



CONNECTIONS

The AERA Graduate Student Council Newsletter

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Strategies for Overcoming Hurdles in a Doctoral Program

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The newsletter of the Graduate Student Council seeks to further the GSC mission by providing an outlet for graduate students and other contributors to address topics of interest to graduate students in education, including issues of intellectual, academic, professional, organizational, and personal relevance.

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Graduate school is a journey with various hurdles along the way. Some journeys are small bumps like choosing courses and finding a time when everyone in the study group can meet. Other hurdles block the entire path, like deciding on a dissertation topic and conducting research. Of course sometimes the hurdles prevent graduate students from other important aspects of life like family and friends. So how does a graduate student go about conducting top-notch research, publishing, writing a winning vita, meeting with friends and family all while finishing a dissertation? Here we have created a Top 10 List of Ways to Overcome Common Hurdles (and still have fun in the process).

Top 10 Ways to Overcome Common Hurdles in Doctoral Programs

10. Conducting Top-Notch Research – The best way to learn how to conduct top notch research is to learn from people already doing top-notch research. Attend specially designed sessions at AERA for graduate students called Fireside

Chats. These sessions have presenters from all areas of education and inform students about everything from picking a research topic to publishing research.

9. Thinking and Writing Critically – Maximize professor feedback by asking them for specific advice and critiques on assignments. After completing an assignment make sure to discuss the feedback with the professor to help clarify ideas to improve on other papers and future projects.

Balancing Family and Friend Time – Time management is the key and knowing when to step away from a project or paper *is important*

8. Reviewing Manuscripts – Most major journals have opportunities for graduate students to get practice at reviewing articles. Contact the editor of the journal to find out how to become a student reviewer.

7. Maintaining a Nutritious Diet – Yes, despite all the work and research that is piling up, it is important to eat well-rounded meals. Take a study break with a friend and get a warm meal before digging into that next round of journal articles. The nutrients will energize your body.

6. Understanding Expectations of

Faculty – Develop an open line of communication with faculty. This can happen at a local level with campus groups or committees. Otherwise on a broader scale, join a national organization to collaborate with faculty from various universities. Each year the Graduate Student Council seeks out individuals to be representatives for each division of AERA. This two-year position will allow you to work with other students and faculty.

5. Writing a Vita – Meet with a faculty member and discuss what a vita should look like when applying for jobs. Ask a faculty member if you can use his/her vita as an example. Have different people offer feedback on ways to improve the vita. Remember, a well written cover letter is also important!

4. Interviewing Skills – Practice, practice, practice. Before any presentation for a position, do a few mock presentations to other faculty and students. Afterwards, have them ask typical interview questions and reflect on their feedback.

3. Deciding on a Dissertation Topic – Take different kinds of classes, attend conferences, brainstorm with faculty, volunteer with an organization, or get involved in organizations. Over time, a topic will present itself or the choices will narrow themselves down.

2. Balancing Family and Friends – Time management is the key and knowing when to step away from a project or paper *is important*. Get a daytime

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From the Chair

Hugo A. Garcia

Chair
Claremont Graduate University

One of the best rewards for being graduate student members of AERA is the opportunity to meet people from various other institutions. As Chair of the Graduate Student Council, I have met several graduate students from across North America that I can always count on for support. Establishing friendships and a network support system in graduate school is very important. I am always amazed at the level of collegiality and support that we enjoy from one another. Obtaining a doctoral degree is not an easy process. However, with the support of fellow doctoral students, this process can be greatly enhanced.

Because a lot of the dialog I have with other graduate students revolves around our dissertation topics and gaining a tenure track faculty position, our conversation inevitably turns to the issue of publishing. This is a very important topic for many graduate students and so I have decided to conduct a session exclusively on publishing as graduate students and junior faculty members at the upcoming AERA Annual Meeting in Chicago. The session will be titled, "The Publishing Process: How to

Successfully Publish as Graduate Students and Junior Faculty Members." As graduate students approach the end of their doctoral studies or become newly minted Ph.D.s and join the faculty ranks as scholars, we will be expected to publish. Although graduate students are immersed in their studies and dissertations, students and junior faculty should understand how to properly compose proposals and how to publish to gain tenure and contribute to their field. This session will feature a workshop atmosphere to instruct graduate students and junior faculty on how to publish in peer-reviewed journals. Topics will include article formatting, content, collaboration, the submission process, and the review process.

In addition, this session will showcase opportunities graduate students have in the peer-review process and Student Editorial Advisory Boards. The GSC recently met with the Publications Committee of AERA and we were informed that the Committee would like more graduate students to participate in the peer-reviewer process and become members of editorial boards. One of the panelists is a graduate student that is currently on the Student Editorial Advisory Board of AERA's Educational Reviewer.

So, if you intend on going to Chicago for the Annual Meeting, make an effort to at-

tend this very informative session.

Visit the GSC on the web at
<http://aera.net/Default.aspx?id=275>



Learn about the GSC discussion listserv on our website.

Overcoming Hurdles

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planner and schedule in time to meet a friend for coffee, go shopping with a cousin, take a long bike ride, visit the museum with the kids, or have a nice home-cooked meal sitting at a table with friends and/or family (instead of a computer screen).

1. *Persevering to Succeed* – Attend an assertive workshop to refresh socially and academically for professional and personal reasons. Workshops provide great opportunities to meet new people, exchange ideas, reflect on previous experiences, and prepare for new challenges ahead. If you are looking for a conference, remember AERA 2007 is April 9-13 in Chicago.

Graduate Student Seminars

Many divisions offer seminars at the AERA Annual Meeting for small groups of graduate students. These seminars often help students think through their research plans, career options, and job opportunities. Divisions have a special focus that often parallel student interests. Some divisions offer stipends to offset expenses associated with attendance. If you are interested in applying for one of these stipends, please check your division's website. Deadlines may be as early as January 2007.

From the Chair-Elect

Stacy DeZutter

Chair-Elect

Washington University in St. Louis

Now that registration is open for the annual meeting, its time to start thinking about whether you are coming to Chicago. Even if you are not presenting a paper, the annual meeting is a valuable opportunity for professional development and scholarly enrichment. Of course, for many graduate students, the decision to come to the annual meeting is based on whether or not they can get travel funding. And this often means convincing your school or a graduate student organization that the trip is worthwhile. Here are some reasons with which I hope to convince you – and help you convince others – that you should come to Chicago:

1. *Fireside chats.* These sessions are created by the graduate student representatives from each division, as a way to provide relaxed, lively discussion on a topic of interest to graduate students. This year we have an exciting array of topics that will help you succeed in graduate school and prepare you to be part of important conversations in your field. If you come to the meeting and do nothing else but go to the Fireside Chats, you will leave invigorated and smarter about academic life.

2. *Professional development courses.* These extended sessions are designed to train attendees (not just grad students) in a particular topic, such as a data analysis technique or an emerging theoretical approach. They cost extra, but the ones I have taken have all been worth it.

3. *Mentoring sessions.* Many divisions have sessions just prior to or just after the conference, in which graduate students can engage in extended interactions with senior scholars, to get guidance on research or to develop professional savvy.

4. *Graduate Student Resource Center.* This is a room set aside just for graduate students, where we can hang out, chat, grab a snack, get to know students from other universities, and find out what interesting things are going on at the meeting. Many of us have found a wonderful peer support network just by hanging out in this room.

Watch this space as well as our website for more information on running for one of our elected positions for 2007-2008.

5. *Career Center.* If you are on the job market, this is a great resource. Watch the annual meeting program for more information.

6. *Graduate student orientation and open business meeting/social.* If you are a little daunted by the size and scope of the annual meeting, you can drop in to our orientation, and we will help you make the most of your time. The open business meeting is an opportunity

for you to get involved with the Graduate Student Council – in fact, this is how most of the current members got involved. Of course, the social has free food, so need I say more?

7. *Receptions.* Speaking of free food, many groups throw fun, well-stocked receptions that are open to all. Graduate students love to reception-hop, and beyond the food, these are a great way to network.

8. *Presidential sessions.* These are sessions designed around the conference theme or other pressing concerns. Attending these is a great way to get a sense of the current directions in education research.

9. *Chicago.* Great food, lots to do, what more could we ask?

10. *It's fun!* When I went to my first annual meeting, I felt like a kid in a candy store. There are so many sessions to choose from—you can find others doing work similar to yours, hear talks from the great minds in your field, explore new interests, and meet fellow grad students who share your interests and concerns.

So, now that you have so many reasons to come, I look forward to meeting you in Chicago in April!

About the AERA Graduate Student Council

The Graduate Student Council has five major responsibilities: annual meeting planning, student advocacy, information dissemination, community building, and self governance.

The **mission** of the Graduate Student Council is to facilitate and promote the transition from graduate student to professional researcher by providing opportunities within AERA for professional growth, development and advancement. In addition, the Graduate Student Council seeks to help graduate students navigate the obstacles, rewards, challenges, and support networks of academic life. Further, the Graduate Student Council will carry out the mission of AERA through the research, scholarship, and professional endeavors of graduate students.

October Planning Meeting Recap

Thomas Turner

Division B Representative
Arizona State University

Greetings Graduate Students!

I was invited to write an article that would give an overview of the recent AERA Graduate Student Council planning meeting, held on October 26-27 in Alexandria, VA. I know you are busy and probably will not read it anyway! So I am choosing to share with you an amazing fact I learned at the meeting. Of the 20,000 members of the American Educational Research Association, 7,000 of them are GRADUATE STUDENTS! Yes, currently we represent a third of the membership. *Why is this fact so astounding? Why is this an amazing time to be both a graduate student and a member of AERA? Why should you even care?* Thanks to the dedication and hard work of previous graduate students and Council members such as the Past Chair Diane Jass Ketelhut much of the hard work involved with the structure of the graduate organization is now in its final stages. At this year's meeting, the council put the final touches on issues such as the Graduate Student Handbook, procedure and policy rules for elections, and emergency contingencies for filling council vacant positions. Now that we have a much greater understanding of "who we are" it is IMPERATIVE that we begin to receive input from all of you as to "what we are". We need you, our members, to give us your opinions on who we should be as an organization.

Towards the end of the meeting the purpose and the role of the AERA Graduate Student Resource Center was discussed. In the past it has been seen as a place for graduate students to come for rest, information, and fellowship. At this year's planning meeting several council members expressed their desire to re-conceptualize the purpose of the room. Suggestions of how that might look included using the room for the Fireside Chats and/or holding workshops that would be of benefit to graduate students. Ultimately, everyone agreed that we need to hear from you...each and everyone of you! Sadly, that is not happening right now. Last year's AERA Graduate Student Resource Center had one of the strongest attendance levels on record, yet, that attendance numbered in the 100's when there are 7,000

members. The hard cold fact is that with attendance numbers comes money, workshops, presentations, and a stronger voice in the overall planning of the conference.

So how can you become involved? One way is to become a Campus Liaison. Campus Liaisons serve as an AERA graduate student representative at their university. Primary responsibilities include disseminating information about AERA activities such as the annual meeting and other professional opportunities for graduate students. If you are interested in finding out more about Campus Liaisons, contact Wendi Laurence, the Community Leader for the GSC at wendil@pdx.edu. Furthermore, feel free to stop by the AERA Graduate Student Resource Center in the upcoming annual meeting to find out more about this and other opportunities to get involved in AERA and the Graduate Student Council.



So now to answer my previous questions, "Why is this an amazing time to be both a graduate student and a member of AERA? Why should you even care?" As an active member of AERA and the Graduate student organization you have the opportunity to decide on the direction of an organization that will not only have an impact on your life, but also the lives of our future graduate students. Please take the time and initiative to get involved and help shape YOUR organization!

Visit



www.aera.net
to register for
the AERA
Annual
Meeting in
Chicago, IL
April 9- 13,
2007

Connections Across Divisions

One “Not-So-Technical” Graduate Student’s Use of Technology during the Dissertation Process

Emily J. Shaw
 Division D Representative
 Fordham University

I had a statistics professor who once told our class that the day he found out he could perform a *Split File* function on SPSS he went out to the local bars and partied all night. As graduate students, we have all had our moments like that. Sometimes it is the little things that can make our lives and our dissertations so much more manageable -often at the click of a button. Unfortunately, we don’t always know which buttons to click, which software to buy, or which people to ask. This article is my attempt to share some of those “Easy Button” moments (a la the *Staples* ad campaign) with you.

SPSS Tips

Split File-Many of you may already know, but “Split File” allows you to choose a variable and analyze your data set by each level of the variable. In SPSS, go to Data→Split File→Compare Groups→(drag the variable you’d like to compare into “Groups Based On”)→click OK→ then choose your analyses and view output by groups.

Variable View-Sometimes you’d like to easily view or print the data in “variable view” to quickly see how many or what types of variables are in your database. In order to do this, go to File→Display Data File Information→Working File.

SPSS Tables -You can format your output to tables in a way that is consistent with APA style. Click on Analyze→Tables→Custom Tables→(creates your desired table) →(double-click on the table you created) →Format→Table Properties→(adjust the borders and font to be consistent with APA style).

New Syntax-Creating new variables through the “Recode” drop-down menu can be somewhat limiting, you can open up a new syntax window (FILE→NEW→SYNTAX) and create new variables using an *IF* statement. For example, the following command, *IF (var1 = 1 AND var2 > 50) group = 2.*, creates a new variable (group 2) if and only if the relational expressions within the parenthesis are true.

Excel Tips

- When you create a formula to be carried down the length of a column, you can simply double-click the “cross” at the bottom right-hand corner of the cell that contains the formula and each cell in the column for which the corresponding input data exists will be filled.

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Technology in the Grant Reviewing Process

Vernita Morgan
 Division H Representative
 University of Iowa

Hello AERA family! I am a second-year doctoral student at the University of Iowa majoring in Educational Measurement & Statistics with a concentration in Evaluation.

To answer the question, “what is the role of technology in educational research, assessment, and instruction in your field,?” I choose to share my personal journey on becoming informed in one of the underlying focal points in the field of evaluation - the grant process. I began my journey by taking a Grant Writing Workshop this summer (the files for Mr. Ron Mirr’s Grant Writing Workshop can be found at <http://homepage.mac.com/rmirr>). My instructor advised that one of the best ways to learn how to write a competitive grant is to review grants; therefore, upon the recommendation of my instructor I sought volunteer grant and/or peer reviewer opportunities. I contacted

friends who worked for non-profit organizations and asked if they knew of any grant reviewer opportunities. They in turn made contacts and through this grass roots effort I was able to obtain an internship with a grant reviewer of a prominent health-based foundation.

It wasn’t until my second assignment as a grant reviewer that technology played a critical role. The five following processes were all integrated with technology:

- (1) **The Application Process** – I applied online and eventually obtained a paid federal grant reviewer position.
- (2) **The Training Process** – Training for the reviewer position occurred via telephone conference. Reviewers were trained on the grant review process, the criteria used to evaluate the grant proposals, and the Grants Application Management and Evaluation System (GAMES). GAMES is a web-based tool used by federal grant reviewers to document application evaluation scores and comments.
- (3) **The Review Process and the Final Submission Process** - The use of technology via GAMES in the grant review process has expedited not only the scoring of grant proposals but also the feedback to applicants.
- (4) **The Discussion Process** – A grant reviewer must be able to effectively express their ideals and be willing to openly listen to the concerns of others during the grant reviewer team telephone conference discussions.

My experience as a grant reviewer has been very rewarding. When I

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“What is the role of technology in educational research, assessment, and instruction in your field?”

Connections Across Divisions

How Have New Information Technologies Affected Educator Professional Development?

Jennifer Steele
Program Chair
Harvard University

One of ways in which new information technologies are reshaping the educational landscape is through the rise of online learning. The increasing sophistication of digital media, including streaming video and podcasts, and the expansion of broadband Internet access have made online learning an increasingly viable choice for people wishing to pursue additional schooling. While current forms of online learning are more prevalent in professional and higher education than at the K-12 level, the impact of online learning has not completely bypassed K-12 schools. Today, virtual high schools provide some students with a distance learning option, and home-schooling-support websites provide resources to students schooled outside the traditional system.

In some cases, distance learning is also reshaping the way educators enhance their own skills. Recent years have seen an increase in professional development courses available online for teachers and administrators. A recent review of forty empirical studies of online teacher professional development found a wide range of models in use, including those that emphasized constructivist learning, adult development, mentoring, and communities of practice. The review found that roughly half of the models focused on particular content areas such as math, science, English language arts, or foreign languages, while other models focused on general teacher education, or on particular cross-disciplinary skills such as special education instructional strategies or integrating technology into the classroom. The reviewers also identified several core tensions in the field, one being the tension between design for incremental learning and design for transformation. In other words, many online professional development programs find audiences by offering skills that teachers can put to immediate use in the classroom. Programs that challenge teachers to rethink their pedagogical approaches may have greater long-term importance for improving educational practice, but they may find it difficult to sustain teacher engagement over the longer term required to transform practice. A similar tension emerged in a study I conducted in 2004 of an online professional development program for school district administrators. By monitoring participation patterns and interviewing participants, I found that the busy administrators preferred course components that were easily downloadable and quickly applicable to their daily practice, and that they viewed reflective and collaborative components like essays and threaded discussions as poor uses of their scarce time.

I currently administer the online component of a hybrid, face-to-face and online course for aspiring school administrators. In that situation, I also find that for educators whose time is already stretched too thin, the requirement for reflective online collaboration and discussion can be seen as a distraction. It seems that many educators see the Internet

as a place to obtain just-in-time information rather than a place to engage in deep, reflective learning. It's likely that many factors—including grades, professional development points, and peer culture—may influence educators' willingness to engage in reflection online, and this strikes me as an interesting area for further study. However, it's also likely that educators' hesitation toward online reflection and collaboration will diminish as the youth reared on instant messaging and MySpace become the educators of tomorrow.

Footnotes:

1 Whitehouse, P.L., Breit, L.A., McCloskey, E.M., Ketelhut, D.J., & Dede, C. (2006). An overview of current findings from empirical research on online teacher professional development. In *Online professional development for teachers: Emerging models and methods* (pp. 13-29). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

2 Ketelhut, D.J., McCloskey, E.M., Dede, C., Breit, L.A., & Whitehouse, P.L. (2006). Core tensions in the evolution of teacher online professional development. In *Online professional development for teachers: Emerging models and methods* (pp. 237-263). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

3 Steele, J.L. (2005, April 13). *District administrators' experiences of an online professional development workshop*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

“What is the role of technology in educational research, assessment, and instruction in your field?”



Connections Across Divisions

“Not-so-technical”

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- CTRL + PAGE DOWN = Move to next worksheet
- CTRL + N = Opens new workbook
- SHIFT + F11 = inserts new worksheet in your workbook
- CTRL + spacebar = selects entire column
- SHIFT + spacebar = selects entire row CTRL + ; = enters current date

SAS Tips

- Many graduate students need an easy way to identify duplicate records in a database. There are two main varieties of duplicate records: *exact duplicates* and *sort-key duplicates*. Duplicates on some series of identifying variables—also known as a “sort key”. One simple way to check for exact duplicates in SAS is to issue the following proc step:

```
PROC SORT DATA= Original OUT= Original_Without_Dupes_1
NODUP; BY ID_Var_1 ID_Var_2 ... ID_Var_n; RUN;
```

If on the other hand you want to detect duplicates by a limited series of identifying variables in SAS, then the following proc step is appropriate:

```
PROC SORT DATA= Original OUT= Original_Without_Dupes_2
NODUPKEY; BY ID_Var_1 ID_Var_2 ... ID_Var_n; RUN;
```

The difference between these two procedures is that the first will only remove *exact duplicates* by ALL variables in the dataset including those not listed on the BY line and the second will remove only duplicates by those variables listed on the BY line, regardless of the values of the other variables in the dataset. Either of these statements will start with the dataset “Original” and will create a new dataset from which the duplicates have been removed and the log file will indicate how many duplicate records have been deleted. Finally in either case, the first of the duplicate records is the one that is retained.

Other

- While people have many different purposes for using online survey software, something that my colleague and I have noticed is that the **skip logic function** in *Zoomerang* is much easier and intuitive to work than the skip logic in *SurveyMonkey*.
- *SurveyShare* probably has the most flexibility in designing questions (between *Zoomerang*, *SurveyShare*, and *SurveyMonkey*), but it doesn't allow sharing results.
- The main reason that some people prefer *SurveyMonkey* over *Zoomerang* is that the range of question types it allows is larger and more flexible. *SurveyMonkey* also allows you to: (1) put in a date for the survey to automatically stop accepting new data rather than having to go onto the site and stop it manually on that date; (2), make the survey password-protected (person needs a password to take the survey) if you choose; and (3) share results without the company's brand ("*SurveyMonkey*" or "*Zoomerang*") on the page. Either *Zoomerang* doesn't allow the above or they're difficult to do because I know someone who has looked very hard and couldn't find a way to do them.
- It may be useful to you to save your dissertation as a new file each time you've worked on it (under a file name that includes the

date). There may ultimately be over 60 versions of your dissertation, but there will also be an impeccable archive of the many stages and versions that your paper has gone through.

Footnotes:

Special thanks to Division D graduate students and members who contributed to this list, including Sandra Barbuti, Krista Mattern Burrus, Doreen Finkelstein, Haifa Matos, Brian Patterson, Sheryl Rosenthal, and Jeff Wyatt.

Grant Writing

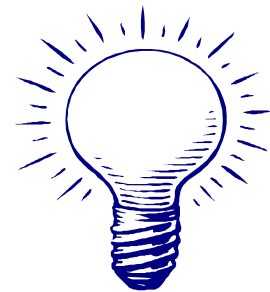
Continued from page 5

do decide to write a grant I will have first hand knowledge on what reviewers look for in a successful grant proposal.

Familiarization with the grant process is just one of the many diverse areas within Division H; I invite you to become acquainted with other opportunities at:

http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Divisions/School_Evaluation_

[_&_Program_Development_\(H\)/DivH-Overview.pdf](http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Divisions/School_Evaluation_&_Program_Development_(H)/DivH-Overview.pdf)



**Do you have suggestions for future
“Connections Across Divisions”
columns or other newsletter-related
recommendations?**

**Email your ideas to the Newsletter
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