

## 2009 Convention Review

**T**his month's Cornerstone features a 2009 convention review in two parts. The first part reviews the fun-raising activities sponsored by the ECT Foundation. The second part reports on a successful AECT Conference Mentoring Program initiated by the 2008 Class of AECT Interns.

### ECT Foundation Fun-Raising

By Don Descy and Robert Harrell

Many of us were lucky enough to obtain a ticket to the ECT Foundation Fund Raiser "Relaxin' on the River" in Louisville on board the Spirit of Jefferson. It may have showered outside but inside was dry and cozy. Singing and dancing to the tunes played by Tom Atkinson and friends, clinking of glasses, and laughs filled the air along with warm conversation and trays of



ECT Foundation Riverboat Musicians: (l-r) Greg Clinton, Jeff Imboden and Tom Atkinson

decadent deserts. Old friends reminisced and within minutes strangers became new friends... and it was all for a great cause: ECT scholarships and awards!

ECT Foundation board members seem to be around every convention corner always selling raffle tickets, seeking donations and putting on functions. What is the ECT Foundation, how do they get donations, what do they do with the donations once they get them? Let's take a look.

The ECT Foundation is an independent non-profit organization for charitable and educational purposes that supports the work of AECT through scholarships, internships, fellowships and leadership training programs. You have no doubt seen and perhaps been introduced to Nari Kim (Indiana University, Bloomington) our Strohbehn Intern and Abigail Hawkins (Brigham Young), Heather Leary (Utah State), and Eunjung Oh (University of Georgia) our Cochran Interns all supported by the ECT Foundation at the 2009 AECT Convention. Be sure to read their thoughts about interning and the 2009 convention in future ECT Cornerstone columns! Our fourth Cochran Intern



"Spirit of Jefferson" Riverboat, Louisville, KY

Evrin Baran (Iowa State) had the flu and was unable to attend. She will be enjoying her internship experience with the 2010 Interns next October in Anaheim, California.

The ECT Foundation also funds twelve other awards and scholarships including the James W. Brown Publications Award, ETR&D Young Scholar Award, Dean & Sybil McClusky Research Award, McJulien Minority Graduate Scholarship, and Robert deKieffer International Fellowship through awards for Qualitative Inquiry and Multimedia. A complete list of AECT, ECT, and Division awards can be found at [www.aect.org/Foundation/Awards/Awards.asp](http://www.aect.org/Foundation/Awards/Awards.asp).

ECT Foundation Board of Trustees membership is limited to 24 individuals. They do not get paid, their expenses are not reimbursed, they pay for their own refreshments at meetings, and purchase their own raffle and special function tickets. One reason Board of Trustees members seem to be raffle winners quite often is because they all heavily support ECT Foundation activities.

Though you are probably most familiar with ECT fundraising through raffles and special activities, much of the money comes from private donations and memorials funded by AECT members. Some donations are actively solicited, but the majority come from AECT members and friends who just want to make a difference. Please support the Foundation as much as you can and think about remembering the ECT Foundation in your will or trust. If you would like to learn more about planning a legacy gift to the Foundation, please contact president Wes Miller at [wesm@earlham.edu](mailto:wesm@earlham.edu) or 765-983-1278.

*Don Descy and Robert Harrell are retired AECT members and serve on the ECT Foundation Board of Trustees.*

## Reflections From the First Year of a Successful AECT Conference Mentoring Program

Richard E. West, Brigham Young University

Cindy S. York  
Purdue University

Raymond Pastore  
Slippery Rock University

Mengqiao Xu  
Northern Illinois University

The conference mentoring program was developed by the 2008 ECT Intern class, but will be continued at future conventions by the Leadership Development Committee and the Graduate Student Assembly. Information is provided to potential students and mentors interested in applying for the 2010 program.

The critical benefits provided by mentoring for developing professionals are well known in many fields (Forehand, 2008; Kirchmeyer, 2005; Luna & Cullen, 1998; Wright & Wright, 1987). Within the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), several organizations identified a need for enhanced mentoring opportunities for graduate student members. This need exists because students are often enrolled in departments lacking a particular area of expertise. Alternatively, students may be enrolled in a strong department aligned to their interests but would benefit from an outside perspective or personal connection related to their research agenda. Finally, enhanced mentoring and networking opportunities can help students make the professional connections that will forward their careers and keep them engaged within the AECT community.

Because of these desires to improve mentoring within AECT, the 2008 ECT Interns developed a mentoring program to enable selected students to meet experienced researchers, ask questions related to the students' research topics and careers in general, and receive advice.

## Purpose of the AECT Mentoring Program

The purpose of the mentor program was to give graduate students the opportunity to meet faculty members from various schools in order to gain perspective on professional development issues including research, career development, and academic publishing. Students were selected through an application process advertised through AECT listservs. The students were then matched according to research interests to one of four experienced faculty mentors:

- Ana Donaldson, University of Northern Iowa
- Andrew Gibbons, Brigham Young University
- Michael Hannafin, University of Georgia
- Sharon Smaldino, Northern Illinois University

The program began with a large-group discussion where the panel of mentors discussed broad issues and general advice about finding effective research topics, improving job marketability, increasing productivity, and balancing student workloads. After the panel discussion, each student met in small-group sessions with their mentors and two to three other students. This experience allowed students to have personal access with faculty members from other schools who had strong expertise in their research area. Each discussion was unique, but mentors typically gave time for each student to ask specific questions and receive feedback related to the challenges they had encountered. To help stimulate the conversation, the students sent their mentors brief summaries of their research topics and the challenges they were facing prior to the conference. This presented a great opportunity for students to establish relationships and make connections with scholars (both the mentors and the other students) who could assist them in the future.

## Evaluation of the Program's First Year

Feedback about the program was positive from both the mentors and the mentees. One mentor expressed,





Figure 1. Andrew Gibbons, Sharon Smaldino, Ana Donaldson, and Michael Hannafin answer questions during the panel discussion.

"It's an excellent idea to initiate this [mentor] program . . . and I definitely see it becoming a new tradition in the coming years of the [AECT] conference." All of the mentors indicated mostly overall satisfaction with the event and a desire to participate again in the future. As one mentor said, "Personally I would not change anything, even the timing. I enjoyed it a great deal. Don't hesitate to ask me again." The only concerns raised by one mentor revolved around the difficulty of providing specific advice to students in the small groups in such a short period of time, and the challenge stemming from each student within the groups working on very different projects. Thus, finding the right balance between general advice-sharing appropriate to all of the students and more specific mentoring is a potential recommendation for the future.

The mentees also felt the experience was successful and expressed gratitude for the opportunity. Students gave the mentor program a perfect overall evaluation score. Comments included: "The panel discussion was great", "[The experience was] wonderful!", and "This [program] is great! Thank you!" At least two of the students found the experience so useful that they asked to assist in organizing the program in the future. There was only one critical comment expressed: "The group mentor session was difficult due to multiple interest areas." This again indicated a need to

balance the level of specific versus general advice as well as the alignment of research interests.

## Future Action

Based on the positive feedback from both mentors and students, there is strong momentum for continuing the program at future AECT conferences. Next year the program will be coordinated by the

Leadership Development Committee and the Graduate Student Assembly, a collaboration that can hopefully organize the mentoring program for many years to come. We anticipate again having a panel session of four to five mentors discussing general topics (open to all graduate students) and then breakout roundtable sessions (for students selected through the application process). The call for student applications will come via the AECT Graduate Student email listserv, and the deadline for student applications will be September 1,

2010. Faculty mentors will be selected by invitation through the Leadership Development Committee. If you are interested in being a faculty mentor or student participant, or simply would like more information about the program, please email Cindy York at [cindy.york@gmail.com](mailto:cindy.york@gmail.com). We ask that advisors, faculty members, and previous student participants of the program encourage their student acquaintances to apply for the program and take advantage of just one of the excellent opportunities available for expert mentoring at the AECT annual conference.

## References

- Forehand, R. L. (2008). The art and science of mentoring in psychology: A necessary practice to ensure our future. *American Psychologist*, 63(8), 744-755.
- Kirchmeyer, C. (2005). The effects of mentoring on academic careers over time: Testing performance and political perspectives. *Human Relations*, 58(5), 637-660. doi: 10.1177/0018726705055966.
- Luna, G. & Cullen, D. (1998). Do graduate students need mentoring? *College Student Journal*, 32(3), 322-330.
- Wright, C. A., & Wright, S. D. (1987). The Role of Mentors in the Career Development of Young Professionals. *Family Relations*, 36(2), 204-208.



Figure 2. Michael Hannafin offers feedback to students during a small-group breakout session.