AEJMC takes the position that the peer-review process should be viewed as an integral part of academic mentoring, designed to provide scholars the feedback and support needed to strengthen and improve their research, and which is received from scholars at all levels. In this way, the individual review plays an integral role in enriching the collective scholarship of our field. The broad mandate of the conference peer-review process is certainly to evaluate research critically and rigorously to ensure high-quality submissions that get accepted for presentation. However, it is equally important to be constructive, kind, and ethical. The cloak of reviewer anonymity cannot become a pretext for using a derogatory or humiliating tone that can creep in when delivering a decision to reject or when enumerating the weaknesses of a research submission.

Some of the best practices that comprise constructive, kind, and ethical reviewing include the following:

- Provide substantive comments that demonstrate to the author that you have indeed carefully read their conference submission. Casual and clumsy one- or two-line reviews, especially in the case of a decision to reject, can be quite demoralizing and lead to a lack of faith in the review process. Superficial reviews—or no review at all—can lead to the perception of a peer-reviewing process as arbitrary, callous, and biased, thus reflecting badly on AEJMC and its scholarly community.

- Review comments should elaborate both the weaknesses and strengths of a paper. Leading your evaluative commentary with the positive attributes of the research submission will greatly assist in framing a review as constructive and kind.

- Authors have a much better sense for how to revise their submissions if reviewers provide concrete examples and offer specific suggestions for improvement. Vague recommendations (e.g. “use more theory” or “offer better analysis”) do little to encourage authors to commit to the ongoing refinement of their research. The best reviews often point authors towards specific readings, exemplary models of research, or other research resources to help authors move their scholarship forward.

- Consider seriously the scope and broad aims of a research project when offering suggestions for improvements. Try to meet authors on their own research terrain as opposed to asking them to do the research the reviewer might do if tasked with writing the paper.

Finally, a valuable litmus test for how thorough, fair, and constructive a review might appear to an author is for reviewers to ask themselves how they would feel if they received the same review. If they find themselves questioning the quality of the comments and the tone of the review, then consider revising to produce a better version of the review that honors the above best practices in reviewing.