

# ***MNADE NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2004***

## **Plan Now for our Fall Conference**

On October 7-8, 2004 we will meet at Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center in Alexandria, Minnesota for our eleventh annual conference. Please plan to join us!

Our theme this year is **Exploring the Spectrum of College Readiness**. The call for proposals is at the end of this newsletter; you still have time to consider sending one to Patty Wheeler Andrews by May 15.

We will post the registration form on our website as soon as we know if we got the MnSCU CTL grant that supports the costs of registration. Here is the URL:  
[www.mnade.org](http://www.mnade.org) .



## **A Note from our President**

Dana Britt Lundell

My message this time to the MNADE community is very brief: LET'S ALL PAY ATTENTION AND GET INVOLVED! Of course, now I'll expand on that message at length. What I'm asking all MNADE members to do in the coming months is to pay very close attention to what is happening in the state of Minnesota that may impact the developmental education community. In my previous column in the newsletter, I referred to our field as "dynamic." I continue to use that phrase as politics and events at the state level are shaping the public's conversations about higher education once again, and it is centrally important to the MNADE organization to become aware of and proactive about what might affect us as a result of these initiatives.

First, I would suggest that we all pay attention to our local news headlines like the one that recently appeared in the *Minnesota Daily*, the campus newspaper of the University of Minnesota. On April 7, 2004, in an article titled "Group to Review State Higher Ed," Molly Moker reported on a new study of higher education that will be conducted this year. (For more information, the full text of this article can be accessed at <http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2004/03/31/8968>). The article details preliminary announcements and appointments that have been made to implement this process, including the fact that the study will be conducted by a membership-based group called

the Citizens League, which will form a committee of 30 individuals to guide the study who are “predominantly...generalists who do not have prior involvement in a topic or professional interest in the outcome of a study” (<http://www.citizensleague.net/highereducation/>). They will conduct an independent study of higher education related to financing, accountability, programs, and services presently available to students and the community. Previously in the Governor’s State of the State Address on February 5, 2004, Pawlenty indicated that he is advocating this state-wide study of the state’s higher education programs as part of his overall strategy for improving education and streamlining finances. The final report from this group about the state of Minnesota higher education will be made in 2005, and the results will centrally influence future legislative sessions. This type of news item and those to follow in the coming months will likely have a significant and highly publicized impact on the future of the state’s developmental education programs and services. The University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities systems are on board with the project, and the results will critically examine and provide recommendations about the kinds of services, outcomes, and successes that the state’s higher education programs presently provide.

It is my position that the MNADE organization and its members should engage in a close examination and ongoing discussion about the relevance of this study to the field of developmental education. I anticipate that popular words like “accountability,” “assessment,” “graduation,” “excellence,” and “retention” will likely be the framing vocabulary for the outcomes of the project. In the past, these words have frequently been used to undercut the successful work of those of us in developmental education programs who understand and practice a more complex, student-centered interpretation of best practices, theory, and research that support student learning. I will note that although the commission claims it is unbiased because it is run and funded by a private organization and will include “average” citizens from the state with no current stake in the educational organizations, I would argue that there are some predetermined points of study and political motives that may be driving this project. For example, someone has already mentioned the potential for reconsideration of the existence of the General College at the University of Minnesota (Moker, p. 2). They also note that there could be the need to reconstruct campuses across the state if the study warrants this (p. 1). Finally, they have indicated that this commission will not “seek state approval for how to conduct the study,” according to the Citizen League’s President (p. 1). Both of these potential outcomes they have informally suggested will directly impact our state’s developmental education services.

As this study proceeds, my questions for us all to consider as MNADE members are these: What is our stake in the parameters and outcomes of this study? What might developmental educators in the state of Minnesota do to become more prepared about the potential results and recommendation of such a study? What key concerns do we have, and what evidence do we have to provide about the strengths of our programs in the face of a study of higher education? Let’s all pay close attention.

As a proactive response from MNADE, one way we can pay attention and get involved in the discussion is by attending the upcoming MNADE conference. Our organization has taken a proactive stance in defining this year's theme of "Exploring the Spectrum of College Readiness" as a way to acknowledge the breadth and connectedness of our work in postsecondary developmental education with the work of community and secondary educators. What is "college readiness" as a community college teacher or university instructor might define it? How are under-served students' needs supported and recognized as they transition to college? What might a high school student not know about what it takes to be a successful college student? The conference scheduled for October 7-8, 2004, at the Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, Minnesota, will provide a space for us to share, connect, and pay attention to what is going on in the state that impacts our work. I invite everyone to come to the conference and share MNADE membership and conference information with colleagues who may be interested. We also look forward to seeing proposals from those of you who wish to share your work at the conference. It will be important to show formally and informally how closely our state-wide organization does pay attention to the issues that most centrally affect our students, particularly those who are under-served in many areas of their lives and who can be successful entering colleges and universities at any point they can take advantage of this opportunity. Let's get involved!



## Subscribe to our Listserv

To ensure that you will be informed of upcoming events, included in online discussions, and connected to your colleagues, **please subscribe to our listserv!**

To subscribe to the MNADE listserv, send an email to [LISTSERV@tc.umn.edu](mailto:LISTSERV@tc.umn.edu). Leave the subject line blank and turn off the signature again if you use one. In the message type SUB MN-NADE FIRSTNAME LASTNAME.

You put your own name in where it says "firstname lastname," but you already knew that!

(To unsubscribe, send a message to the same address, and type the message: signoff MN-NADE.)

## The States of Developmental Education: A View from 2003

Patty Wheeler Andrews

*In his keynote address that opened the MNADE conference, Dr. David Arendale from the University of Minnesota's General College described a brief history of developmental education in the nation; he informed us that there are five states to observe: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, and Texas. From the materials he provided, we had the opportunity to examine the current listing of post-secondary developmental education policies in those and the 45 other states. From this information, we were able to draw conclusions about the State of the Union, in terms of developmental education and the laws that legislatures have enacted to shape its future, and simultaneously, our futures.*

*Many of us in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System have attended workshops on critical and creative thinking; one outstanding speaker, Gerry Allan, an architect and educator, has presented seminars and courses that demonstrate strategies for shaping one's career and imagining one's own future. In particular, his "Decade at a Glance" model, a method of looking at longer range goals and action plans, provides a significant technique that may provide us with a tentative timeline for our work in developmental education in the coming years. Consider the Decade at a Glance for your program or your institution as we explore the nature of five other states for us to observe as we anticipate the coming decade in developmental education programs.*

*If you are curious about the sources of the following comments, they are based on recent conversations with faculty and staff from around the MnSCU system, this collection of seven state universities and twenty-two community colleges, technical colleges, and merged community and technical colleges that serves almost 60,000 students in a variety of programs that influence the academic success of students. While we will keep California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, and Texas clearly in mind, here are five other states for us developmental educators to observe in the MnSCU system.*

*1. The State of Ignorance: Who knows about the developmental math program on your campus or the lab for students in developmental math courses? How does the success of that lab get communicated to the rest of your department, to administrators on your campus or at the system office? Who knows about the cut scores on the placement tests for mathematics or for composition or for reading? Who decides when and how to revise them? Who on your campus or in your legislature knows about developmental education courses for post-secondary students of all ages, backgrounds, and educational goals? How is the State of Ignorance affecting your department, your campus curriculum policies, and your students' retention and college success? What will be the impact on our campuses and in our state if we ignore these questions?*

*Governor Pawlenty recently mandated that each Minnesota child will be reading by the end of first grade. It is a worthy goal, but reading teachers and other reading professionals know that not all six-year-olds are yet physiologically capable of reading. Is that then an appropriate mandate for our already overextended elementary teachers and families? What will be the impact of a comparable mandate at the secondary and post-secondary levels? Will there be a "No Adult Left Behind" program?*

*Chancellor McCormick has recently instituted a policy to meet the MNSCU goals to recruit and retain the underserved populations; there is \$50,000 start-up money for projects designed to serve high-risk students. How will those projects intersect with existing programs and existing staff? What communication will occur with campus professionals with extensive experience in working with underprepared students? How are such projects developed, written, communicated, publicized, staffed, and evaluated? Who oversees the integration of such projects and the dissemination of their effective and ineffective components to other campuses?*

*How are we dealing with the State of Ignorance? Let us consider an alternate state, the State of Information. Let us encourage and support the clear communication of realistic needs, goals, and solutions. Let us contribute to the participatory practices that use the knowledge of professionals on our campuses to generate policy. Let us be proactive in our involvement as faculty and staff. Let us be a significant source of information that can guide and support student retention. Let us create and maintain a State of Information, rather than a State of Ignorance.*

*2. A second state for us in developmental education to observe is the State of Apathy. Who on your campus cares about the futures of high-risk students enrolled in developmental education courses? Do all the faculty and staff acknowledge responsibility for the education of underprepared students? Are only a few staff and students aware of courses and programs for generating student success? If only the faculty in developmental courses and their students have concerns about such programs, how will their concerns be made known? Who advocates for necessary funding? Who follows up on research? Who publicizes success stories? Who cares?*

*If your campus seems to exist in such a State of Apathy, then examine this alternate state, the State of Informed Compassion. Residents of this state include faculty in all departments, academic and student services administrators, informed staff in marketing and public relations, support staff, students, community members who know about this significant component of every educationally vibrant campus. Student success stories will be available; alumni groups will read about programs that create and support successful students; community members will know about local residents who entered as developmental students, succeeded, became tutors, became Phi Theta Kappa members, and became ambassadors for the developmental courses and for the college, as they transferred and succeeded at four-year colleges and universities. All these people will know, care, and inform others. They will be like those enormous semi-trailers with signs saying how many dollars of taxes these trucks pay to keep the roads in repair; such students and graduates reveal the success of our MnSCU colleges, the reinvestment of tax dollars into an informed and compassionate citizenry. Which will better meet the needs of our state, that State of Apathy or the State of Informed Compassion?*

*3. A third state to observe is the State of Confusion. Who on your campus or in your system knows the numbers, the success rates, or the completion rates, or even defines the assessment? If data is gathered, what happens to the results? How is it*

*available to the faculty, staff, students, or community? If there is a research, how are the faculty specializing in developmental education involved in decisions about what is analyzed? What are the priorities for research on your campus? Who determines those research priorities in your system? The sense of confusion is evident in conversations with faculty all over the state. On some campuses such research occurs without the participation of faculty or staff who work directly with students. The collection and analysis of data may not be meaningful without informed people asking the questions; the decisions made about courses, staffing, and policies based on such research may not be in the best interest of students. Surely, given all that we know from our combined years of experience in teaching, counseling, advising, and learning, we can do better than exist in such a State of Confusion.*

*Who prefers to contribute instead to another alternate state, a State of Knowledge? Who prefers to work with some sense of order and reason, based on questions asked on all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, based on the most astute critical and creative thinking, based on integrating the combined knowledge of thoughtful, educated people seeking answers. Let us instead propose collaborative groups with a shared purpose who will ask the significant research questions and disseminate the significant findings campus-wide and system-wide, since there is research that concerns all departments and divisions across campuses within the system. Let us instead lobby for a developmental education advisory committee on every campus, plus a developmental advisory committee system-wide to aid in clarification of goals, programs, implementation strategies, and evaluation. Let us share the knowledge of the many colleges working closely with area high schools, sharing research and resources, combining the insights of faculty in secondary school mathematics, reading, and composition with the observations of faculty in postsecondary courses in those disciplines and others. Let us use what we already know about the reading, composition, and mathematics skills needed in physics, philosophy, nursing, history, economics, and business to expand our limited definition of developmental education. Let us be proactive in working in a State of Knowledge, rather than a State of Confusion.*

*4. Be on the lookout especially for the results in a State of Isolation, a fourth state to observe. How many on your campus teach courses or work in programs that are considered developmental? How often do you meet to talk about best practices, research models, assessment policies, or exit exams? How often do you have a chance on your own campus to discuss the latest Journal of Developmental Education, or Research and Teaching in Developmental Education, or that salient article in the most recent Chronicle of Higher Education? Many of us are teaching or counseling in small or one-person departments. We are physically removed from others who teach similar courses to comparable students; we are distant from those in tutoring centers working with students in developmental courses. How do we keep in touch with our colleagues in such a State of Isolation? How do we stay current in our fields of study when we are separated from others who are familiar with the issues we face in our classrooms and academic support centers?*

*You've already guessed what this alternate state must be: the State of Community. For one model, look at Mind Quest, a partnership with Adult Basic Education and the*

*Minnesota Literacy Council and other state organizations. For another model, look at those MnSCU colleges that work in partnership with other campuses or that utilize program fellows on their campuses. For another model, look at the Center for Teaching and Learning workshops and seminars. For another model, check out the classic text, *The Community of Classrooms*, and talk with your campus representatives who contributed to that document.*

*It is the responsibility of all of us to locate and communicate with our peers through all the means available to us. If you enjoy electronic connectedness, join the MNADE listserv, the NADE listserv, the CRLA listserv, the NCLCA listserv. If you prefer your communication on paper, read the paper version of the MNADE newsletter or the journals of NADE, CRLA, NCLCA, or any of the other professional organizations that maintain publications to inform and connect professionals in the field of developmental education. If you like in-person human contact, set up a campus meeting, attend a monthly forum at the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, arrange a regional meeting of colleagues, sign up for a MNADE committee, volunteer for a workshop, or talk to the high school teachers in your area, or contact a colleague by phone every two weeks. Choose connection; choose community; choose to keep in touch. Develop partnerships of support among those you know or want to know. Invite a colleague to be your mentor.*

*We all know that community can be the opposite of isolation; we only need to act to eliminate the debilitating effects of the State of Isolation. Let us use the past to inform the future. The State of Community has been an effective answer in the past; it can serve us again.*

*5. Finally, remember to pay attention to what happens in the State of Stress and Burnout. In one county of that state, observe our students who are dealing with more personal and psychological issues, more mental health issues, more post traumatic stress disorder, more grieving of the events of the past two years, more friends overseas in the army. Notice the new immigrants arriving in Minnesota from a brutal civil war or an overcrowded refugee camp. Attend to the proliferation of those factors that interfere with college success. Stay alert to students who have been medicated with Ritalin since fourth grade who suddenly stop cold turkey and can't understand why they can't concentrate, students living in family systems of abuse, students who are defying their families' cultural norms by attending college with little financial or emotional support. That's one demographic group in the State of Stress and Burnout. In another county of this state, observe the faculty and staff. We are asked to do more with less, to increase class sizes, to reduce our budgets, to teach courses with fewer credits, to teach faster so as not to use up students' limited financial aid dollars. We have students with greater needs, but we have forces in our society (the Legislature, the Governor) who want this developmental education job, this teaching and learning, done better, faster, and quicker for less. There is friction in the State of Stress and Burnout. Are you ready to leave that state?*

*Then consider this alternate state, the State of Bliss and Hope. You probably include some teaching and learning styles in your courses. Here's Gary Larson's cartoon about the four basic personality types: one looks at the glass, and it's half full; another sees a*

*glass that's half empty; a third can't make up her mind whether it's half full or half empty; the fourth, a true Gary Larson galoot with a scruffy tee-shirt says, "Hey! I ordered a hamburger!"*

*Even though we may work with those who think "I ordered a hamburger" most of the staff and faculty in developmental education are the optimists who do believe that we can work to make things better. It is always important to keep in mind that this is not the only place where our work occurs. We are not the only ones who work with our students; on all of our campuses there must be college-wide services to meet student needs. The issues we deal with are fundamentally college-wide issues; what happens in developmental education courses affects the college as a whole. As optimists, as viewers of the half-full glass, we must insist on unified awareness of the issues of readiness for college-level courses.*

*In the alternate State of Bliss and Hope, we as experienced professionals will recruit and train others to work in developmental English courses, developmental math, and academic support centers or learning centers. We will continue to build the community that will support this field, through workshops, seminars, forums, and graduate courses. You've noticed already at this conference, in the alternate State of Bliss and Hope, we talk about our students, our teaching, our tutor training, our innovations, and a whole new level of energy and excitement suffuses our being, our spirit. We know how to teach so that students learn, and we can find that State of Bliss and Hope. (As Joseph Campbell advised, we have followed our bliss, and here we are.) We have consummate professionals in our fields of developmental reading, writing, math, and learning centers. We are in the midst of the biggest political threat to our existence as educators. We are optimistic, and we are determined to continue to make a difference.*

*While we keep our eyes on California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, and Texas, let us also remember to observe these other states. The conclusions we draw about our futures and the futures of our students depend on our collaborative vigilance.*



## **High School Preparation Counts!**

Linda Russell

“College bound high school students should take the most difficult courses possible and work hard to earn the highest grades possible,” says James E. Rosenbaum in the latest issue of *American Educator*. Unfortunately, students and their parents may not be taking this advice to heart. More and more high school students indicate that they plan to get a college degree (84% of 1992 graduates), but typically only 45%-49% of those who enter college and take at least 10 credits actually do. That's about half!

In fact, Rosenbaum laments that high schools generally report the high numbers of their graduates that *enter* college, but neglect to report how many actually finish. He identifies six common misconceptions about preparing for and attending college. I'd like to share them with you here as we look ahead to discussions about college readiness at next fall's conference.

**Misconception #1: College success is not linked to high school preparation.** I can't figure out why high school students feel that even if they are poor students in high school they will do just fine in college, but they do! In fact, low high school grades greatly reduce the chances of completing college. Rosenbaum cites a study of 1982 graduates that concluded that 86% of college bound students who had C's or lower in high school did not graduate from college (even with an AA degree) within ten years.

**Misconception #2: College plans lead to increased school effort.** In a depressing study of over 2,000 seniors in 12 urban and suburban high schools, almost 40% of college bound students thought that "school effort" did not have much relevance for their future careers.

**Misconception #3: High school homework doesn't matter for college success.** Some students think they can wait until they go to college to work hard. But in terms of homework, students who do no homework in high school end up with 1.2 years less education AND 19% lower earnings than average! Students who do 15 or more hours of homework per week in high school attain almost 1.5 more years of education and 16% higher earnings than average.

**Misconception #4: Going to college means taking college-level classes.** This one is particularly clear to all of us in developmental education. Many students are surprised (and unhappy) to discover that they place into courses that "don't count." Rosenbaum reports that although the percent of students in four year institutions needing "remedial" coursework has gone down (from 1982-1992 it went from 44% to 25%), the percent hasn't changed much for students attending two year institutions. Unfortunately, he doesn't mention what we know; that many four year institutions have been legislated out of the developmental education business!

**Misconception #5: Going to college for a two- or four-year degree takes two or four years.** We in developmental education also are familiar with this myth. Rosenbaum quotes on community college administrator as saying that "because of remedial needs, a 'two-year associates degree' takes full time students an *average* of 3.5 years to complete." We know how detrimental this can be for students' financial aid packages, budget planning, and even family support.

**Misconception #6: School counselors should not offer discouraging words about the hard work necessary for college success.** Rosenbaum discusses two studies which generally reported that counselors do not discourage students with poor grades from attending college. They also did not "warn students when they had poor chances of college success." Counselors are in an unenviable position, since when they do tell

students that they haven't prepared adequately for college, parents complain. I believe it is not appropriate for counselors to try to predict success (we all know students who beat the odds, even with severe learning disabilities and other obstacles), but perhaps it is time for counselors to be clear with students what the demands of college actually are.

Rosenbaum's article continues with a number of suggestions for high schools and colleges. We've discussed some of them here in Minnesota. One idea is to give a "modified" version of the college placement test to high school students who plan to go to college, so the students can see if they are deemed ready to take college level courses or not. There are problems with this suggestion, as we know, but perhaps we educators could come up with a workable way to give those students a clue about their skills (relative to college level skills).

I hope you read the article (see website below). Let's continue this discussion when we meet in October!

You can read the entire article online at [http://www.aft.org/american\\_educator/](http://www.aft.org/american_educator/). Click on the "It's Time to Tell the Kids" article.

Source: *American Educator: The Professional Journal of the American Federation of Teachers*. Volume 28, No.1. Spring, 2004. pp. 8-15, 41-42.

## **Also Noted**

Susan Hipp, Century College, gave a presentation on "College Readiness" to the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy's monthly forum on April 21st. She is on sabbatical next year and will be involved with the Metro's College Readiness Initiative. As an officer of MNADE, Susan exemplifies the leadership that our organization needs as we look for ways to contribute to the field. Thank you, Susan, for your dedication!

## **Exploring the Spectrum of College Readiness**

### **CALL FOR PROGRAM PROPOSALS**

The Executive Board of MNADE invites proposals for one-hour sessions on the multitude of the issues surrounding college readiness, the scope of research that shapes related decisions, and the range of effects on our students in developmental programs and college classes. Presenters are encouraged to demonstrate successful practices, discuss current policies and research, share information about programs and students, or provide perspectives on future trends and issues.

Proposals should include names of presenters, a primary contact person (including phone, address, and e-mail), session title, and brief description of the proposed presentation (250

words maximum). Please indicate your audiovisual needs; overhead projectors will be available, and other equipment may be arranged or rented.

Send to:

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Due date: May 15, 2004

For more information about MNADE, visit our website at [www.mnade.org](http://www.mnade.org). For information about Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center, check out details at [www.arrowwoodresort.com](http://www.arrowwoodresort.com).

**You still have time to send your proposal to Patty!**

