

2012 Conference Program Chair's Reflections

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What a wonderful gathering we had in Evanston at the beautiful Hilton Orrington Hotel to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the annual meeting of MWERA members via the conference theme *Integrating Evidence-Based Practices in Education*. We had over 250 proposals submitted for conference presentation by a diverse composite of educational researchers such as faculty, students, practitioners, administrators, and community. The high-quality research of the final, accepted proposals was very evident from the excellent ideas and findings shared with members who attended the various session types: papers, professional development workshops, symposia, posters, alternative sessions, and research in progress. The research discussions and interactions between presenters, chairs, discussants, and audience members were truly inspiring.

Dr. Cynthia Campbell, President of MWERA, started the conference with a tremendous presidential keynote address entitled "MWERA: Looking Back 35 Years." This presentation was an informative content review of MWERA's archived conference programs that revealed a rich and cutting edge history of era-based research initiatives. We were extremely privileged to have as the luncheon keynote address speaker, Dr. Larry V. Hedges, Board of Trustees Professor of Statistics and Professor of Educational and Social Policy at Northwestern University. Dr. Hedges' address, "The Crisis in Education Research Capacity," examined the various areas of underinvestment in systematic research related to the overall functioning of the enterprise of education.

Further highlights from the conference that showcased the organization's collegiality between faculty and students were the new member and new student member welcome session, the President's cracker barrel social (with an awesome blues band in residence!), division business meetings featuring invited speakers, and the community-based session entitled "Voices of Young Latina Mothers."

The 2012 conference would not have been a success without the countless volunteers who assisted in realizing the great program that transpired. I would like to give my deep appreciation to all of the proposal reviewers and MWERA members who volunteered to be session discussants and chairs as well as the remarkable assembly of hard-working, division chairs who helped amass the conference program! Also, a hearty "thank you" to all of the past MWERA program chairs and current officers that I called upon for your wealth of knowledge and experience. Lastly, I am truly grateful for the assistance and wisdom provided by MWERA's outgoing Executive Officer, Dr. Sharon McNeely, who helped bring the conference to "life" at the Orrington from working with the wonderful hotel staff to accommodations to media.

Personally, this was a delightful experience from commencement of program ideas in 2011 to conference closing sessions a year later in 2012. My program chair involvement has affirmed what I have observed as an active member at numerous MWERA conferences over the past 10 years that the organization's membership provides quality research, discussion, and a collegial environment for all scholars and practitioners interested in the sundry areas that encompass educational research. Thank you for a rewarding experience!