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President's Message



Wendy Strobel Gower
President, NARRTC Executive
Committee

Wendy is the Project Director of the
Northeast ADA Regional Center
www.northeastada.org

This month, NIDILRR unveiled its Long-Range Plan, outlining a comprehensive five-year agenda dedicated to advancing applied research and development. The primary goal is to enhance the integration of individuals with disabilities into all facets of society. NIDILRR is steadfast in its commitment to the social model of disability while expressing openness to embracing concepts from emerging models in research.

A crucial emphasis in the plan revolves around the significance of language choices, with a call to honor the preferences of the disability community. The plan also sheds light on the prevalence of ableism both within and outside the disability community, stressing its impact on knowledge generation and participation in research studies.

Of particular note is the acknowledgment that ableism has historically affected the research enterprise, contributing to knowledge gaps and limited opportunities for disabled individuals. Recognizing these challenges, our funder is dedicated to fostering broader inclusion within the research landscape.

The Long-Range Plan presents intriguing opportunities for grantees, including the exploration of international research, a heightened focus on the enabling or disabling characteristics of communities, and a call to adopt an intersectional approach, encompassing individuals across the lifespan.

Engaging the Community: Building Capacity Through NIDILRR Projects and Partnerships

2024 Annual Conference & Business Meeting

May 21-22 Embassy Suites Alexandria Old Town, VA

Register NOW at narrtc.org

Aligned with NIDILRR's vision, NARRTC's upcoming conference will delve into engaging community members with disabilities. This reflects a shared commitment to expanding opportunities for inclusion across the research enterprise through intentional strategies and operationalization.

As we eagerly anticipate the possibilities presented by this new Long-Range Plan, we look forward to fostering fresh collaborations and engaging in meaningful conversations with our members at the upcoming NARRTC conference. See you soon!

2024 Best Paper Finalists

The Research Committee met to select the best NIDILRR-funded paper for CY2023 after providing independent ratings. Nearly 20 research teams nominated their papers for the 2024 Best Paper competition! Three papers were selected as finalists. Authors from all three papers have been invited to present at this year's NARRTC Conference, where the winner will be announced. Follow the links to learn more about these important papers!

- Jennifer D. Brooks, An accommodation for whom? Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the landscape of flexible and remote work for workers with disabilities? *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10672-023-09472-3>
- Huan Deng, Predictors at 6 and 12 months for social participation outcome at 24 months in the adult burn injury population: A Burn Model System National Database study. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, [10.1016/j.apmr.2023.06.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2023.06.011)
- Andrew Myers, "Patiently waiting": How do non-driving disabled adults get around in rural America? *Transport Policy*, [10.1016/j.tranpol.2023.10.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2023.10.009)

Nominations are open for the 2024 Distinguished Service,
Commendation, and Special Recognition Awards
Learn how to nominate your colleagues at narrtc.org/narrtc-awards

Legislative Committee Update: Census Bureau Retracts Proposed Changes to Disability Questions in 2025 American Community Survey (ACS)

In a significant development, Robert Santos, Director of the US Census Bureau, announced on February 6 that the planned modifications to the disability questions in the 2025 ACS have been abandoned. This decision follows a collaborative effort led by longstanding NARRTC member Jean Hall, in conjunction with Professors Bonnie Swenor and Scott Landes, and supported by advocacy groups such as the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC) and the Partnership to Improve Patient Care (PIPC).



Jae Kennedy, PhD
Chair, Nominating &
Legislative Committees

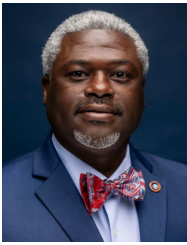
The proposed changes aimed to replace the current six survey questions (ACS-6) with those used by the National Center on Health Statistics (Washington Group Short Set on Functioning or WG-SS). However, both measures, each over 25 years old, presented challenges in capturing data on respondents with psychiatric disabilities or chronic health conditions, as highlighted in the research by Hall et al. Switching to the WG-SS measures would have resulted in a 40% reduction in disability prevalence, potentially disrupting benefits, services, and policy attention for people with disabilities nationwide.

The ACS serves as a vital tool for population surveillance, enabling researchers to monitor changes in disability rates over time and estimate rates at the state and community levels. Former Representative Tony Coelho, an instrumental figure in introducing the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1988, emphasized the substantial impact of the proposed changes on government funding for various programs dependent on Census data. Coelho expressed concerns about the potential dire consequences for the access of people with disabilities to crucial benefits and the lack of consideration for longitudinal disability research in the proposed changes.

Following public feedback, with over 12,000 comments received, including substantial contributions from NARRTC members, Director Santos announced the decision to retain the current ACS disability questions for the 2025 collection year. Santos highlighted the Bureau's commitment to working with stakeholders and the public to better understand data needs on disability, indicating a willingness to assess and revise federal statistical systems accordingly. Going forward, the Census Bureau plans to recommend revisions to enhance collaboration with data users and stakeholders during the ACS content change process.

The NARRTC legislative committee and the DRRC will remain vigilant in monitoring this issue as it progresses.

DEIA Committee Update: Looking Back and Moving Forward



Andre Washington, PhD
President-Elect,
Chair, Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion, and Access
Committee

NARRTC formed a DEIA committee as an ad hoc committee in 2020 and this group continues to lead efforts toward meeting the organization’s commitments. NARRTC values and is committed to the tenets of diversity, equity, inclusion, and

access (DEIA) across the landscape of NIDILRR-funded projects, to include Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTCs), Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERCs), Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRPs), Field Initiated Projects (FIPs), Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training projects (ARRTs), Switzer Research Fellowships, etc.

These values are expressed, embraced, and instilled in our organizational culture, behaviors, and practices that promote priorities addressing the employment, community participation, and health and function inequities among multiply marginalized persons with disabilities and fostering change in the research workforce that reflects the demographic makeup of our society and disability community. When asked the question by conference attendees during the 2023 conference, as the NARRTC DEIA committee chair, how do I feel the DEIA committee’s efforts were going? I responded that “I believed the DEIA committee thus far has done a nice job in getting the word out to NARRTC membership and NIDILRR-affiliated project staff of color to promote inclusion.” This is evident by the participation of conference attendees and presenters at the 2023 conference themed “Equity: More Than a Seat at the Table”, which had the most diverse group of presenters and conference attendees in history of the NARRTC Conference and Business Meeting.

The 2024 NARRTC Conference and Business Meeting titled “Engaging the Community: Building Capacity Through NIDILRR Projects and Partnerships” promises to be another good year for participation of diverse researchers to present and attend. Conference proposal submissions are at a high and conference registration is trending up. As DEIA committee chair and NARRTC President-Elect, I feel we still have some upward mobility to achieve when it comes to researchers of color being afforded the opportunities to become federally funded. But I’m encouraged that we have plans to keep working toward offering training and conference sessions that focus on important information to early career researchers, specifically, researchers that are historically underrepresented, multiply marginalized persons with disabilities in the federally funded research landscape, such as grant peer reviewer guidance and preparation.

Want to join the NARRTC DEIA ad hoc committee? Please contact NARRTC, Attn: Dr. Andre Washington, DEIA at narrtc.communications@gmail.com.



Kim The, Teresa Nguyen, and Jennifer Lee-Rambharose, from the Community Living Equity Center



My colleague Shakira Cohen joined me from the RRTC on Advancing Employment Equity for Multiply Marginalized People with Disabilities (LU2E-RRTC).

Come Back to the KT World Café

By popular request, the KT Committee is bringing back the lively “world café” focused on innovative KT approaches and practices! If you’re not familiar with the World Café format, it’s a large group facilitation in a relaxed environment, where small groups gather around cafe-style tables to discuss a topic, then rotate to discuss the same topic at new tables with new discussion mates. The result is exposing yourself and the topic to maximum diversity and cross-fertilization of ideas.

During the 2023 KT World Café, participants were able to join up to three small group discussions distributed across nine tables, which we stocked with paper, crayons, and small bouquets for inspiration. Table moderators took notes on three topic questions, which are summarized below:

WHAT ARE NEW PRODUCTS AND PRACTICES TO IDENTIFY AND REACH YOUR AUDIENCES?

Methods identified encompassed using digital tools like questionnaires on platforms like Qualtrics, podcasts, live “Ask Me Anything” sessions on Zoom, email marketing with tools like ConstantContact and Mailchimp, and social media management tools such as Loomly and HootSuite. Some participants mentioned the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT for creative content generation, involving parents and peers in content creation, and exploring platforms like TikTok and Reddit for audience-specific outreach. The participants underscored the importance of adapting to evolving communication platforms, maintaining ethical standards, and actively involving the target audience in content creation to effectively reach and engage them.



Much appreciation to the 2023 KT Committee members who contributed: Troy Balthazor, Cindy Cai, Marsha Ellison, Marianne Farkas, Mark Harniss, Kathleen Murphy, Kryz Standley, and Michelle Zorilla as well as Felice Trirogoff and Joann Starks from the Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

WHAT ARE BEST WAYS TO ENGAGE IN KT WITH GROUPS UNDERSERVED BY YOUR PROJECT?

Participants noted the need for not only for diverse representation but also recognizing the diversity within underserved groups. They recommended involving youth and social media experts in KT efforts and underscored the importance of building trust and relationships within communities. These efforts require allocating resources for outreach, forming partnerships with grassroots organizations, and committing to engagement beyond initial project timelines.

WHAT ARE WAYS OF GENERATING ENGAGEMENT—BOTH WITH EXTERNAL AUDIENCES AND YOUR OWN TEAM?

Participants noted the importance of managing project staff energy levels, fostering their skill development, and aligning KT efforts with individual staff career goals. Consider making KT projects entertaining for both the project team and the audience, such as in use of videos or infographics. With respect to external partners, participants emphasized the importance of early involvement of potential partners in research design, establishing communication teams for bidirectional communication, and showcasing impact to funders. Rather than selecting only one method, participants noted that the strategies can work together to reinforce the commitment of both the internal team and project impact.



Do you have topic for the
2024 KT World Café?
Share your ideas at
[narrtc.communications@
gmail.com](mailto:narrtc.communications@gmail.com)

Vote on By-Laws Changes at the 2024 NARRTC Conference

The Executive Committee has charged the By-Laws and Rules and Regulations Committee to prepare several amendments to the NARRTC By-Laws [<https://narrtc.org/sample-page/about/by-laws/>] for consideration and voting on May 21, 2024 at the Business Meeting of the 2024 NARRTC Annual Meeting and Conference.

The items under review with amendments to be proposed include:

1. Remove Vice-President as an Officer and transition most duties to the Chair of the Program Committee, who will be appointed by the President.

2. Revise President-Elect to include Vice-President duties that are not included under Program Committee Chair

3. Revise Past-President duties to include assuming the role of President in the absence of the President

Expand Program Committee to allow for co-chairs

1, 2, 3: Why? - It has been difficult to recruit individuals willing to serve in this role. The primary duties relate to planning the annual conference, so this will allow NARRTC to focus on that role. Will also eliminate confusion between VP and President-Elect roles.

4. Remove Treasurer as an Officer with duties transferred to an appointed Fiscal Manager

5. Revise description of Chair of Membership Committee to include solicitation of dues (currently assigned to Treasurer) and maintaining membership list (currently assigned to Secretary).

4, 5: Why? - A Fiscal Manager can carry out these duties without a need for reestablishing the organization as a charity in a new state when the Treasurer changes. This provides more stability and consistency for NARRTC. Clarify the duties that are reassigned.

6. Revise Individual Member description to allow for voting privileges.

7. Clarify any remaining inconsistencies resulting from past changes to the By-Laws, for example, how and when to use electronic voting.

6, 7: Why? - The role of Individual Members was proposed by the Executive Committee in 2019-2020, but when the 2020 Annual Meeting was canceled due to the pandemic, there was no vote. During this review, members of the By-Laws Committee have identified some inconsistencies in wording throughout the By-Laws that need to be resolved.

What next? Current By-Laws state that proposed amendments must be "presented with notice in writing to all voting members at least 30 days prior to the annual business meeting." This will be April 21, 2024. Members can contact the By-Laws Committee (Joann Starks - jstarks@air.org and Rayna Sage - rayna.sage@mso.umt.edu) for additional information or if there is interest in working with the committee.

NARRTC will be voting
virtually this year!
Look for your project's ballot
after the annual meeting.

2024 Conference Preview

The NARRTC Conference Committee is very excited to bring you an agenda packed with presentations, posters, and keynote activities that celebrate the work and dedication of NIDILRR grantees. Here are some highlights:

- Building on last year's success, we will kick-off the meeting with the **Knowledge Translation World Café**.
- Our keynote address, **Building an Inclusive Approach to Research**, will highlight recent policy and legislative efforts to include people with disabilities as research partners, key informants, and advisors.
- More than **30 papers and panels** spotlighting the diversity of NIDILRR-funded research and development across the outcome domain areas.
- **Guests from NIDILRR** will discuss upcoming opportunities, the Long-Range Plan, and technical assistance for sharing research data and publications.
- More than 20 posters, including the **best poster competition** for student presenters.



Catherine Ipsen, PhD
Chair, Conference
Committee

Explore the agenda at narrtc.org.

KTDRR Preconference: Add Infographics to Your KT Portfolio!

The Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research is sponsoring a face-to-face workshop May 20th to help you understand and produce infographics and other forms of data visualization. Learn about (and practice!) which strategies are best for sharing research information in visual forms. Hiram Henriquez of H2H Graphics & Design and Thomas Watkins of 3 Leaf will facilitate.

Center on
KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION FOR
DISABILITY & REHABILITATION RESEARCH

REGISTER NOW >

PreNARRTC Infographics Workshop

Free and open to the public. Registration is capped at **15 attendees** with priority to grantees of the National Institute on Disabilities, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR).

May 20, 2024
1:00PM - 5:00 PM ET

Embassy Suites Hotel
Alexandria, Virginia

[Learn more and register https://tinyurl.com/2yh3hudn.](https://tinyurl.com/2yh3hudn)

NARRTC Members in the Spotlight

On March 7th, NIDILRR released its [Organization Highlights Report for FY 2021-2022](#), celebrating the accomplishments of some of the grantee community, as well as NIDILRR's collaborations across the Federal space. Congratulations to our NARRTC colleagues who were featured in this year's report!

Assessment and Investigation of New Coverage Policies for Complex Rehabilitation Technology (CRT) Within a Contemporary Accountable Care Environment -

University of Pittsburgh - for their research on service delivery in CRT and findings that people with disabilities experience long wait times, lack of clinical specialized expertise, and limited consumer education opportunities.

Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC) - American Institutes for Research - for their award-winning consumer information products presenting trusted, research-based information on spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and burn injury.

Langston University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Research and Capacity Building for Minority Entities - Langston University - for its longitudinal study on the Institutional Research Capacity Building & Infrastructure Model (IRCBIM) which has resulted in at least one new grant to a minority serving institution, with more to come.

Employment of People who are Blind or Have Low Vision - Mississippi State University - for their research on changing employers' implicit attitudes about the competence of people who are blind.

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics - University of New Hampshire - for their research on food insufficiency and utilization of free food resources among working-age Americans with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Organization Highlights report is available from the ACL Newsroom at [ACL.gov](https://acl.gov).

