



From the Desk of the Executive Director

Members of research societies often wonder how their governing bodies work and what they do. I am pleased to report that AERA members have a committed and hardworking group serving them in the highest offices. The Executive Board and Council met on June 24–26, with a post-meeting retreat this year held on June 27. The membership can be proud of what its Council is accomplishing on behalf of the Association and its members on issues large and small.

The minutes of Council meetings (April minutes are in this issue of *Educational Researcher*; January minutes were in the May issue) provide a valuable window on important matters before Council, how Council reasons, and the outcomes of its deliberations. All minutes are routinely published in *ER*, which is readily available on the AERA website under Publications (<http://www.aera.net/publications/?id=308>). Admittedly, it may be only the truly committed governance wonks who assiduously read minutes. But it is worth doing so to see what Council is accomplishing over time as well as to observe the importance of continuity of leadership on salient issues (for example, those insightfully identified by immediate Past President Marilyn Cochran-Smith that are being brought to completion during the term of President Gloria Ladson-Billings).

In this column, I thought I would provide brief highlights from the June meeting that capture Council's role and how it works. The following are illustrations:

- Council completed discussion of a Bylaws revision that provides AERA with a better framework for guiding a 21st-century organization. The revisions, to be voted on by AERA members as part of the ballot in January 2006, include housekeeping matters to keep up with changing times (e.g., an independent professional firm tabulates ballots eliminating the need for a Tellers Committee to review counts previously made manually; contemporary technology permits Council members to confer simultaneously so that meetings need not always be place-based) and structural changes that reflect developments in the Association (e.g., granting graduate student members the right to vote; explicitly establishing the Nominating Committee, the SIG Executive Board, and the Graduate Student Council as committees specified in the Bylaws). The structural changes recommended by Council open the Association to greater member participation and provide official recognition in the Bylaws for committees that exercise governance functions. These revisions flow from the hard work of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Bylaws consisting of Council members and ably led by

Past President Hilda Borko. This Committee invested many hours and days in producing a high-quality product. Members will see this accomplishment when the revised Bylaws are presented to them for their consideration in January.

- Looking to the future, Council also discussed and approved an investment policy for the Association. Typically, organizations like AERA have such policies to guide how funds are invested. For AERA, establishing this policy is the culmination of several years' learning about how AERA investments are handled and drawn upon for use. An Ad Hoc Committee on Financial Planning—again consisting of members of Council plus one external expert from the Washington, D.C.–area education research community—studied AERA practices and examined the policies and practices of other major research associations to help chart a course for handling Association resources and planning for their growth and use. The Executive Board not only considered a draft policy at length on June 24 but also interviewed four teams of investment managers about various approaches to handling AERA investments. In adopting a policy, Council delegated oversight to the Executive Board and implementation to the Executive Director, with an explicit decision to have a long-term investment portfolio managed by a professional investment firm that would routinely report to the Executive Director and Executive Board. In considering this issue (however much a business matter), Council had at the fore its responsibility to establish a policy that can protect as well as promote the Association and the field of education research.
- One measure of a Council's strength as a deliberative body is how it deals with challenging and complex problems that require sound but immediate decisions. Groups can become fractious or lose a sense of mission and purpose in the face of formidable challenges. AERA Council faced that possibility in addressing how to proceed with the 2006 Annual Meeting—given ongoing labor disputes between the hotel workers' union and the hotel management in San Francisco. With one voice, Council agreed that the integrity of the AERA Annual Meeting as a forum for scholarly presentations and exchange was the central criterion that needed to guide any decision. All members of Council expressed the view that the Association must provide a viable Annual Meeting for its members. Council also concluded that it should encourage all parties in the labor dispute to reach a swift settlement so that meetings like ours would not be compromised. The merits of various hotel contracts (with hotels

that are subject to possible boycotts and those that are not), alternatives and potential costs of remaining at or moving from sites where there are labor disputes, difficult judgments about attendance and participation under various conditions, and the intellectual integrity of the 2006 Annual Meeting for our members were just some of the issues that Council discussed. At its meeting on June 25, 2005, Council unanimously adopted a concise but clear resolution:

Whereas the Council of the American Educational Research Association must ensure a viable 2006 Annual Meeting for the Association, the Council has determined to relocate the Annual Meeting to properties not vulnerable to labor boycotts, with a preference for remaining in San Francisco, if feasible, and with a final decision to be made no later than July 15, 2005.

- Council also discussed progress in the operations and programmatic areas of the Association from Annual Meeting planning, information technology, and membership to government relations, communications, and publications. In each arena, there were palpable moments when Council members reflected on what the Association needed to do to enhance the field of education research, to stimulate more integrative thinking across subfield domains, and to ensure that excellence and inclusiveness were advanced as complementary, not competitive, goals. The Vice Presidents of the twelve divisions (constituting 12 of the 19 members of Council) sought to build linkages across divisions and to the mission of AERA as a whole.

This spirit of shared purpose and collaboration was most evident at the retreat held on June 27. AERA President Ladson-

Billings led a remarkable day during which Council was provided with some basic orienting questions to enable discussion: What are the current issues that inform or dominate debate in your area of education research? What are the opportunities? For AERA, to be successful, we must be especially good at [fill in the blank]? And, what is the relationship between these challenges/opportunities and the role of AERA?

Discussion at the retreat was both rich in its vision for education research and grounded in realistic possibilities for AERA in the short and long term. The core themes were the importance of advancing education research as a field of inquiry, as distinct from education; the need to build research capacity and identity; the centrality of fostering a research community based on excellence, inclusiveness, interaction, and outreach; and the complexities of connecting research with policy and practice. Council members saw considerable promise in activities currently under way (e.g., the new AERA/LEA Handbook Series in Education Research), in areas for potential change or improvement (e.g., strengthening the research focus at the Annual Meeting), and in untapped opportunities (e.g., enhanced emphasis on professional development in education research).

In evidence throughout the retreat and in the Council meeting was an appreciation of the value of teamwork in Council and across Council and staff. As we look to the challenges and opportunities of a new year for the Association (July 1 started a new fiscal year), it is good to know that Council is hard at work and that it is indeed a body that works.

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AERA Award Nominations Deadlines Near

AERA's Awards Program is one of the most prominent ways for education researchers to recognize and honor the outstanding scholarship and service of their peers. Don't miss the opportunity to nominate strong candidates for the major 2006 AERA awards. Self-nominations are welcome.

Deadlines:

- October 15, 2005, for the Outstanding Book Award
- November 4, 2005, for all other AERA-wide awards, including AERA Award for Distinguished Contributions to Research in Education; Palmer O. Johnson Memorial Award; Review of Research Award; Relating Research to Practice Award; E. F. Lindquist Award; Early Career Award; Social Justice in Education Award; AERA Distinguished Public Service Award; and Scholars of Color Distinguished Career Contribution, Distinguished Scholar, and Early Career Contribution Awards.

For detailed information on the Call for Award Nominations, please refer to the May 2005 issue of *Educational Researcher* (pp. 45–46) or the AERA website at <http://www.aera.net/aboutaera?id=240>.

AERA members are also invited to submit nominations for the 2006 *Brown Lecture* no later than November 1, 2005. Detailed information can be found in the June/July 2005 issue of *Educational Researcher* or on the AERA website at <http://www.aera.net>.