

Graduate Students: Undecided if you should submit a proposal for AERA 2025 or wondering what navigating the AERA Annual Meeting is all about? Here, we invite you to hear from some former and current graduate students who share their perspectives and advice from their experiences at AERA 2024.



Jackson Scholar

Dr. Brandon Cheeks

Ph.D. Graduate-Kansas State University

I have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the AERA and Jackson Scholar program. I felt that the Jackson Scholar program gave me opportunity to hear from other people of color and opened my eyes to new possibilities for my professional career. Prior to this program I really didn't see opportunities for me working in higher education institutions. This opportunity empowered me to believe that I can find a sense of belonging in academia. Working with my mentor help me see opportunities for scholarship and future book writing opportunities. I am hopeful that I'll get to continue to participate in the AERA and hopefully successfully submit a proposal in the future.

Graduate Research Paper Presenter

Andrea O'Sullivan

Ph.D. Candidate-University of South Florida

As a fourth-year doctoral candidate, presenting at the 2024 Annual AERA Meeting in Philadelphia was significant. After all, the average acceptance rate approximates 50 percent. It was a BIG DEAL! Being accepted signified that the Academy considered my research connected with and relevant to the field today. As my co-presenter and I prepared our presentation, we not only focused on the content, but also considered our call to action. Our work was a critical analysis, and it seemed important to offer a new perspective, a suggested way of thinking about our findings. During the presentation, I was thrilled to experience our research intersecting with the work of three teams of researchers with whom we shared the 90-minute presentation slot. It was a mix of novice and expert researchers.



Together we shared and discussed current perceptions of race and/in education in America today, offering promises and possibilities for the future. I left the conference with new understandings and being more open to engage in critical work.

To fellow graduate students, do not shy away from sharing your work with the field. Consider submitting your research proposal to AERA, knowing the deadline is fast (early summer of the prior year). Seek support from faculty and fellow graduate students. In your proposal, you must connect your research to the conference theme and when you receive a response, focus on what you can learn from the feedback. Remember, being accepted/denied is one experience in a lifetime of possibilities. If accepted, investigate your university travel grants/scholarships to mitigate the cost.



Dissertation Research Paper Presenter

Dr. Trevor McCray

Ph.D. Graduate- The University of Texas at Arlington

Attending AERA for the first time, I was filled with a lot of anxiety and excitement; I was delighted to be in a community with thousands of researchers. Although I am not a stranger to conferencing, having the opportunity to attend and present at the most prominent national conference for education research, I was frightened by the moment. The first day I arrived, I asked myself how I got here. In the words of Holly Rowe to Angel

Reese, "You are supposed to be here." However, it wasn't until after I presented during my research roundtable that I realized that my voice and research were essential components to add to the literature. In addition to my Chair being present and giving me encouragement, I settled my nerves and realized I am worthy of being in a community with scholars on the national level.

If you are a graduate student or presenting for the first time at AERA, bet on yourself! The jitters will be there, but on the other side are beautiful butterflies ready to conquer the world of education. The advice I received while attending the conference that I want to share with you: "Remember to follow your heart; you will always win!" Lastly, it's an enormous conference; pace yourself, find your community, have business cards, or connect via LinkedIn, but most importantly, connect with scholars who are contributing to the topics you are currently researching or are interested in researching in the future.

