

Randa B. Wahbe's  
CCA Report on the  
National Education Association (NEA)  
Higher Education Conference  
April 1-3, 2016  
San Diego, CA

31 March 2016: Prior to the start of the NEA Higher Education Conference, I attended the Leadership Day program on March 31, 2016, that focused on immigrant rights and included a tour of Chicano Park with San Diego State University Chicano Studies Professor Isidro Ortiz and Chicano Park muralist Hector Villegas. This extra activity afforded me the opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the country and to compare the challenges Latinos face not only in California but across North America. An especially memorable exchange was with an instructor from Texas, who shared how her students and office staff were directly affected by the proximity of the border and deportations.

1 April 2016: Day one of the conference, I attended the NCHE Meeting and participated in voting. I was also invited to attend the NEA Staff Meeting where we met with NEA organizers from across the country to share our stories. Of the sessions I attended this day, the strongest one by far was the Building Power through Membership Engagement. Presenters included Susan Green from Chico State and District Q Director, Kim Geron from CFA, and Josie Malik and Elizabeth Maloney from San Joaquin Delta College. Although I've worked with Josie and Elizabeth before on membership engagement, their presentation coupled with that of CFA's faculty, highlighted the similarities and differences between our faculty populations. It was enlightening to learn about the challenges CFA faces.

Keynote Speaker: Steven Pemberton, Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Chief Diversity Officer, Walgreens Boots Alliance, and author of *A Change in the World: An Orphan Boy, a Mysterious Past, and How He Found a Place Called Home*, was the highlight of the conference. His personal story was exceptionally moving and pointed to the teachers in his life who helped shape who he is today. I was fortunate to meet with him afterwards for a book signing. He was gracious and friendly. His presentation that evening and the next morning resonated to such an extent, I recommended to the CCA Conference Committee that he be invited to speak at a future CCA Conference. Hopefully we can afford him!

2 April 2016: I attended the Diversity Workshop led by Steve Pemberton. The workshop focused on diversity of ideas rather than ethnicity or color and tied in greatly with the latest push in the NOCCCD to hire people of diversity. This workshop underlined the importance of redefining diversity to be inclusive of differences unseen by the eye, those that are below the surface and only discernable upon getting to know someone. To assume all people of a certain ethnicity or race share the same experience is erroneous.

I also attended the Understanding and Developing Solutions to the Major Issues Affecting Women in Higher Education session. Presenters included Cecile Bendavid, CSU Northridge; Caroline Inman, Mt. SAC; Catherine Jeppson, CSU Northridge, and Kristie Iwamoto, Napa Valley Community College. The session focused on four tabletop discussions. I chose to participate in the one on campus safety, especially since Cypress College has had a long list of complaints surrounding the lack of cellphone reception, lighting, and security, especially at night. Unfortunately, many of the solutions we devised during our discussion are reliant on the campus's willingness to support the changes.

3 April 2016: The Closing Plenary session focused on institutional racism and screened the TED Talk "Color Brave." There were five panelists (Sharon Elise, San Marcos College; Ravi Hutheesing, Global Motivational and Cultural Speaker; Terry Jones, CSU East Bay; Phu Pham, Dominion Hills College, and

Dana Stachowiak, University of Louisiana) on the stage who shared their experiences with race and then fielded questions from the audience. The highlight of this session was seeing how the audience and the panelists reacted to the TED Talk since I will be a panelist for the same talk at the Spring CCA Conference.

Overall, I found the NEA Higher Education Conference to be worth the time to attend. I learned so much from talking to colleagues from Boston, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Colorado, to name a few. I was surprised to learn that some state community colleges operate under one contract. Faculty members from those states were shocked to learn each community college district negotiates their own contract. Several of the people I met regularly attend the RA, and I look forward to reconnecting with them this summer.