

**The Past, Present and Future of Developmental Education:
 Remarks from the Fall 2013 Conference**

By Ron Weisberger, former LAANE president and Coordinator of Tutoring Services at Bristol Community College, Fall River, MA

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More than 10 years ago Alexander Astin, one of the leading researchers of higher education argued that: "The education of the 'remedial' student is the most important educational problem in America today, more important than educational funding, financial aid, curriculum reform, and the rest. Providing effective "remedial' education would do more to alleviate our most social and economic problems than almost any other social and economic action we could take".

However recently a commission report issued by the American Association of Community Colleges conceded that "developmental education as traditionally practiced is dysfunctional, that barriers to transfer inhibit student progress, that degree and certificate completion rates are too low, and that attainment gaps across groups of students are unacceptable". An extensive study of remedial and developmental education carried out for the Education Commission of the States and the Lumina Foundation found that "remedial and developmental education has contributed to the democratization of American higher education by expanding access, **but there is a need for innovative strategies that increase the effectiveness and efficiencies of such programs.**

Why have we arrived at this 'cross roads' as the authors state and what to do about it in order that as many students as

possible succeed in obtaining a degree whether in a community college or a baccalaureate institution? These are fundamental questions that those of us working in developmental education must face.

We appreciate that our students come from diverse backgrounds and need support to bring them up to a level that will help them succeed. We also know that developmental education is not a new phenomenon. UCLA educator Mike Rose reminds us that while the numbers of students needing developmental courses may seem alarming "some form of remediation has existed for a very long time, and by some estimates, the numbers have remained modestly stable" (41). In addition the fact is that some sort of remedial education goes back as far as the colonial period when American colleges were first established and has continued to be part of higher education throughout our history

Of course in the mid-twentieth century and continuing, the amount of students entering higher education based on need and the promise of access for all of our citizens has greatly expanded and therefore so has developmental education.

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education.

The promise of equal access has required that students brought into the academy be provided with the support needed to succeed unless they become the victims of the “revolving door”. The need, of course, is greater than ever. President Obama in his American’s Graduation Initiative back in 2009 called for an additional 5 million college graduates by the year 2020 and the Center for American Progress says that in order to accomplish this goal these students will need developmental education in a variety of areas in order “to be successful in college-level courses”.

Nevertheless, we do have to admit that the record of success of developmental students is clearly mixed. As we know, despite years of practice we haven’t found the “holy grail”. Most educators coming into this area were often and still may be “flying by the seat of their pants” and with inadequate support. It has not even been entirely clear what is meant by developmental education. While the term remedial was used and still is by some, many in the field switched to the more positive term of developmental because of the connotation of remedial referring to the idea of having to compensate for a deficiency.

The organization that developed in the 1970s to include many developmental practitioners the National Association of Developmental Education (NADE) eventually took as its motto “**helping underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, and advanced students excel**” so as to see this field as one that encompassed a variety of learners. It was also based on psychological models of development that take into consideration the “acquisition of cognitive or social processes consistent with stages of development or specific cognitive processing”.

We in LAANE have been part of this movement of course. We have all participated in the various ways that we have tried to operationalize the need for support through comprehensive learning centers utilizing both professional and peer tutors, writing centers, Supplemental Instruction (SI), specific developmental courses in writing, reading and math which did not carry college credit, but were required after testing were also created. Organizations such as LAANE, NADE and its regional affiliates such as LAANE, CRLA have provided both support for educators in these areas as well as both the developing theory and practice through conferences and journals.

Still there has been continuing criticism, as we have seen, from a variety of quarters as to the viability of what we do. Some come from politicians who feel that they are paying for work that should have been done in the primary and secondary schools.

Others from researchers such as Thomas Bailey of Teachers College, Columbia University who has called for a ‘**broad based effort to reform and re-think developmental education**’. He argues, among other things, that there lacks a consensus as to what college ready really means and that assessment tools that do exist to determine readiness are all over the map. He is not calling, as some have, for our programs to be eliminated. Rather he argues that a reform agenda would include “**a comprehensive approach to assessment, more rigorous research that explicitly tracks students with weak academic skills through their early experiences at college and a blurring of the distinction between developmental and what is considered “college level” students. This would, he feels,**



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President's Column

Regina McCarthy, UNH Manchester

Missionary Work: Spreading the Word of LAANE

LAANE membership has been stalled for the last few years. We have not seen significant growth in membership numbers. In a period of diminishing department budgets, frozen professional development funds, ever-increasing workloads cutting across multiple functional areas, we professionals in academic support, transition, and enrichment have little time and less funding for engagement in our own professional development. We have to make careful decisions about how best to utilize funding to get the most bang for our institutional bucks (and sometimes the investment of our own personal buck).

However, it is networking with a colleague that sparks curricular innovation. It is attendance at a conference workshop that is a catalyst for that next great idea for your department or program. Reimagining of your work can occur with a quote from a keynote speaker. Colleagues who share similar disciplinary challenges or who seek effective classroom pedagogies share the pain and kindle the ideas off-site and over lunch.

LAANE can become the intersection of program inspiration, curricular redesign, and cross-departmental collaborations. Cultivation of new membership is critical to the survival and vitality of the Learning Assistance Association of New England. Please spread the word on your campus. Please be the LAANE missionary so that your colleagues learn about our professional association and the robust annual conference supporting your professional development needs without huge impact on already underfunded budgets.



Photo credit: Margaret Pobywajlo

Our President recently received the following awards:

The 2014 Campus Compact for New Hampshire Good Steward Award. Regina McCarthy was recognized for her work in serving veterans on her college campus and for a college-wide service initiative raising awareness about veteran homelessness in the Manchester, NH community and raising funds for Liberty House, a Manchester, NH transitional residential facility for honorably discharged veterans.

CRLA Northeast Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Reading and Learning

Regina McCarthy, assistant dean of academic student services at UNH Manchester, was recognized by the Northeast Chapter conference of the College Reading & Learning Association at their spring conference in March. McCarthy was presented with an award for Outstanding Contribution to the Field of college reading and learning. In presenting the award, CRLA Northeast Chapter President Judi Salsburg Taylor highlighted McCarthy's commitment to student development and learning.

improve the pedagogy for both groups of students and “accelerate students’ progress towards engagement in college level work”.

Of course those of us who have been working in this area know that often there is not a real clear cut distinction between so called developmental students and those considered to be college level. Bailey himself points out that often the distinction between developmental and non-developmental students is arbitrary. What he feels is needed particularly is to include programs for first-year college students that while providing them with needed skills also helps them to feel that they are part of this new institution that they have joined rather than feel alienated. In other words, we need an effective socialization process as much as we need courses that build math, reading and writing literacy skills as important as they are.

In order to deal with the above situation colleges need to develop ways for students to gain support at least during their first semester ,and more likely their first year, in order that they can make a successful transformation from the world they have come from to the new world of academia. It is foolish to think that such a transformation can happen “over night”.

An Education Trust study of colleges or universities that have an unusually high graduation rate emphasizes that what makes the difference is whether the institution focuses on “*getting their students engaged and connected to the college particularly in the critical freshman year*”. In addition, it emphasizes “**the monitoring of student progress taking advantage of new data and patterns of student success**” and also importantly whether “**campus leaders make student success a top institution-wide priority**” Of course all institutions claim they are in favor of student success but there is a difference between intention and action.

A college success course (CSS) especially if connected to a learning community (LC)that provides students with a support system both in regard to fellow students and a faculty/mentor is one approach. Another feature of the CSS/ LC combination is that students are better able to see the relationship between the different courses they are taking and faculty in this arrangement, of course are better able to coordinate lessons and assignments and are able to both learn from each other and gain support. In so doing both students and faculty are in a sense growing together as the semester progresses. Recent evidence by researchers such as Vincent Tinto and others have shown that this arrangement can make a significant difference in engaging and retaining students as well as helping in their cognitive and affective development.

In a many ways developmental educators have been in the forefront of developing and working with these first year programs. However, increased professional development is called for in order to help colleagues to learn how such strategies such CSS and LCs, as well as other techniques, can help increase the numbers of students who succeed in college. We need more professional development opportunities such as what LAANE has provided all of these years and we need classroom research to continue to determine what works and what doesn’t.

Mike Rose in his usual very practical, but poignant way points out what we know which is that many of our students are challenged in their everyday lives. As he says “ **A lost job or health crisis would destabilize their plans for school. There is little room for mishap.**” There are many reasons beyond our control for why students might drop out. These are reasons that critics who question developmental education in general fail to take into consideration.



Poster Sessions: More than paste and paper

by Katy Kramer, Adjunct instructor,

Southern New Hampshire University

At first blush, the poster session seems like “just one more thing” to add to the syllabus, and perhaps a frivolous one at that. Glue sticks, colored paper and photos seem to run counter to the level of research and quality of writing that professors expect of students by semester’s end. Ironically, these materials are the very things that enable students to encapsulate research, display their findings and explain them to an audience. Above all, in this age of emoticons and tweets, poster sessions promote the higher-order thinking for which teachers long.

Poster sessions have their roots in the “hard” sciences—chemistry, physics, biology traditionally—and in other disciplines where experiment and statistical significance hold sway. Posters at scientific meetings provide an efficient way for participants to share information about their current research and posters generally include the data found in a scientific study: abstract, introduction, methods and so forth. But posters, unlike their dense journal counterparts, convey this information with a better appreciation for an audience. More colorful and less detailed, they explain complex information simply and creatively through permutations of color, layout, text, tables, diagrams and photos.

One bridge from the scientific community to public education came through science fairs and high school chemistry AP courses because poster sessions comported with the National Science Education Standards: using an inquiry-based process to develop written and oral communication skills to transmit scientific information; to foster discourse among students as they shared their projects. College and university science departments, aware of their use at scientific meetings, adapted posters sessions to improve written, oral and visual skills as well as familiarize students with the discipline’s expectations.

It is an easy leap to see why poster sessions appealed to social science and humanities professors, who also conducted research and were, no doubt, cajoled by their colleagues to attend poster sessions to evaluate students’ writing and oral presentations. Other benefits were evident.

As an alternative to traditional pencil and paper assessments, poster sessions provide an opportunity to evaluate additional skills and for different students to stand out. Good students do well at poster sessions, but more than one teacher has been astonished by the design skills of students whose expertise in this area would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Finding opportunities for students to excel has to be a sound idea. More importantly, students have to read the research to summarize it, understand findings to explain them, and see the relationship of the parts to the whole to make a poster work visually.

For public speakers, a poster session is a less threatening way to convey information orally and an opportunity to perfect a presentation as numerous people file by. Many teachers encourage students to engage passersby—to “buttonhole” them with captivating information rather than simply waiting for people to stop and show interest in their work: an argument of a different sort.

Finally, posters are also an effective vehicle for peer-review, sharing topics, and assessing an audience. Invitees can serve multiple purposes for the institution itself including interdisciplinary efforts, community involvement and recruitment.

Levine-Rasky (2009) in her article “The Public Poster Session” in *Teaching Sociology*, writes about the less measurable outcomes: “The prospect of showing a poster to one’s peers and to interested strangers elicits excitement and curiosity about each other’s work that is gratifying to observe.”

Conference and Awards

31st Annual LAANE Conference
October 24, 2014 at Cape Cod Community College
“Pathways from Access to Completion”
Proposals due June 27, 2014

Conference Registration begins: August 1, 2014

Cost: \$100 conference fee/ \$15 network reception on evening of 10/23=\$115

Student cost: \$40 conference fee

Membership is included in your conference fee!

The conference will take place at Cape Cod Community College and accommodations will be provided by the Cape Codder Resort in Hyannis, MA.

Group Rate Code: LAAN1014

Proposal submission link:

http://www.laanechapter.org/events/2014_annual_conference/2014-call-for-proposals

In addition to presentations, at the conference, LAANE will be acknowledging the outstanding contributions of both our colleagues as well as students. Begin thinking about nominating either a colleague or a student for one of the following awards. We also have a student scholarship. **For more information, please see page 9 of the newsletter.**

Submit your award nominations now by emailing our Vice President, Sarah Bedingfield at sbedingfield@ccsnh.edu.

Outstanding Service to Developmental Students

Outstanding Student in a Developmental Program

Outstanding Support to Developmental Education by a college administrator and/or public servant

Outstanding Developmental Education Program

Outstanding Contribution to LAANE

For a more detailed description of the awards and criteria, please visit:

<http://www.laanechapter.org/scholarship-and-awards>

Conference details so far...

Keynote Speech Title:

“Needed Now More than Ever: The Evolving Roles of Learning Support Systems”

Keynote panelists will be:

Dr. Jane Neuburger is Director Learning Resource Center at Syracuse University. She is also a member of the NADE Certification Council; Research and Marketing Coordinator. Also, she is the Co-chair of the NADE Research Committee, a former NADE and NYCLSA President, a former visiting professor at the Kellogg Institute, and a CLDAE fellow.

Dr. Jennifer Ferguson is a Professor at Cazenovia College, Cazenovia NY and also the Training coordinator for the Certification Council. She is a recent Kellogg Institute attendee and should be certified by the time of the fall conference presentation.

Dr. Karen Patty-Graham is Professor Emeritus from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, a former NADE President, and the Review Operations Manager for the Council. She is a former NADE Vice President as well. Karen is a CLADEA Fellow and was awarded the 2006 Henry Young Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution to NADE. She is also, NADE’s conference Manager.

Recently Published White Papers
(To access, cut and paste addresses into your web browser)

"The Terrain of College Developmental Reading"

Executive Summary and Paper Commissioned by the College Reading & Learning Association

[http://nade.net/site/documents/breaking%20news/
TheTerrainofCollege91913.pdf](http://nade.net/site/documents/breaking%20news/TheTerrainofCollege91913.pdf)

"Meaningful Access and Support: The Path to College Completion"

written on behalf of the Council of Learning Assistance and Developmental Associations (CLADEA).

[http://nade.net/site/documents/breaking%20news/CLADEA%20White%20Paper%
20REVISED%20FINAL.pdf](http://nade.net/site/documents/breaking%20news/CLADEA%20White%20Paper%20REVISED%20FINAL.pdf)

"Where Value Meets Values: The Economic Impact of Community Colleges Analysis of the Economic Impact and Return on Investment of Education"

[http://www.aacc.nche.edu/About/Documents
USA_AGG_MainReport_Final_021114.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/About/Documents/USA_AGG_MainReport_Final_021114.pdf)

Student Scholarships

The Learning Assistance Association of New England (LAANE) is committed to supporting the continuing enrollment of students successful in their in developmental course work. At this year's annual fall conference, (October 24, 2014 at Cape Cod Community College, Hyannis, MA) LAANE will award one \$500 student scholarship. The 2013 recipient of the LAANE Scholarship was Lindsay Scholl, a Health Psychology major with a minor in Public Health, of Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences University in Boston.

Please encourage your students to apply. The scholarship will be awarded to a student who at the time of application:

- is enrolled in a bachelor's or associate's degree program
- has completed at least 6 credits of developmental coursework
- has earned at least 24 credits
- has a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2
- will be a continuing student (graduating students are ineligible to apply)

The student must provide:

- an official transcript
- an essay addressing one of several writing prompts related to the role of developmental education
- a letter of recommendation from a faculty member, professional staff member or administrator.

Submit now. Deadline for application: October 8, 2014

Upcoming Professional Conferences

Professional conferences, workshops, symposiums, and in-service meetings are of considerable importance to our development as teachers, administrators, professors -- to all professionals. They introduce us to ideas and revive our interests in our career. We network, share experiences, gain insight, and often return to our respective institutions more enlightened and feeling less alone in our work. If you know of a conference you would like to see your colleagues attend, please send that information to Katherine Conlon, LAANE Newsletter Editor, at 978-934-4463 or at Katherine_Conlon@uml.edu or UMass Lowell, **3 Solomont Way Suite 1**, Lowell, MA 01854

5th Annual Conference for Student Success

“Teaching for Student Success”

Friday, September 19, 2014, UMass Amherst

www.umass.edu/studentsuccessconference

National Association for Academic Advising (NACADA)

“Adventures in Advising: Explore, Discover, Collaborate, Transform”

October 8-11, 2014, Minneapolis, MN

www.nacada.ksu.edu

International Writing Centers Association

National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing—Joint Conference

October 30-November 1, 2014, Orlando, FL

<http://iwcanctw2014.com/>

College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)

47th Annual Conference

“The North Star: Navigating, Teaching, and Learning”

November 5-8, 2014, St. Paul, MN

Regional Conference TBA

www.crla.net

Board Member News



LAANE Vice President Sarah Bedingfield (left) of Great Bay Community College and Jeanne Hughes (right) of Southern New Hampshire University both received their doctoral degrees at the Rivier University Commencement on Saturday, May 10, 2014. Jeanne did her dissertation research in fellow LAANE member, Crystal Bickford's first-year composition class.

Board Member Elections

During the fall conference, we will be holding an elections for some new board members.

The following seats will be open:

President

Treasurer

These positions require a two year commitment to service.

Incentives to run for the Board of LAANE:

- **Opportunities for professional development within the organization**
- **An expanded network of dedicated professionals who share your goals, interests, and their means of meeting challenges**
- **Resume builder**
- **Further development of your leadership skills**
- **Encouragement from other developmental educators**

Email Sarah Bedingfield at sbedingfield@ccsnh.edu now to submit your nomination or self-nomination for a seat on the Board. A vote will take place at the fall conference.

Stay in the loop with LAANE

We are now using MailChimp as our email marketing tool.

Also, “like” us on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/learningassistanceassociationofnewengland>

Our website: <http://www.laanechapter.org>

Important Items to Remember:

Fall Conference Proposals due: June 27, 2014

Fall Conference Registration opens: August 1, 2014

Nominate your colleagues now for a LAANE award.

Nominate or self-nominate now for upcoming LAANE board open positions.

Nominate your student for a LAANE student scholarship by October 8, 2014.

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LAANE Executive Officers

Continued

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