

# The New (Old) NADE

A Position Paper on the State of the Association by the NADE Executive Board

People change for two reasons: they have learned enough to want to change, or they have been hurt enough to want to change. NADE has experienced both, and it is time for us to change.

The attacks on our field the past 7 years have given us more than enough pain. But much of this pain has come from our mistakenly accepting the unfounded assumptions of our critics—that we are nothing more than ineffective proponents of broken remediation classes. In accepting their definition, we have allowed ourselves to become their victims.

We are not victims. We are much more than the definition by which our critics would attempt to limit us. A quick tour of the NADE website helps remind us of our mission, vision, and goals. Now that the initial sting of the assaults has passed, we must look at the critics calmly, learn from the criticisms, and change as we continue to revitalize, strengthen, and expand.

Yes. It is time to change--It is time for NADE to change back to and embrace who we have always been: An organization dedicated to improving the theory and practice of developmental education at all levels of the educational spectrum, the professional capabilities of developmental educators, and the design of programs to prepare developmental educators

## The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.

—Sydney J. Harris

Some criticisms of our profession have been accurate: too many students are placed into non transfer courses because of our placement practices; we need a variety of options other than traditional course sequences to help students learn at their appropriate levels; and, we do not extend our support services effectively to students from intake to completion. However, much of the criticism is based on mistaken assumptions. When our students make a mistake, we educate them; our critics have made poor assumptions, and we are working on educating them:

1. Our critics have incorrectly identified remedial and developmental education as synonyms. This foundational mistake has been the cause of much of our angst and their inflammable rhetoric.
2. We are not remedial educators. We are developmental educators, and there is a difference. Although we proudly teach students who are under prepared for transfer classes, students who probably would not succeed without the benefit of developmental education practices, we also know that our field improves education for all students on the educational spectrum. This is best

reflected in our motto: “Helping underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, and advanced students excel.”

3. We are not advocates of remedial education. In fact, for years we have all agreed that remediation does not work. We have known this since the early works of Boylan, Cross, Casazza, and many others. That is why we are developmental educators instead. and why our organization moved from being called the National Association for Remedial/Developmental Studies in Postsecondary Education to the National Association for Developmental Education in 1976.
4. We know developmental education, when implemented effectively, does work, and its tenets are very close to those of our former detractors.

### Critics are our friends; they show us our faults. –Benjamin Franklin

As much as there are obvious weaknesses in the arguments of the critics, we must accept responsibility for many of the recriminations. Hearing opposing views helps us to reaffirm, reexamine, and revise what we believe to be true.

1. Why us? Most of us were complacent and an easy target. People with a national voice, money, and research came into our field to tell us what was wrong with us and what to do about it. Instead of responding with confidence and knowledge, we wanted to attack back, not acknowledging that we, as all organizations, should always welcome and always need consistent self-examination and adjustment to make sure we are most effective. We all agree with the curricular design process, and yet we resisted evaluating and adjusting our own work. We were not doing it, so people not involved in the work and with an unfavorable impression of the work, did it for us.
2. Their analyses were a bit of truth wrapped in a mix of vitriol, misinterpretations, and outright undeserved attacks. And yet, as with all painful experiences, this was a blessing in disguise. Since the attacks began, there has been more innovation, research, and experimentations in our work with under prepared students than there was in the 7 years before the onslaught. Our hurt feelings did not stop mandated reforms, but the reforms mandated we analyze our work and change. Our mistake was not being in on the changes from the beginning and choosing to rage against the messengers instead of using that information to analyze and adjust proactively.
3. We are at a point where we can continue to cry out about how unfair these attacks have been, or we can reclaim our roles as creators and reclaim who we are and what NADE stands for.

### The Secret of Change Is to Focus All of Your Energy, Not on Fighting the Old, but on Building the New –Dan Millman

It is time for us as an organization to stop fighting the old criticisms, and to start building the New NADE to be stronger than ever. The New NADE is actually the New Old NADE. It is remembering who we are and who we always will be: educators dedicated to improving postsecondary educational paradigms through "a comprehensive process that focuses on the intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of all students" (*Fact Sheet*, nade.net). It is reclaiming who we are and what we do with confidence and pride. The New Old NADE meets critics with an open mind, the security of our own knowledge and experience, and a willingness to be reminded that continuous quality improvement is a boon for us all—especially for the students we serve.

**DEFINITION.** Developmental education includes, but is not limited to, tutoring, personal/career counseling, academic advisement and coursework. It is reclaiming our knowledge and power as educators. It is speaking professionally using all we know about education to create better solutions for all students.

We can no longer let outside entities identify us. We must meet and work with the very people who have called for our demise. We must meet with them and educate them about what developmental education is—they do not know. Their criticisms came from analyzing data without a deep knowledge of what developmental education is and what it promises. We are now working with the major educational reform movements to remind them that we are not a bunch of complacent teachers who resist change and whose only response to criticism is to fight back to justify what we do.

We must not let others define us as inept people running even more inept programs. We need to remember who we are and what we do as defined by the goals of NADE:

- To promote educational opportunity for all individuals, appropriate to their needs, goals and abilities
- To promote the retention of students
- To encourage educators and institutions to utilize multiple forms of assessment that will ensure proper placement of students based on levels of academic preparedness
- To encourage educators to maintain academic standards while helping learners to acquire competencies needed for success in academic coursework
- To encourage educators to consider the development and application of cognitive and affective learning theory
- To facilitate partnerships between educators, employers and the community at large

This is who we are and what we stand for. We are much more than we have been showing the world, but we need to acknowledge and make peace with the criticism and move forward.

We can do things the cheap way, the simple way, for the short-term and without regard for the future. Or, we can make the extra effort, do the hard work, absorb the criticism and make decisions that will cause a better future. –Mike Rounds

Faced with this criticism, the NADE Executive Board has had to make a decision: Do we continue crying out about how unfair it all is, or do we take proactive steps to become one of the policy makers and have our voices heard. We have chosen to do the latter because trying to change people in an atmosphere of antagonism does not work. A first step was making peace with our critics. As part of moving forward to educate and make an impact on policymakers and the policies they create, NADE has formed a partnership with 8 other organizations: The Charles Dana Center, Complete College America, Jobs for the Future, AACC, Education Commission of the States, Public Agenda, CCRC, and Achieving the Dream. We are equal partners in developing policies now, adding our insight about developmental education, characteristics of the under prepared student, and best practices to those organizations and our joint initiatives and policies. After several meetings and discussion, those we once held in such contempt are now our friends, partners, and colleagues. Above all, they share the same goals as do we: to help all students be successful.

## The Core Principles

To forward cooperation and collaboration, we joined with several organizations to endorse the Core Principles. Although we wish we had been involved with the development of the principles, upon closer analysis, we found the NADE goals and the Core Principles have more in common than they do differences. NADE continues working with our partners to ensure the interpretation and implementation of the principles align with what we know about developmental education.

1. *Every student's postsecondary education begins with an intake process to choose an academic direction and identify the support needed to pass relevant credit-bearing gateway courses in the first year.*

This principle is a call for multiple measures for placement and ensuring support services are available to every student who enrolls. Guided pathways, as long as they are used for direction and not restriction, can help students focus on educational goals.

2. *Enrollment in college-level math and English courses or course sequences aligned with the student's program of study is the default placement for the vast majority of students.*

Although it is NADE's ultimate goal to increase the number of students ready for college level courses through bridge programs, high school partnerships, more accurate placement strategies, and other initiatives, the more important part of this principle is that the students' courses are aligned with the student's program of study by default. However, if students want to take different electives and explore different courses, they should be encouraged to do that as well as long as they understand the financial and time implications on their attaining a certificate or degree.

- 3. Academic and nonacademic support is provided in conjunction with gateway courses in the student's academic or career area of interest through co-requisite or other models with evidence of success in which supports are embedded in curricula and instructional strategies.*

This is the essence of developmental education: consistent provision of affective and cognitive support to students. NADE would add that this should be provided at all levels, not just in gateway courses throughout the student's educational career. We also agree that the embedded support is the best way to integrate these strategies. Contextualization of skills is a developmental education best practice.

- 4. Students for whom the default college-level course placement is not appropriate, even with additional mandatory support, are enrolled in rigorous, streamlined remediation options that align with the knowledge and skills required for success in gateway courses in their academic or career area of interest.*

Although we disagree with the term "remediation," we wholeheartedly agree that all students, even those with the greatest need, have a place in our educational system, and that those courses should have to goal of preparing students for gateway courses.

- 5. Every student is engaged with content of required gateway courses that is aligned with his or her academic program of study—especially in math.*

NADE concurs that the content of all courses should be aligned with a student's goals—whatever they may be. Courses which simply add requirements which have no basis in researched best practices should be eliminated.

- 6. Every student is supported to stay on track to a college credential, from intake forward, through the institution's use of effective mechanisms to generate, share, and act on academic performance and progression data.*

NADE agrees that students at all stages of the educational journey should be supported through academic and nonacademic means. This includes the institution's participation in using the best technology and capacity to make all of the principles feasible on a consistent basis. This

principle calls for using everything we know works in developmental education and making institutions responsible for facilitating their implementation.

## Learn from the Past, but Build for the Future

NADE has been hurt by mostly unfounded and misdirected attacks, but it is time to leave that hurt behind. We need only go back to our founding principles and remember who we have always been and for what we have always stood to birth the New (Old) NADE.

Please join your Executive Board as we renew, revitalize, reinvent, and remember who we are as developmental educators. Please join us to rededicate ourselves to our vision and goals. regaining our power in ensuring all students, no matter what their educational needs, can claim success, no matter what their educational goals.