



AERA Announces 2020 Annual Meeting Change

Dear AERA Members, 2020 Annual Meeting Participants, Colleagues, and Friends,

We are writing to inform you that the American Educational Research Association (AERA) will not be holding a place-based Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California, in April 2020 due to the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Instead, we are shifting to a virtual meeting with the goal of providing an authentic and meaningful experience for those who had expected to attend. This decision was reached through a unanimous resolution of AERA Council, adopted March, 5, 2020.

For over a year, we have anticipated a physical convening in San Francisco where we would gather together in 2020 to create and share cutting edge research for organized collaboration. As an association, we value our face-to-face meetings—the formal and informal opportunities to share and discuss our research, the special moments when we discover in the most unexpected ways and places new possibilities for networking, and the opportunities we have to value and applaud colleagues for stellar accomplishments.

Sadly, the pernicious presence and spread of the coronavirus internationally, including in recent weeks and days in the United States, makes it both impossible to hold a meeting that would even approximate the value of our annual place-based gathering and irresponsible to encourage, expect, or stand silent when attendees could be exposed to a communicable disease, affect Bay area workers or residents, and return to their homes transmitting an illness to family and friends even before it manifests itself. This is coupled with the recent State of Emergency declared by the mayor of San Francisco last week, a further Declaration by the Governor, and growing incidence of confirmed reports in California and in the United States.

As a research association, we adhere to the realities and the facts involved, including heeding precautions limiting travel and remaining within one's community except under the most urgent and extraordinary of circumstances. An annual conference has many wonderful strengths, but it just cannot be classified as urgent or extraordinary in the face of the heightened risk. Those members and colleagues who are already registered will receive full refunds of their AERA Annual Meeting registration fee.

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Although an in-person AERA Annual Meeting will not take place in 2020, it is our goal to reimagine the opportunities of a virtual meeting that honors our professional responsibility to share significant research for the public good. We have been proactively exploring options and weighing what is possible for a virtual meeting from a technical and financial standpoint. It is anticipated that the major lectures and other special features of the invited program, including select presidential and division-planned sessions, will be available streamed live in real time, and we are in the process of exploring making these sessions available on demand for “attendees.”

The open submission process yielded more than 7,250 acceptances on the Annual Meeting program. We are also exploring and anticipate that presenting authors and symposia presenters will have an opportunity to place their paper in the AERA online paper repository (date and time stamped and assigned a DOI), upload select slides or a poster, and present their work in their own recorded voice. We envision that select professional development courses will additionally be offered virtually, and refunds provided to registrants for those courses not broadcast this year.

Virtual conversation corners (perhaps in the form of threaded discussions) are being explored to encourage national and international dialogue. Our goal is to make this a high quality alternative professional experience, both for our members as well as for those interested in educational problems in the U.S. and world. And, we plan to open on April 17, 2020—the originally planned opening day for AERA.

Important to us is getting this announcement out in time to assist those who have already made plans. There are no cancellation fees for the Annual Meeting hotels for those who booked through AERA’s housing bureau and who cancel now. We encourage attendees to cancel these and any other arrangements. We are looking into, but cannot control, flight cancellations costs, some of which carry change fees (\$200 typically). Keep in mind, however, that there will be no registration fees for participation and attendance this year, and we hope this will help offset penalties or sunk costs.

In the coming weeks, you will receive detailed information on the AERA website about the virtual meeting. We are already crafting FAQs and broader guidance materials to cover as many areas of change as would be helpful. We also seek the support of our members as we create a platform for virtual access and, to the extent possible, participant engagement.

We are planning to host immediately a series of “Briefing and Listening Sessions” via Zoom, on Tuesday, March 10, at 4:00-5:00pm ET; Wednesday, March 11, also at 4:00-

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5:00pm ET; and Friday, March 13, at 12:00-1:00pm ET. Detailed instructions on how to join the discussion will be posted and publicized.

This communication comes with our thanks for your interest in AERA and your support as the Association grapples with transforming our Annual Meeting from a challenge to an opportunity. The success of our meeting depends on all of us collaborating and creating a common sense of purpose as we build a dynamic, accessible, affordable, reproducible, and inclusive conference that will remain educative for us all.

Warm wishes and be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Felice J. Levine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vanessa Siddle Walker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

Vanessa Siddle Walker, Ed.D.
2019-2020 AERA President
Emory University

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