



OIA Fall Policy Meeting Explores Research Issues

The annual Fall Policy Meeting of AERA's Organization of Institutional Affiliates (OIA) was held in Washington, D.C., on September 14–15. The meeting has been held every fall since the group was organized in the 1970s, always with the aims of introducing OIA member representatives to new people or programs in the national education research policy system and exploring cutting-edge issues. Seventy-two OIA member organizations sent representatives to the recent meeting, most of them deans, associate deans, and directors of research in schools of education. They heard 18 knowledgeable presenters from the research policy community, including 5 congressional staff members.

This year's meeting addressed a number of critical topics: (1) the challenges facing researchers who work with growth models of achievement; (2) research opportunities provided by the new statewide databases; (3) linkages between research on teaching and the preparation, licensing, and certification of teachers; (4) the reauthorization of the Institute of Education Sciences; and (5) a status report on the efforts of ED in '08 (a project of Strong American Schools) to make education a central issue in the ongoing presidential campaign. An evening program introduced the participants to nine presenters influential in education, some leading new ventures, and gave them a platform for describing their roles in the research policy system. In addition, AERA President Lorraine M. McDonnell initiated a discussion about AERA's role in promoting high-quality education research, a theme that will be developed in other forums during the year.

One of the objectives of the sessions involving congressional staff was genuine interaction, with an opportunity for participants to explain positions as well as express them. The panel discussion on the relationship between research and teacher preparation achieved that goal. Among the teacher educators on the panel were Joseph

Aguerrebere (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards), James Cibulka (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education), and Sharon Robinson (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education). They discussed teacher education research with three congressional staff members, two from the Senate (Lindsay Hunsicker and Erin Renner) and one from the House (James Bergeron). The dialogue was spirited, producing new information and offering constructive criticism for researchers. It became clear that congressional staff have learned much about education research and researchers. The ideological and methodological quarrels within the community are well known, with two consequences: (1) Congressional staff have developed a preference for major studies undertaken by agencies such as the Government Accountability Office or the National Research Council, rather than independent researchers or organizations; (2) staff have become knowledgeable about methodology and sources of evidence and expect briefings to delve into those issues.

Attendees learned that in addition to passing the Higher Education Act in 2008, Congress will address issues of teacher quality in the forthcoming reauthorizations of the Institute of Education Sciences and the No Child Left Behind Act. Congressional

staff members have a strong interest in hearing more from the research community about the most perplexing policy issues in teacher education. For example, if multiple measures are to be used in assessing students, what are they? If the definition of highly qualified teachers is to be modified to account for a more nuanced understanding of good teaching, what should it include? Congress, the forum was advised, is less interested in "boutique research" than in research that may result in fundamental improvements in education, such as residency programs for teachers. The exchange among OIA representatives and congressional staff made it clear that high-quality education research has an audience on Capitol Hill.

The program for each OIA Fall Policy Meeting is outlined at the meeting of the elected OIA Executive Committee in the spring and developed by AERA's Director of Government Relations, Gerald Sroufe, during the ensuing months. The 2009 Fall Policy Meeting is scheduled for September 13–14 in Washington, D.C.

Schools of education and research institutions with a strong interest in education research and research policy are eligible for membership in OIA. (Membership is not open to individuals.) For information about membership, contact Gerald Sroufe at jsroufe@aera.net.

OIA Executive Committee, 2008–2009

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