

## **AERA and NAEd Launch Assessment of Education Research Doctorate Programs With NSF Support**

**T**he American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Academy of Education (NAEd) have launched a ground-breaking study in the field of education research. This joint, first-time-ever assessment will examine education research doctorate programs in graduate schools and colleges of education in the United States. The National Science Foundation (NSF), through its competitive award process, has awarded a 3-year continuing grant effective September 15, 2008, to support this project.

In a field as large and robust as education research, which produces approximately 1,800 doctorates each year, there has been no prior comprehensive assessment of doctorate programs. This assessment will examine the national picture for programs in 16 major education research fields that have distinct programs of doctoral study, including mathematics and science education, teaching and teacher education, curriculum and instruction, educational psychology, education measurement and statistics, higher education, and educational policy. This assessment focuses on the research doctorates offered through more than 900 programs in approximately 120 universities. The study parallels an ongoing National Research Council (NRC) assessment of research doctorate programs in other arts and sciences fields.

The AERA-NAEd assessment begins with preliminary work in cooperation with participating institutions during the 2008–2009 academic year, with the surveys of programs, faculty, and students planned for 2009–2010. It is directed by AERA Executive Director Felice J. Levine, Principal Investigator, and NAEd President Lorrie Shepard, Co-Principal Investigator, with a study director and project staff to be located at AERA in Washington, D.C. As with the NRC assessment, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., will conduct the data collection for the study.

“The assessment is central to understanding the substance and quality of education research doctorate programs. Scholars trained through these programs are central to advancing our knowledge about education in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sciences and in other fields of learning,” said Shepard.

In addition to the investigators, an AERA-NAEd Advisory Committee for the Assessment of Education Research Doctorate Programs has been named: Bruce Alberts, University of California and Editor-in-Chief, *Science*; Camilla P. Benbow, Vanderbilt University; Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Cornell University; Adam Gamoran, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Paul W. Holland, Educational Testing Service (retired); Vinetta C. Jones, Howard University; Marcia C. Linn,

University of California, Berkeley; Shirley M. Malcom, American Association for the Advancement of Science; and William F. Tate, Washington University in St. Louis.

With considerable attention paid to assessment of research doctorate programs in other arts and sciences fields in recent years, there has been almost none directed to doctorate programs in education research fields, despite a history of examination of graduate programs dating back nearly one hundred years. The American Council on Education oversaw early studies, followed by the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils studies led by the NRC, prior to the current NRC assessment. More recently, the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate included research as part of an overall effort to reexamine and change doctorate programs in six fields (including education) at 44 universities.

AERA and NAEd received a planning grant from the Spencer Foundation to develop this study and undertake the pilot work that led to the NSF award. “This research is extraordinarily important,” Levine said. “It will provide critical data and findings that can be used to establish benchmarks and quality criteria to advance and improve education research doctorate programs nationally and to prepare high-quality education research scientists.”