of the Center for Higher Education; and Lillian Niwagaba, a doctoral candidate in Higher Education and native of Uganda. The East African delegation was made up of:

- Dr. Charles Olweny, Vice Chancellor (President) of Uganda Martyrs University,
- Dr. Charles Kitima Vice Chancellor (President) of St. Augustine University of Tanzania,
- Dr. James Nkata, Executive Director of the Uganda Management Institute and Makerere University in Uganda
- Dr. Moses Golola, Deputy Secretary of the East African Inter-University Council
- Dr. John Senyonyi (sp.), Vice President for Advancement at Uganda Christian University in Uganda,
- Jonathan Baranga of Mbarara University of Science and Technology
- Dr. Barbabas Otaala, Dean of the College of Education at Uganda Martyrs University,
- Dr. Eugenia Kafanobo, Associate Dean of the College of Education at University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania

Tales from Dubai: the reality of fieldwork **Jason Lane, University of Albany, SUNY**

My plane landed about 2:00 am. Never had I been so happy to touch down – even if it was just the beginning of my trip. After about 30 hours of planes and airports and only a rough three hours of sleep, all I wanted was to collapse on a bed. Of course, I had to chuckle to myself that I really should have been here two days ago. When I first checked in for my flight four days earlier, I was told that weather in Philly was delaying takeoff and I would not make the first connection. I cheerily asked when they could reschedule the flight and was told in two days. Apparently, every flight to Europe was booked the next day. Finding this hard to believe, I sat down nearby and pulled up a flight search engine and, sure enough, nothing but a \$10,000 first class seat was available – I suggested this to the ticket agent and she just laughed.

The good cheer that had overtaken me upon my arrival quickly dissipated. One of my bags was lost – at least I thought it was lost. When I arrived at the luggage office, there were three attendants helping us poor passengers through the grief and anger of losing our bags. After waiting in the luggage room for more than an hour to file a claim, it was pointed out to me that my bag was actually on the luggage carousel – I just did not recognize it. It had been decorated with about hundred feet of tape as it apparently had exploded somewhere along the journey from Albany, NY. However, before the suitcase was “found”, I first had to wait for one of the lost luggage “grief counselors.” Those of us who had lost a bag queued to wait our turn. That is until I got to the front of the line. As I was about to sit down in front of the claim agent, someone came charging in and took the seat. I kindly pointed out that I was next in line; he brusquely showed me a number and ignored me. Apparently, there was a number-taking system in place. The agent pointed to the number dispenser outside the office, which all of us in line had overlooked. After the mad rush of people who were in line to get numbers, I moved from first to fifth. At the point, I really didn’t care. I almost just left; willing to replace the clothes and snacks in the lost bag. But, I waited. Finally, sitting in the chair to register my complaint and went through the routine I had now witnessed fifteen times in about five different languages. I provided my information. Identified the suitcase type. Provided a list of items in the suitcase (at least the ones I remembered). And, then was told the computer says my luggage had arrived with me. Unfortunately, my preconceived notion of what my suitcase should look like when it arrives on the carousel did not allow me to look past the “tape” to actually “see” my bag. I had simply assumed that my bag would look the same upon arrival as when I had left.



It seemed that there were many aspects of this trip that helped me to see past the “tape.” For a number of years, I have done fieldwork in the United States and several other countries. I have also taught qualitative methods and constantly remind students to be cognizant of how their experiences can bias their research. Yet, even though I acknowledge that one needs to be careful about not letting preconceived notions or assumptions bias research; I am continuously amazed by the difficulty of such a task. This was no less true during this trip to the Middle East to do field work.

I have been interested in the development of International Branch Campuses (IBCs) for about five years. I originally started researching Australian universities opening campuses in Southeast Asia, but my scholarly interest soon expanded to focus on the global development of IBCs. Dubai was one of the hotbeds of IBC growth, having first opened the Knowledge Village and then the Dubai International Academic City with the explicit mission of attracting IBCs to Dubai. Currently, more than 20 are operating in Dubai.

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Prior to my visit, I met with a representative of the DIAC at a NAFSA conference; Skyped with scholars in the region; talked with local representatives; and read every report I could find about the Dubai education sector, the DIAC, and IBCs. After about two years of this type of work, I thought I had a pretty good handle on the nature of these organizations. That was until I arrived in Dubai.

The phenomenon of IBCs is so new that there exists very little information about their development and operation. In piecing together information about these campuses, I would fill in holes with information from my own experiences and knowledge base. Much like the scientists in Jurassic Park filled in holes in the dinosaur DNA with that of frogs – not an exact match, but a known and seemingly suitable substitute. While my filling in of the holes did not create gender-switching dinosaurs, my own research, left unchecked by work in the field, could have led to inaccurate conclusions about IBCs.

Only by being in Dubai; working in a branch campus; meeting with the faculty, staff, and policy makers was I able to understand the “real” experience of starting a branch campus in a foreign land. Difficulties ranged from learning how to do business in a city in which standard contracts are very difficult to enforce; carving out a niche in a domestic education market that is less than 30 years old; developing a recruitment strategy for a campus that has not yet graduated any students; and balancing the desire to offer a curriculum like that of the home campus with the need to have the curriculum reflect the local culture.



For example, I was in the midst of campuses from institutions such Hult University (USA), London Business School (UK), Michigan State University (USA), Rochester Institute of Technology (USA), New York University (USA), the Sorbonne (France), Wollongong University (Australia), and so forth. I wondered how students navigated the college choice process. Based on the growing international prominence of institutional rankings, I assumed that branches of internationally ranked institutions would have an advantage over the branches of lower ranked or unranked institutions. This may prove to be true as students become more savvy consumers. However, my initial analysis suggests that international rankings only minimally, if at all, influence college choice. One of the most significant factors was the national identity of institutions. Students were very cognizant about the distinction between the nation-set of institutions (e.g., the value of an “American” credential versus a “British” credential versus an “Australian” credential). Many were much less concerned about the relative quality of education within each set. That is students were interested in receiving, for example, an “American” credential. Whether that credential came from a leading, private research university or a non-accredited, for-profit institution was not nearly as important. While more research and analysis needs to be done in area of recruitment within the IBC sector, not engaging in this fieldwork would have likely left me with a significant misconception about a factor that influences both actor and organizational behavior.

Such insights are not limited to the operation of the campus, but to the environment in which the campuses operate. Living with (rather than simply hearing about)an 8 hour time difference and four-day work week overlap with the main campus (the work week in Dubai is Sunday through Thursday), provides one with a great appreciation for the significant tensions it can create for faculty, staff, and students. For example, Requests for assistance from staff, which could normally be answered in a few hours, may take days or a week because office hours only overlap about one hour a day for four days.

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When dealing with a shared student information database, taking it off line for updates in the middle of the night at the home campus may mean that students at the branch campus cannot access their records or register for classes during their day.

I should conclude though, that while fieldwork is an important component of many research projects, it is the personal connections and experiences that have become the most rewarding aspect of such work. The friends that are made and the stories generated (even lost bags at 2 am) help make the rich tapestry of life that much more vibrant and give greater meaning to the research we do.

Jason E. Lane is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies and an affiliate of the Comparative and International Education Policy Program at the University at Albany, SUNY. As a Fulbright New Century Scholar, he is researching the organizational development and public policy dimensions of International Branch Campuses in the Middle East. He is co-editor (with M. Christopher Brown) of *Studying Diverse Institutional Settings* from Jossey-Bass. He can be reached at jlane@albany.edu.

From the Midwest to the Far East: My Research in China Yi (Leaf) Zhang, Doctoral Student - Iowa State University

I was very excited to go back to China, my home country, this past summer, not only because I was able to see my family and friends after being away for two years, but because I would conduct a funded research project with my major professor, Dr. Linda Serra Hagedorn, from Iowa State University. Dr. Hagedorn has visited multiple cities in China before and was excited to see what has changed over the past 10 years.

Although we made a number of connections with high schools and other schools with equivalent standings and received positive responses from the administrators before the trip, many uncertainties remained and any one of them could become catastrophic for our research.

Anyone who has done business in China would know that communicating on the telephone with someone you don't know is a completely different story from meeting face to face with him/her while having a cup of tea together. Generally speaking for Chinese, a trust relationship is critical to one's success. A positive personal relationship can lead to smooth sailing; on the contrary, a negative first impression might create a bumpy ride. Therefore, we planned to pay personal visits to each school before conducting our research and make sure that these schools understood our project and what we were asking them to do.

Dr. Hagedorn and I officially started our research adventure in China after her arrival on July 24. We visited administrators, teachers, and students at five

different high schools and equivalent schools in the following five days

We found explaining our research project to the high school administrators was not an easy task. When we started contacting high schools as our potential research sites, we sensed a lot of confusion and hesitation from the other end of the telephone. We then decided to send the schools fax in both English and Chinese explaining the objectives and procedure of our research, but it was still not well received. A school even refused to accept the document, for lack of trust and understanding. The difficulty within the communication was not just about the language; rather, it was more about how to communicate academic research concepts to those who do not have a basic understanding. At the initial stage of contact, many schools were very conservative and were very wary of a "catch". Since our research topic is about Chinese students' attitude regarding attending college in a foreign country, many administrators suspected us working for some agencies and worried that our intentions might be to make financial gains from their students. After realizing these misunderstanding we altered our explanation of the project to include basic definitions and purposes of research. Finally, we convinced the school administrators that we traveled all the way from the U.S. to China PURELY for the purpose of research and that many researchers DO travel long distance to conduct research without expectations of personal gain..

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Eventually, the schools understood the importance of our project to international higher education. Some of the administrators we met expressed great interests in our work and started to view our visit as a learning opportunity. Dr. Hagedorn and I were invited to give presentations regarding American higher education and study experiences in the U.S. Some of the individuals we met even suggested possible cooperation opportunities for the future towards the ends of our research. We successfully conducted our research in China and established several good connections with the local schools in China. At the conclusion, approximately 500 Chinese high school students completed our survey and about 50 of them volunteered to participate in four separate face-to-face focus group interviews.

We came back to the USA with data that we are anxious to analyze and also with new knowledge about performing research in a culture and environment that differs from the U.S. We learned many lessons. Chiefly we learned that a smile goes a long way. Respect is earned not only by the credentials one carries, but also by conduct and sincerity. Lastly we learned the students across the globe desire an opportunity for the future. We hope that our work will contribute to that end, even if it is only in a small way.

**Reflections on the 3rd Annual SERU Research Symposium:
Comparative Perspectives on the Undergraduate Experience
Elizabeth Berkes, Ph.D. SERU Project Research Associate**

The SERU Project is a collaboration between academic scholars and institutional researchers devoted to creating new data sources and policy relevant analysis to help broaden our understanding of the undergraduate experience and to promote a culture of institutional self-improvement. Based at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, and led by a faculty and institutional researchers, the SERU Project has produced an innovative SERU Survey - a census and online survey administered regularly since 2004 to some 180,000 students at all nine of the University of California's undergraduate campuses. The SERU Survey (known in the UC system as the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey or UCUES) has emerged as a major tool for, understanding who our students are in terms of familial, academic, cultural, and ethnic background and self-identity. SERU researchers analyze and use data from the survey to help identify strengths and weaknesses of undergraduate programs that can be integrated into policymaking and that help guide policy-relevant research

In 2008 the SERU Project research team formed a SERU Consortium that currently includes fifteen major US public research universities. The SERU Consortium is exploring expansion to a number of major European and Asian universities.

This year's SERU Symposium was held on May 1st and featured three very interesting panel discussions, in addition to various presentations on campus climate research, diversity issues in higher education, and student-faculty partnership research.

The first was a student panel focused on issues of

affordability and engagement chaired by D'Artagnan Scorza, University of California Student Regent 2008-09/UCLA. In light of the financial meltdown, it was illuminating to hear how students are able to afford to continue their education and whether they feel that they are able to fully participate in campus life and civic activities with new financial burdens.

The second panel featured a number of administrators from prestigious universities in Japan, China, Taiwan and Korea. Presenters described both the student experience at these diverse institutions as well as attempts by higher education researchers and administrators to capture this experience using newly available surveys and innovative technologies.

The final panel was a much-anticipated debate on the value of learning outcome measures in higher education such as standardized tests and self-assessment. Professor Richard Shavelson (former Dean Stanford School of Education and past president of the American Educational Research Association), Christina Maslach (Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning UC Berkeley and professor of Psychology), and Henry Braun (Boisi Chair in Education and Public Policy in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College). I'm happy to report that the debate generated much more light than heat regarding the thinking behind the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), who assesses discipline-specific knowledge, what counts as learning, and understanding what constitutes value in higher education.