



# IOSS Reader's Corner

Iowa Organization for Student Success Newsletter, March 2020

## Introducing Justin Robertson, IOSS President-Elect

In October 2015, I attended my first Iowa Developmental Education Association conference in Okoboji. I had never been



to the conference, nor to the vacation destination I'd heard so much about, but I remember it was quite windy and cold that year, the resort town's shops, restaurants, and bars under gloomy skies of gray. However, the bad weather didn't diminish

anyone's enthusiasm for the conference itself. I marveled at the obvious passion for education shared by the keynote speakers, session presenters, conference attendees, and the IDEA board members. These were people dedicated to helping students overcome obstacles both in and out of the classroom. They were instructors, tutors, support staff, and even administrators who worked tirelessly to help the most at-risk students despite unreliable support from the public and even their own institutions. They came together that day sharing ideas, exploring strategies, and really talking, listening, and understanding each other. While those of us working in this field offer students an immense amount of support, we often find our own support lacking.

I haven't missed a year since.

The weather was even worse in 2016 (snow flurries!), but the conversation and the connections

were stronger. It's been that way every year. I've even presented a few times and have always found it to be rewarding--how often can you say that about a conference? And IDEA has great annual traditions that make its members feel good, too; the group donates children's books to a local school and a \$500 scholarship for one deserving student at a member's college. This past year in Ankeny, the conference was one of the best yet, even if attendees dealt with a torrential downpour the first morning. Maybe all the bad weather around the conference is just another example of how our group members often have to go farther and work harder, of how we must push through barriers and find solutions to problems bigger than us. The truth is that Iowa's early winters and its pressures on developmental education aren't going away anytime soon--we'll need to keep working together and learning from each other. I look forward to getting more deeply involved in the organization with my new role on the board this year, and I thank you for doing your part to help Iowa's students.

*Mark your calendar for the*

*IOSS Fall Conference*

*November 12-13, 2020*

*DMACC Ankeny Campus*

*Conference Theme: Pathways to Success*

## Transitions: Amanda Rodenborn Applies Her Developmental Education Skills to Instructional Design at DMACC

Empathy is *the* hallmark of good design. And that—seeing classes through students' eyes and keeping their needs in mind when developing, designing, and implementing curriculum—is a trait we have all honed as



developmental educators. I cherish this trait as I transition into my new role at DMACC, moving from Writing Lab and Developmental Ed Professor to Professor and Instructional Designer. As developmental educators, we are experts at creating welcoming learning spaces that help our diverse students level up both their cognitive and non-cognitive skills. We also have an acute awareness of students' varied needs and challenges. That is why I took this new role and also why I believe we have a responsibility to help shape online learning experiences.

Technology is here to stay. Online programs are growing, and digital literacy is paramount to our students' academic and career success. Furthermore, nearly a third of all students will take at least one online course, meaning some are bound to have special needs, require extra supports, and find the technology and/or content challenging. We are *the experts*, trained in designing learning spaces that do the least harm to students in the most need, so we have an obligation to involve ourselves in the online community. Additionally, universal design research shows that when we create inclusive environments that provide multiple ways to access and learn information, *all* students benefit.

As developmental educators, we possess inside knowledge about the student-user experience, and we owe it to them to ensure that classes—traditional, blended, or fully online—are designed

around their needs. It is precisely because of my teaching background, working one-on-one with students in the Writing Lab, and learning from conferences like the one our organization holds annually that I was driven to my new position. Through these experiences, I have learned to approach students from a place of compassion rather than authority or superiority. I have learned to stop and listen more. I have learned to be more understanding, and I've learned to adapt to students' needs. These characteristics are invaluable to me as a designer. For all that I have gained from developmental ed, I have much to give back, and I intend to do that by remaining on the IOSS board and continuing to serve students in the following ways.

First, I plan to teach at least one course each semester because I know that engaging with students firsthand will inform my design decisions. Second, I hope to be able to use my new role to further the mission of developmental ed, meeting *all* students where they are and helping them accomplish their goals. In the online environment, that might translate as digging into students' stuck points, looking at why, and finding the tech or resources to get them unstuck. Or, it might entail working with instructors to improve an assignment, assessment, or course as we strive to continually improve our programs. Third, I will continue fostering the work of academic support services.

To the latter point, again, my developmental ed experience will be put to good use. In my new position, I have been tasked with researching additional tutoring services to support our online students. Not only do I have high expectations of what an online tutoring service should consist of, but also, I can see how such a resource would meet the needs of many of our students—those who work daytime hours and therefore cannot meet with an on-campus tutor or faculty member, students who do not live near a DMACC site, those who are parents and do their classwork late in the evening when their

children are asleep, as well as those who cannot afford a trip to campus or a meeting with a professional tutor. These additional services will never take the place of teachers, tutors, and face-to-face interactions. However, they can help prevent frustration and dropouts by providing supports to students who otherwise may not get them. As I said, designing with empathy and being familiar with students' experiences shapes a better learning environment for all. It may take some creative problem-solving, but working in developmental ed has equipped me to think outside the box when it comes to giving students access to the resources they need to achieve their goals.

Like developmental ed, my new department encourages constant improvement, embraces change, questions the "That's the way it's always been, so that's the way it is" mentality, and pursues uncharted territory. I believe these sentiments echo the work we all do at our various institutions and align with IOSS's core values. Thank you for allowing me to continue to serve. It seems I'm a year behind our conference theme of "Transitions" (IDEA 2018), but I'm still "ALL in," resonating this past year's theme. I have more learning and growing to do, and I look forward to doing just that in the coming months.

Education in the U.S. is facing a pivotal point—one where questions about its value are growing. I invite you to join me in guiding all branches of changes coming our way: face-to-face, online, developmental, college-ready, financial and academic support services, and all other areas of education. In ten years, the college experience could be much better or much worse. It's up to us to break down silos and shape changes to keep students' needs at the forefront. If we approach these changes with empathy, I have no doubt the future of education will be bright (shout out to IDEA 2014). I hope to see you at the next IOSS conference so we can share our challenges and successes in effecting positive, student-centered change!

## IOSS Student Scholarship Opportunity

*Molly Struve, Iowa Lakes Community College*

The IOSS Student Scholarship is awarded each year to one student who has excelled in both developmental and college-level coursework. This **\$500.00 scholarship** can be used at the student's current institution or at a transferring institution.

### ***Below are the scholarship eligibility criteria:***

\*All this information, along with contact information for questions, can also be found within the application form.

1. Successful completion (earning a C grade or higher) of at least one developmental course in the area of math, writing, reading, ELL, or study skills. Developmental courses, also known as college-prep classes, prepare students for college-level course work. If the student is currently taking the class, the scholarship committee will verify successful completion when the course is over.
2. A cumulative college grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
3. Plans to continue enrollment in a post-secondary educational institution during the next academic year.

### ***Applicants must submit the following:***

- A 500-word, typed, double-spaced essay on the topic: *"How my involvement in a developmental education course(s) has helped me prepare for my future college courses."*
- A copy of the most recent college transcript.
- A letter of recommendation from a school official, instructor, or counselor.

**Application deadline: June 1, 2020**

**More information and the link to apply can be found at**

[https://www.dmac.edu/idea/SitePages/scholarships\\_grants.aspx](https://www.dmac.edu/idea/SitePages/scholarships_grants.aspx)

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**IOWA ORGANIZATION FOR  
STUDENT SUCCESS (IOSS)**

# LOGO CONTEST

WINNER RECEIVES A \$100 AMAZON  
GIFT CARD!

With its recent name change, IOSS needs to rebrand itself. If you're a current student who has an eye for design, then we want to see your work!

### Contest Info

Deadline: April 1, 2020

Format: PNG or JPG

Submission/Questions: Amanda Rodenborn at  
ajrodenborn@dmacc.edu

Info to include: Full name, college, email address

The winner will be notified in May 2020.

By submitting, you agree to have this work used by IOSS on all print and digital materials.

### Who We Are

The Iowa Organization for Student Success (IOSS) consists of educators, administrators, and support staff who are committed to student success. We seek to make a positive difference in our diverse learners' lives. Our mission is to help underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, and advanced students excel.



a broader range of interested parties, such as advising and content areas outside English and math. Just a quick review of the conference presentations exhibits the variety of concerns the organization touches, such as making online courses more engaging, making course changes more effective, and accessing or pursuing useful research. The next conference will be in Las Vegas, and it promises to be a big draw, so members may wish to plan now and inform colleagues who may wish to consider attending. The Las Vegas conference will also coincide with a math summit.

## NOSS 2020 Conference Highlights

*Dan Nelson, DMACC  
NOSS Interim Vice President*



Despite the recent tornado in Nashville and the impending COVID-19 virus concerns, the 2020 NOSS conference was a great success and offered a rich selection of presentations relevant to our courses and public policy. As some of

you may know, the Executive Board invited me to fill in as Vice President just before the conference, so I had a rapid introduction to dealing with NOSS business. Although I did not get to attend as many presentations as I had intended, my experience offered plenty of useful information for our chapter members.

This conference represents a very positive milestone for the organization. For a variety of circumstances, including the name change, attendance is up and several states are seeking to create or revitalize their chapters. The organization is drawing interest from

My short experience on the executive board reminded me of the variety of benefits becoming a member of the national organization offers. Presenters at the national conferences are able to post their presentations on the national website, so members may access those presentations long after the conference. Further, if you are interested in learning more about a particular topic or engaging colleagues around the country, a variety of networks within NOSS offer access to the combined knowledge and experience of the membership. Attendees took advantage of network meetings in areas such as research, equity, administration, and advising. Membership in the national organization also provides access to the *Journal of Developmental Education* and the online journal *Practitioner to Practitioner*, serving as a place to find research and commentary within our profession.

My interim position will primarily relate to working with the state chapters and helping them grow as they seek to support students. I am looking forward to meeting our colleagues and representing Iowa.





## IDEA Conference Highlights: “We’re All In!”

On September 19-20, 2019, the Iowa Developmental Education Association met on DMACC’s Ankeny Campus for the final conference under our old name. In addition to participating in an in-depth presentation on the nature of implicit race bias, attendees had a variety of concurrent sessions to choose from, including food insecurity in higher education, using technology to improve student learning, addressing the cultural and language challenges faced by English Language Learners, conquering math anxiety, and fostering communication among corrections educators. Department of Education Program Consultant Chris Russell provided an update from the Developmental Education Working Group.



Dr. Stephen Biggs, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at ISU, delivers the keynote presentation on the cognitive and perceptual underpinnings of implicit race bias.



Amy Moffitt, IDEA Treasurer, presents outgoing IDEA President Jennifer Condon with a plaque honoring her service to the organization.

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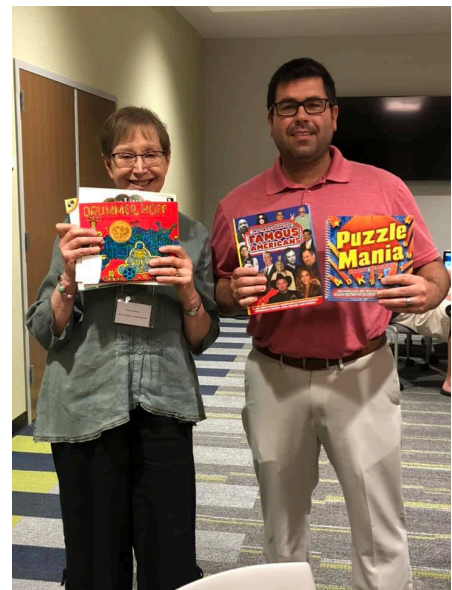
Passing the torch: 2019-20 IDEA President Bea Houston is flanked by 2017-18 President Jenny Doke-Kerns and 2018-19 President Jennifer Condon.



DMACC President Rob Denson makes the endnote presentation at the Friday morning session.



Maysee Herr presents a session on strategies to reduce disruptive behaviors in the classroom, creating a more positive learning environment.



America Reads Presentation: Sue Wickham with Principal Ryan Sharp, who accepted donated books on behalf of his students at Oak Park Elementary School in North Des Moines.

## Join the IOSS Conversation

- Have you recently attended a conference of another professional organization? Summarize a session relevant to our membership for the *Reader's Corner*.
- Has your institution revamped its placement policies, developmental studies offerings, or academic support program? Provide a quick update.
- Have you located a great academic resource for student or faculty use? Share the wealth.
- Have you transitioned to a new position or received special recognition for your professional accomplishments? Let us celebrate with you!

To submit articles or information for future editions of the *Reader's Corner*, please send to:

IOSS Newsletter Editor, Sue Wickham  
[smwickham@dmacc.edu](mailto:smwickham@dmacc.edu)

### 2019-2020 IOSS/IDEA Executive Board

**President:** Bea Houston, WITCC  
**President-Elect:** Justin Robertson, ICCC  
**Secretary:** Molly Struve, ILCC  
**Treasurer:** Amy Moffitt, ICCC  
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**Member at Large:** Susan Wylie, IHCC  
**Member at Large:** Amanda Rodenborn, DMACC  
**Corrections Consultant:** Jennifer Doke-Kerns, DMACC

*(For contact information, please see the IDEA website linked to the right.)*

## Stay in Touch with IOSS and NOSS

### IOSS/IDEA Website:

Check the IDEA website for 2020 conference updates, student scholarship information, and member resources.

[www.dmacc.edu/idea](http://www.dmacc.edu/idea)

### The NOSS website:

<https://thenoss.org/>

### IOSS Facebook:

Like us on Facebook to receive updates on IOSS and our annual conference!



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