

A Word from our President

--Patty Wheeler Andrews

Spring pops up all around us, and with it arrives the blooming paradoxes. Leaves give color to the lilacs and weeping willows, and blue wild hyacinths, yellow daffodils, and white-petalled bloodroot blossom in sunny corners of the yard. As we Minnesotans finally see evidence of newness and rebirth in the land, our academic year is winding down, with less than a month before the end/beginning paradox of campus commencements. We live in our own paradox of the academic schedule: just as we anticipate closure for these courses and these students, we have deadlines for the fall semester book orders, which translate into deadlines for plans for reshaping our courses, restructuring tutor training or schedules, or reconceiving a sequence of learning activities. As the hours of daylight lengthen, our awareness increases that the academic schedule means that we work always in the paradox of mutual endings and beginnings, that at any moment in the semester, we are considering what has or hasn't worked in the past, what will happen this week and this term, and what we need to prepare for the next semester and next year in terms of courses, budgets, schedules, and goals. While the students will be finished with our classes or our programs, we will be starting to reshape, revise, and re-invigorate our work.

Spring brings time for reflection about what to keep and what to toss, whether it's purging the garage or the garden beds, refreshing the bookshelves, files, or teaching strategies, or re-organizing our colleges and universities to meet new guidelines for higher education. We face the implications of the history of our developmental education profession, and we encounter the varied promises of the future, those unknown

elements of policies, mandates, and committee decisions that will have an influence on our students, our curricula, and our services and programs for student success in higher education. Because we have all attained the stage of development, both personally and professionally, that allows us to live and function with ambiguities, we are used to the blooming paradoxes that are especially evident in the spring. How do we cope with these challenges? How do we handle the forward-backward perspective? How do we maintain clear focus in our work with students this term, while struggling to see through the crises and confusions of next term and next year? In Maxine Hong Kingston's novel *The Woman Warrior*, one character states, "I make my mind large, as the universe is large, in order to include paradox." Her call to critical and creative thinking, open-mindedness, and enlarged viewpoints serves as a source of wisdom for us.

Spring is our most vivid and visceral reminder that change and growth (motivation, learning, development, stages, achievement, passages) are part of a much larger cycle. Let us make our minds large, accept the paradoxes (as long as they don't invasively overrun the rest of our lives), and move forward.

College Readiness Brochures: Get Yours Now for Summer and Fall Students

Here are the options for acquiring copies of MNADE's colorful, glossy College Readiness brochure. (1) Email Patty at Patty.Wheeler-Andrews@anokaramsey.edu with the number of copies you want (in multiples of 25). Patty will confirm your order and let you know the total cost (\$5 per 25 copies), then you will send a check made out to MNADE, c/o Patty at Anoka-Ramsey Community College,

11200 Mississippi Boulevard NW,
Minneapolis, MN 55433. (That charge
covers the cost of printing and postage.)
When the check arrives, your copies will
be mailed to you.

(2) Go to the MNADE website
www.mnade.org and download the pdf
to print the copies on your own campus
(although it won't be the colorful, glossy
version.) In either case, please let the
Executive Board or the MNADE listserv
know how you have utilized this
brochure.

On the MNADE website you'll find the
brainstormed list of strategies generated
at the Fall 2004 Conference for how to
use this brochure with college students,
high school students and staff, and
families to increase community
awareness of the differences between
high school and college. Order yours
today.

Call for Proposals

Call for Proposals for MNADE Fall
Conference: October 6-7, 2005, at
Rutger's Bay Lake Conference Center.
Our conference theme is "If Not Now, If
Not Us: Research, Resources, and
Responsibilities," and the keynote
speaker will be Dr. Jeanne Henry of
Hofstra University. Many have read her
book, *If Not Now*, and responded by
altering their reading instructional
approaches; her further research on
visual literacy and strategies for
engaging students will generate
questions and provide insights to our
own programs.

Proposals are due to Kathy Wellington,
MNADE President-Elect, at
Metropolitan State University, by JUNE
1, 2005. Presenters will be notified by
June 15, 2005. Proposal format:
submit a 1 page (250 words)
description, including a title, list of

participants, any audio/visual needs you
anticipate.

Recent News

UMN Strategic Planning and
Developmental Education Research:
Perspectives From the Center for
Research on Developmental Education
and Urban Literacy about the Proposal
to Close the General College

--Dana Lundell, CRDEUL Director; Carl
Chung, GC Assistant Professor and
CRDEUL Advisory Board Member;
Jeanne Higbee, GC Professor and
CRDEUL Senior Advisor for Research

On March 30th, the University of
Minnesota released two Strategic
Planning Task Force Reports that
recommend sweeping changes for the
Twin Cities campus
([http://www.umn.edu/systemwide/strate
gic_positioning/](http://www.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/)). Among those changes
is the dissolution of the General College
(GC) and the College of Human
Ecology. The recommendation is to
create a new College of Education and
Human Development that would house
current College of Education
departments along with remnants of
General College and the College of
Human Ecology. Instead of an
independent academic unit, GC would
become the Department of General
Developmental Education. After a two-
year transition period GC would no
longer admit its own students after the
fall of 2006 class; instead, the remaining
faculty and staff would teach stand-
alone developmental education courses
to students from around the University.
The nationally recognized student
services staff would become part of a
more centralized advising and student
support program. The publicly funded
UMN will become more nationally
selective in its student admissions and
privatized in its revenue sources.

For anyone who cares about the future of the University of Minnesota and the future of fair access to higher education in our state, it is important that we assess the recommendations and likely impact of the UMN's plan to close General College. Will the proposed changes address one of Minnesota's and the nation's greatest public challenges and democratic educational goals for an institution of higher education—eliminating the achievement gap for future students who will be entering our nation's colleges and universities? Demographic trends show an increase in college attendance by students of color, low-income, and first-generation students, as well as students who are underprepared for higher education due to having fewer preparation opportunities prior to college entry. The need for postsecondary developmental education and access, along with strengthening K-12 education, is not a "relic" concept of the past but is a strong foundation and framework for the future. These questions are the foundation of General College's historic work and mission and is the central focus of CRDEUL at the UMN.

In the Strategic Plan, General College is praised for its valuable contributions to student-centered developmental education. It is stated that this expertise will be retained and strengthened. However, the means for enhancing this research and teaching expertise do not appear to coincide with these goals. We challenge the following assumptions that, according to current research in higher education, are flawed or unsupported in the Strategic Plan.

UMN Proposal 1: *General College's mission, curricula, and services will be more effective at the UMN expressed as a "unit" on campus providing developmental education services and*

courses to the university's underprepared students in areas like math, ESL, and writing.

OUR RESPONSE: This proposed reconfiguration of GC will be less effective as a curricular structure for preparing students and honing their skills for other courses at the UMN. Why? Research in developmental education demonstrates that it is more effective to provide integrated models for supporting students, such as Supplemental Instruction programs or course-based models for working on skill development within all academic disciplines. Writing, mathematics, and communication skills are misconstrued by the current UMN's proposal to be separate entities and the only areas of knowledge that students must develop to become successful academically. Although these are obviously important and essential to a student's success, to offer skills development courses separately from students' academic areas of study and apart from their peer communities is to regress to an older model of "remedial" education here on campus that reflects the outdated models of the 1970s. A university looking toward the future should base its decisions on newer concepts and strive for what is known as most effective presently regarding student preparation. Current research studies on learning communities in higher education also confirm that students learn best when a group identity can be formed and educational experiences can be shared. For example, GC is presently implementing and gathering data from its application of the learning communities concept. To propose that future University students who are identified as "lacking" in some skill area should be taking separate classes in a department of developmental education does not reflect what is known about best practices for student learning in the 21st century. Thus, closing down the

presently established learning communities of GC, eliminating all its students, and replacing the concept of preparation with outdated models of remedial education for future students of the UMN will NOT likely bring about the positive and progressive influence that is present in the current, research-based concepts and curricula that serve students presently in GC.

UMN Proposal 2: *After the proposed elimination of GC, its faculty can continue to do their valuable, world-class research on developmental education and access issues in the proposed new structure under the College of Education and Human Development.*

OUR RESPONSE: Educational research requires a synergy and close relationship between its investigators, its driving questions, and its subjects. If GC students are no longer admitted to the UMN campus, how can a group of researchers continue to ask similar questions and get reliable answers—*without* access to their primary subjects and multidisciplinary classrooms available to them any longer? How are the experts in GC supposed to effectively continue to produce their strong, productive threads of nationally recognized research in a vacuum? It is an inherent contradiction to retain isolated parts of an effective research college while dismissing the entire community and research base. The research in GC that is nationally recognized is very closely linked to its students, its mission, and its location within a land-grant public university.

UMN Proposal 3: *Access and diversity will be maintained at the UMN despite the elimination of General College. Students from all backgrounds will continue to be admitted and graduate from the institution with higher retention rates because services will still be*

available to support and prepare them for their other courses on campus.

OUR RESPONSE: If Minnesotans want the demographics of their state's own rural and urban students to be continued to be reflected in proportion to current and future students at their public, land-grant university, then GC is presently the only college on campus with a nearly 75-year legacy of serving this racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, and culturally diverse group of students and preparing them for the rigors of the UMN curriculum. GC admits a more diverse range of students than any other program at the UMN, such as students of color, first-generation college students, and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.. It also admits the largest percentage of its students from Minnesota and its urban center, the Twin Cities. Current census data in the U.S. and Minnesota reflects trends for an increasingly diverse and less prepared group of entering college students. Certainly the UMN can claim it will recruit diverse students, though it has not described how it will achieve this goal or appropriately serve all its students with a multicultural education. Will it follow the UC-Berkeley model for becoming more selective in admissions, noting that its Chancellor recently publicly admitted that multicultural relations and lack of diversity on campus were its most pressing problems? Given this and given GC's legacy of commitment to research and teaching for diverse students, is now really the best time to dismantle and dilute the work of a program like this without an adequate replacement? A forward-thinking, world-class university should not turn its back on continuing to address cutting-edge questions; it should instead try to explore, consult with, and expand education and research programs that will work on solving these challenges for years to come.

For those of us affiliated with GC and especially the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy (CRDEUL), it is painfully clear that these recommendations are not grounded in an adequate understanding of General College, developmental education, or current trends in higher education research. The proposal will eliminate a successful developmental education college, hinder its ability to do innovative research and teaching, and, in the long run, erect more barriers to higher education for Minnesota's underserved and talented students. We advocate for more dialogue, research-based decisions, and a more creative strategic planning phase that involves experts in the process and does not eliminate historic opportunities for future generations of students at a land-grant UMN.

Nominations for New Officers

Our nominations committee, Dana Lundell and Patty Wheeler Andrews, are receiving nominations for several offices on the Executive Board. If you have an interest in serving your colleagues and this professional organization as treasurer, president-elect, or member-at-large, please contact either of them. They will present a slate of officers for voting at the October 7, 2005, business meeting.

Sabbatical, Anyone?

--Laurel Watt, Inver Hills Community College

Greetings from Sabbatical Land!

I write this as I approach the last month of my sabbatical, and I'm not nearly as melancholy as I thought I would be. It has been busy and productive, and I'm excited at the prospect of being back in

the classroom with students next fall. In recent months I've been spending a fair amount of time on campus at Inver Hills, shepherding new courses through the curriculum process and seeing to all the details that result from creating new courses, programs, and the resulting assessment updates. This winter I also was on campus interviewing faculty for a project as part of our FIPSE (Funds for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) grant. I spoke with twenty faculty in disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology, biology, art, and others, discussing instructors' perspectives on teaching ESL students and how we can support their learning across the campus curriculum. Perhaps the single most important thing I learned from this project was that many faculty desire a closer relationship with the tutors that work with their students. This was exciting and gratifying for the collaborative opportunities it presents, and even more so for reinforcing my perception that I am fortunate to teach with so many people who value this work. Maybe I'll have the opportunity to tell you more about this at our next conference.

But the real fun began last September when I embarked on a quest to visit high schools in our service area to learn more about ELL (English Language Learners) curriculum and services. (Please note that throughout this article, I use ELL to refer to the K-12 program of courses and services for non-native speaking students and ESL for simple reference to non-native speakers and their teachers). Together with Brenda Landes, an Inver Hills colleague from our counseling department who's also on sabbatical this year, we visited all seven public St. Paul high schools and nine high schools in Dakota County. I knew that I was going to revive our curriculum for ESL students this year, and I said to some of our administrators, "Let's do it right this time-give me some

time to do a little needs assessment.” For years I had wanted to chat with high school teachers, and the chance to go as a team proved to be both practical and synergizing. For one thing, it’s useful if you can manage to not get lost, and Brenda’s familiarity with the back roads of Dakota County proved to be fortuitous.

Even more valuable was her knowledge of how things work in recruitment, admissions, orientation, registration, and financial aid, to name just a few. Her background enabled her to ask questions I didn’t even know to ask, and together, we managed to learn a lot about the classes non-native speaking students take in high school and all the other variables that impact their choices and access to higher education. I began this project by simply being curious about how many hours of instruction these students were receiving in high school and what classes they took outside of their time with licensed ESL instructors. I also wanted some insight on what they need in order to be successful in transitioning to our campus. Here’s just a sampling of what we took away from our visits:

- If ESL students have access to sheltered or transitional courses in high school, the targeted subject area tends to be social studies. Science courses for these students taught by licensed science instructors were much less frequent. One teacher noted that the “playing field for native speakers and non-native speakers in science classes was more level.” (This should give one pause.)
- Many high school ESL teachers said that although many students aspired to attend college, their grasp of realistic career options was fragile. Career education is critical.
- In some schools, passing the Basic Skills Tests is what exits a student from ELL classes, hence their displeasure in being told that they have to take “ESL” in college. In other words, “been there, exited that!” High school teachers *do* tell their students that passing the BST’s doesn’t guarantee college readiness. We’ve clearly got to find ways to reinforce this.
- In districts or schools where there are fewer ESL students, there is less pressure to exit them from the ELL program. In settings where they constitute a greater percentage of the student population, there will likely be increasing pressure to exit students from ELL services after five years of instruction due to funding pressures from the state. This does not bode well for the college prospects for those students. St. Paul schools, in particular, may be in for an even rougher ride.
- Last year’s scoring of the BST writing tests for ESL students appears to have been handled more fairly. Pass rates were up from previous years.
- It comes as no surprise that the system is fundamentally unfair for some students. A recent immigrant student who begins high school in the fall of tenth grade will be exempt from passing the BST’s since he/she will be enrolled for less than three full years. However, the younger sibling who begins in ninth grade and is not ready to pass one or more of the tests by the end of the twelfth grade will be denied the diploma, in spite of having one more year of instruction. Students can return to high school until they’re 21,

but they often don't for the obvious reasons.

- Non-English speaking parents need college enrollment and financial aid information in their own languages. Imagine the prospect of dealing with FAFSA if English is not your first language. FAFSA is intimidating enough when English *is* your first language!
- High school ESL teachers are discovering multiple ways to blend English language instruction with content area knowledge. One has adopted some particularly lively social studies texts as her primary English language texts; the focus is ELL instruction but the materials support students' development of content area knowledge in the social studies. In some schools where teachers are licensed in multiple areas, students can benefit from content area instructors who are also licensed ESL teachers.
- The individual character of a school's ELL program is nuanced by the culture of the larger school. For example, although St. Paul schools follow a common ELL curriculum, at least one offers more advanced writing and is able to retain some students longer because the school culture boasts strong academics. Some other schools also offer college-prep ESL, but this is not as common as we would like to see.
- There is some evidence that ESL teachers hold students to higher standards in reading and writing than their mainstream teaching peers. At one school, students complained that it was harder to get top grades from their ESL teachers. In another, ESL teachers found that

determining students' readiness for exiting the ELL program could not be based on their grades in mainstream courses because the highly motivated ESL students were achieving at higher levels than the native speaking students. It's important to note here that when ESL students are mainstreamed, they don't usually go into the college-bound curriculum.

But perhaps the most overwhelming and gratifying thing we took away with us was the sense that students in these schools are lucky to have teachers as gifted as the ones we met. We saw passion for the work and the students and tremendous competence. More practically speaking, we began to see many opportunities for us to develop better courses, services, and materials for recruiting and retaining students on our campus. I hope that in the short time that these teachers could give us, we have begun to create relationships that will help students find their way to our campus and thrive in an environment that is welcoming and ready for them. Perhaps at our next MNADE conference, I can also share with you how we are attempting to use some of this information in our recruitment, teaching, and support services to these students.

Until then, here's hoping you can enjoy a mini-sabbatical of your own with a gentle book (try *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series if you haven't already), an unpretentious glass of wine (look for Milton Park 2002 Shiraz), and a tour of someone else's garden (don't miss Thomas Jefferson's recreated flower beds at Monticello, or closer to home, visit the Munsinger & Clemens Gardens in St. Cloud). See you in the fall!



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION
30TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

February 15-18, 2006
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
(Postmark submissions by
June 13, 2005)

Access proposal information and
conference details at
www.NADE2006.com

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38th Annual Conference of College Reading & Learning Association



**November 2-5, 2005
Long Beach, California**

Join us as we chart our course through changing tides and shifting winds.

MNADE NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005

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To submit an article, please send an email attachment to Linda Russell at
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Feedback on this newsletter is WELCOMED! Send suggestions to the
above email address.