



March 23, 2020

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

We are writing to let you know that, in a unanimous resolution by Council on March 22, 2020, the American Educational Research Association is cancelling the AERA 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting.

We have been monitoring the coronavirus disease, now sweeping the United States, over the last week to assess whether our vision of a free, open-access Virtual Annual Meeting for all would continue to provide the safe and secure space for participants and attendees we had imagined, or whether it was adding to a “to do” list growing exponentially for far too many.

We have been engaged in and informed by the personal concerns of so many of our members about how best to handle their life situations—supporting family members or friends with positive test results, teaching online and learning new teaching skills for the first time, and managing new childcare responsibilities while engaging in providing educative and nurturing environments for students of all ages. Important jobs have been eliminated or disrupted because of the closure of research or teaching work. Moreover, as the disease continues to progress, we face legitimate concerns about our own vulnerabilities and those of others significant in our lives.

The question before the AERA leadership team was one of responsibility amidst a pernicious pandemic. The situation on the ground quite literally has changed in ways unimaginable on March 5, 2020, when the AERA Council decided to cancel holding a place-based meeting in San Francisco on April 17-21, 2020 and engage a virtual meeting. At that time, we dreamed of creating an online platform where, without cost to anyone, competitively selected and invited paper presenters and other participants would be provided with an opportunity to share their work and benefit from connecting with a worldwide audience of attendees. It seemed both feasible and responsible to invent and build a space to connect a breadth of scholars with practice and policy persons at all career ages and stages and to build it as a product that would in perpetuity remain available for all.

We were also grateful for the response of AERA members to this collaborative process of imagining and creating a virtual meeting. Over the last 2-3 weeks, the diverse arenas of inquiry that constitute our field have come together in extraordinarily gratifying ways with a sense of collegiality second to none (approximately 1,500 participating in three listening sessions from around the world). We also engaged online web innovators and technological experts to develop a virtual web-based platform that could meet our expectations and realize our vision.

Yet, the rapidly changing circumstances, even as recently as this weekend, made us question whether our vision of a safe-haven virtual environment could be realized. As we said from the outset in our March 6 letter, “[A place-based] annual conference has many wonderful strengths, but it just cannot be classified as urgent or extraordinary in the face of the heightened risk.” After a full Council discussion last evening, we collectively reached the very same conclusion about a virtual meeting—that our first priority in light of ever-increasing risk is to affirm that the highest value that we share is the physical and emotional needs of all people connected to the world around us.

In the days ahead, there will be further announcements about planning for future Annual Meetings and events, fellowship submission deadlines, online courses or webinars, chat rooms to connect to or talk with others. Mainly, however, we intend not to specify too much in advance. We shall wait to see the progression of this disease, since we want AERA activities and communications to be supportive rather than a distraction in your lives.

So, as was true when AERA did not have meetings during World War II, we shall not see you on opening night on April 17, 2020—either for a place-based meeting or a virtual Annual Meeting. We shall miss you. But, when April 17 dawns for each of you in whatever your time zone and hemisphere, we hope that AERA’s and our collective commitment to serve the public good, will be a light that shines in all of us.

May you be well, peaceful, and productive—even amidst a pandemic.



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P.S. We do want to communicate two bits of information:

1. Every 2020 accepted paper, whether to be presented in a paper session, poster session, roundtable session, or a session submission with planned papers will receive from AERA via email a citation that you can use as authentication that

your paper was accepted for the AERA 2020 Annual Meeting.

2. The extended deadline from March 20 to March 30 (recently announced) for uploading final papers and participating in the AERA Online Paper Repository has been lifted. If you are working on a revision, please do so at your own pace. Any deadline for final papers and for locating your paper in the Online Paper Repository will be announced far in advance and will not be before June 1.
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