

NCME

national
council on
measurement
in education

Newsletter

Fall 2021

The President's Corner: Derek C. Briggs



It seems like just yesterday that we were enjoying one another's virtual company as part of a very successful 2021 conference. But the summer months flew by leaving many of us with a mix of joy and sorrow, and now here we are in the midst of a hectic fall season. Behind the scenes, a legion of dedicated committees, SIGIMIEs and Board of Directors has been putting in work on behalf of the NCME Community. I want to share a few notable updates with you.

Matt Gaertner

The passing of [Matt Gaertner](#) still weighs heavy on so many of our hearts, and there is a real need for us to come together to honor his memory. A plan is in the works to hold such an event on the eve of the 2022 Conference, April 21st in San Diego. I will share more details as they become available. I am also happy to say that in large part through the generosity of the NCME community, \$81,255 was raised for a fund to support the ongoing education of Matt's two daughters, Corinne and Genevieve. Matt's wife Freya has been overwhelmed with the outpouring of support she has received. Thanks folks.

Survey Results

Back in September we put out a survey to NCME membership to get feedback relevant to the planning underway for annual conference to be held in 2022 and beyond. We received a total of 472 responses, with 86% coming from regular members, and 14% from student members. Among survey respondents, 78% had attended the 2021 virtual conference, and 82% reported that prior to the pandemic, they had typically attended the NCME conference in person.

When asked if they planned to attend the NCME 2022 conference if it is held in person just 12% of respondents answered no. Instead, respondents were pretty evenly split between "yes" (46%) and "unsure" (42%). Unsurprisingly, the main factor behind this uncertainty was

concerns about safety giving the ongoing pandemic. When asked if they would be willing to participate if the 2022 conference switched an all-virtual environment, 84% of respondents answered yes. At the same time, a majority of respondents made clear their preference to return to an in-person format in the future.

A large majority of respondents indicated that requiring proof of vaccination, requiring conference participants to wear masks when indoors, and imposing limits on seating in conference rooms to facilitate physical distancing were all precautions that would make them more likely to attend in person. These are in fact precautions we plan to take—in conjunction with AERA—for the 2022 conference.

We also asked respondents the following question: “If future NCME conferences were to be taking place in-person, are you generally more or less likely to participate if it is being held concurrently with the AERA conference?” A majority of respondents--58%--answered that it would make no difference, 9% that it would make them less like to attend, and 33% that it would make them more likely to attend. An important issue that many respondents raised in their written comments was a concern about the expense in having to travel to attend both conferences if they were not held concurrently, an issue that is especially pertinent for international travelers.

One interesting finding from this survey is that holding the NCME conference at the same time as AERA would be viewed as less of a factor influencing attendance if the NCME conference was taking place virtually or in a hybrid format. Finally, when asked for a preferred time of the year to hold the NCME conference, respondents were pretty evenly divided: 17% fall, 13% winter, 23% spring, 19% summer and 29% had no preference.

At the present time we are still planning to hold an in-person portion of the conference with accommodations available for those who are unable to travel due to health or safety concerns. We also plan to have some of the conference sessions take place in a fully virtual format. However, these logistics are still somewhat in flux at the present time, and we will be keeping our eyes on the trajectory of the pandemic, vaccination rates, and the possible emergence of new variants. The Board does not plan to separate the timing and location of our conference from that of AERA at the present time. However, it is a possibility we may revisit in the future if doing so provides us with the opportunity to offer NCME members a significantly better experience.

The full survey results are available upon request.

2022 NCME Equity Webinar

Also in early September, as one of my presidential initiatives, a call for proposals was released for an Equity in Assessment and Measurement Webinar. The goals for the webinar are to

1. To put a spotlight on the ways that the NCME community is taking up (or could be taking up) issues of equity and social justice in the context of assessment and measurement.
2. To engage members of the NCME community in discussion and debate.
3. To provide a forum for learning.

The winning proposal, coordinated by Chastity McFarlan from Renaissance, is entitled

“Cultural Relevance Versus Construct Relevance: How do we Create Culturally Responsive Assessments?” The webinar will take place mid-January of 2022. The specific date and time of the webinar will be announced in November. A summary of the proposal and the participating panelists are provided below

The year 2015 marked a significant tipping point in our educational system: it was the first year in which White students did not make up more than 50% of the US public school student body. As the country grows continually diverse, so does the importance of ensuring curricula and assessments reflect this diversity. This urgency to implement responsive practices and programs was recently compounded by the pandemic’s [disproportionate effect](#) on students from traditionally marginalized communities. Now more than ever, the sector is faced with the challenge of ensuring inclusion and responsiveness in all aspects of our educational system. Traditional assessment practices have suggested that to make assessments accessible to all students, regardless of racial or cultural background, we must remove any construct-irrelevant variable, including culture-specific contextual items, that may unintentionally privilege or hinder performance. However, a growing body of literature calls for the use of culture-specific contextual items, citing that culturally relevant material will increase engagement, interest, and inclusion of marginalized students.

Given these seemingly disparate ideas, the proposed webinar seeks to allow for an understanding of these ideas in education and how they might play out in classroom formative, interim and summative contexts as we seek to develop equity-focused assessments. The webinar will start with an introduction and overview of both universal design for assessment and culturally responsive assessment practices. Then a panel of experts in assessment development and culturally relevant pedagogy will

discuss how these ideas could and/or should be implemented in various types of assessments. All panelists acknowledge the importance of bias-free assessments and the importance of cultural and linguistic responsiveness in education, but all continue to seek the best way to address the tension in these two aspects.

Facilitator:

- **Dr. Jennifer Lee**, Assistant Director of the Capstone Institute at Howard University.

Panelists:

- **Dr. Fiona Hinds**, Senior Advisor, Equity & Transformation, Cognia Inc.
- **Dr. Katie McClarty**, Vice President of Research and Design at Renaissance.
- **Dr. Chastity McFarlan**, Content Quality Manager at Renaissance.
- **Dr. Akuoma Nwadike**, founder of Inclusivity Education.
- **Dr. Molly Faulkner-Bond** is a Senior Research Associate at WestEd

Taskforce on Foundational Competencies in Educational Measurement

I am excited to announce, in support of another of my key presidential initiatives, the formation of a taskforce I am convening to make recommendations to help to shape the education and preparation of the next generation of educational measurement professionals.

On the one hand, there has never been a better time to learn about the methods and practices of educational measurement. There are so many incredible resources that are just a few clicks of a button away so long as one has a connection to the internet. On the other hand, we know that most people, especially in the US, who self-identify psychometricians or assessment and measurement specialists tend to arrive in the field through idiosyncratic channels. Few people have a disciplinary background in psychology; some may know very little about education. And many of the kinds of people that might have previously self-identified as psychometricians or statisticians may now see themselves as “data scientists.”

Are there foundational competencies that we expect any newly arriving member to the educational measurement profession to know and be able to do? If so, how can we build consensus around these foundational competencies and develop them among students?

Imagine if there were an NCME consensus document that answered this question. It could be as broad as a framework or as detailed as a curriculum. Such a document could help to improve the visibility and standing of the field. It could attract talented and committed

undergraduate students to important work. It could cohere and improve instruction among and within graduate programs. It could improve the skills and readiness of incoming professionals to measurement organizations. And it could serve as the basis for a license and certification program in educational measurement.

Charge to the Taskforce

1. To develop and maintain consensus foundational competencies for the field of educational measurement.
2. To propose one or more models for an exemplar curriculum for a graduate program in educational measurement.
3. To make deliberations public through conference presentations and possible joint publications in the NCME Newsletter, *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice* and/or the *Journal of Educational Measurement*.

The Taskforce Members

Terry Ackerman, University of Iowa; University of North Carolina Greensboro, emeritus
Debbi Bandalos, James Madison University
Derek Briggs, University of Colorado Boulder
Howard Everson, SRI International and CUNY
Andrew Ho, Harvard University
Sue Lottridge, Cambium
Matthew Madison, University of Georgia
Sandip Sinharay, ETS
Michael Rodriguez, University of Minnesota
Mike Russell, Boston College
Alina Von Davier, Duolingo
Stephanie Wind, University of Alabama

The taskforce will be chaired by Andrew Ho and is holding its first monthly meeting in November. Stay tuned for more details as this important initiative continues to evolve.

Scott Marion appointed to NAGB

I am happy to announce that Scott Marion, one of three nominations that NCME supported with a formal letter of recommendation, has been appointed to a four-year term on the National Assessment Governing Board, from October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2025. Scott will replace Greg Cizek in a NAGB slot reserved for a testing and measurement expert. Congratulations to Scott!

**From the Editor:
Arthur (Art) Thacker**



First, the newsletter is continuing to run a little behind and that is entirely my fault. I'll redouble my efforts to get us back on track. I tried to stall until I could find time to do an interview with Derek Briggs, our new NCME President, but decided to release the print version of the newsletter and put up a video of the interview on the website in the next few weeks.

For this issue, I want to talk about “measurement systems” that eventually lead to a single “binary” decision. When I say binary decision, it refers to decisions that are yes/no, or in educational measurement terms it could mean, proficient/not proficient, admit to college/reject college application, grant scholarship/do not grant scholarship, graduate/do not graduate, promote/retain, place in advanced courses (e.g., Gifted and Talented programs)/place in regular courses, assign remediation/do not assign remediation, grant college credit/do not grant college credit, and a host of others. There are many other yes/no binary decisions that are specific to students with disabilities, English learners, technical program students, and others. There are even more binary decisions associated with teacher evaluation and school and district accountability. For many of these decisions, a single cut score on an assessment has historically been used to sort candidates into yes/no categories.

Now, the field of educational measurement is moving toward a more “systems” approach to measurement, taking multiple indicators of a student’s performance and/or readiness into account to make these very important decisions. This means that we must somehow accumulate those multiple pieces of information and use them appropriately and fairly to land at our yes/no decision. Unlike checking to see whether a test score is higher or lower than some cut score, there are myriad ways of accumulating and aggregating student performance information, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, potentially serving very different purposes. I’d like to discuss some important considerations regarding the methods we use to make these very important decisions.

First, not everything can or should count toward deciding a student’s proficiency. We know from research and experience that unintended negative consequences often happen when we try to combine good instructional practice with accountability assessments (remember portfolios). The goal for educators and students becomes maximizing the scores rather than efficiently and effectively learning the content. Students must be given the freedom to make mistakes and to be wrong to promote learning. A safe and nurturing environment where students can investigate their errors and misconceptions without fear of negative consequences is a key to promoting student agency and achievement. Whatever components we include in our system of measurement, even if

course grades are a component, we must leave some consequence-free space for student learning.

Second, multiple cut points do not make a system. A common saying among educators is, “Important decisions about students should not be made based on a single data point!” Unfortunately, this very important idea is often misapplied in practice. A typical way for students to qualify for higher level classes or programs is to require multiple assessment scores and grades for entry. A simple way to accomplish this is to assign a cut score on each assessment and grading scale and require a student to meet all those independent thresholds to qualify. For example, a student might need to score Proficient on their state assessment, two district-required interim assessments, and have a grade point average of at least 3.5 to qualify for an advanced program. This kind of system punishes the student for any sort of “bad day” and maximizes the potential for measurement error to impact the student’s placement. It is a system where decisions are made based on a single data point—just applied multiple times. These kinds of systems are often referred to as “multiple hurdles” or conjunctive systems. They should only be used when the multiple assessments measure substantially different things and when all are important for making decisions about a student. An example of an appropriately applied conjunctive system can be seen in most English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessments. It is important that students be able to interact with written and oral language in English to fully participate in and benefit from courses taught in English. Many ELP assessments measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing separately, each with a threshold performance requirement. This is because no amount of ability to understand spoken English can compensate for an inability to write or read in English. Conjunctive measures should be used only when the measurement constructs are substantively different and when all those constructs are important to a student’s success.

Third, adding things up may also lead to unfair or inaccurate decisions. Compensatory systems allow a strong performance on one measure to “make up for” a weaker performance on another. Regular grading cycles are an excellent example of a compensatory system. A student can get a bad grade on one test, but an excellent grade on three others, and still wind up with an overall grade that is “pretty good.” Compensatory systems are usually considered more fair than conjunctive systems, but we must still exercise caution. Imagine a student who comes to a course ill-prepared for the challenge of the coursework. That student begins the semester behind and performs very poorly on exams and assignments at the beginning of the semester. However, through hard work and perseverance, the student improves as the semester progresses. By the end of the course, the student has caught up and learned enough to score among the highest in the class on the comprehensive final exam. When the grades are added up from beginning to end, however, the student’s overall performance is in the failing category. The final exam

score is a strong indicator that the student has mastered the course content, but a strictly compensatory system might cause a well-meaning instructor to assign an inaccurate and unfair grade. Perversely, the instructor may assign the inaccurate score in a misguided attempt to be impartial, since all the students in the course have their grades computed in the same manner. Compensatory systems should be informed by time and growth. Students are not static, and we should not expect their growth to function as a single rate. The best estimate of a student's ability is the most recent assessment of that student's ability—not the average of three separate measures of ability taken over a year. Prior performance can inform us about student ability, but it should not be an anchor holding the student in place. Growth should be encouraged and rewarded by our measurement systems.

So—how should our measurement systems aggregate data? Like most measurement questions, it starts with purpose. There are purposes that call for conjunctive or compensatory systems. There may be purposes that require hybrid systems. There are models that allow a student's prior ability estimate to inform the next assessment, building toward an increasingly accurate student ability estimate. Systems of measurement hold great promise, if we focus on accurate estimation of student ability to inform learning. Systems of measurement can help us make better binary decisions—they may even help us add some nuance, so our decisions don't have to be so binary.

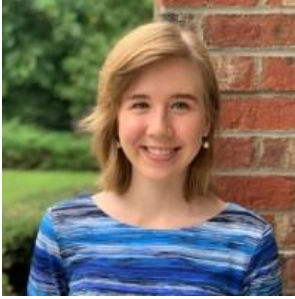
**Committee on Diversity
Issues in Testing (CODIT)
Raman Grover**



CODIT offers the following update:

1. Continuing with offering pipeline scholarships to underrepresented graduate students to attend NCME and present their research
2. Helping the NCME Mission Fund to review grants focusing on fairness, equity, and social justice
3. An exciting collaborative opportunity with the AERA Division D Equity and Inclusion committee. We are in the process of planning a coordinated session or an invited panel discussion on topic of mutual interest, that is related to issues of equity, fairness and inclusion in educational assessments. We are planning to present this session at the upcoming NCME/AERA conference.
4. To continue the discussion on issues that affect the performance of Indigenous students on large-scale assessments (we have organized sessions focused on Indigenous students in past NCME conferences and these have been highly successful).

**Mission Fund Committee
Updates
Francis O'Donnell**



Greetings! I am excited to share a few updates on behalf of the Mission Fund Committee. I understand some members may be unfamiliar with what we do. The Committee exists to support the Mission Fund, which was established to provide a means for donors to express their tangible support for NCME's mission to advance the science and practice of measurement in education, and to provide individuals and organizations with financial support for projects that address this mission directly. Our primary tasks involve fundraising, preparing calls for proposals, reviewing applications, and recommending grant recipients to the Board of Directors.

After months of preparation, our next Call for Proposals will be released in the coming weeks! In light of continuing disparities in the consequences of testing for traditionally marginalized groups, we collaborated with the Committee on Diversity Issues in Testing (CODIT) to develop a Call for Proposals focusing on the following themes:

- Social Justice at the Center of Assessment Design
- Fairness and Equity in Validation, Reporting, and Consequences
- Innovation in Service of Fairness, Equity, and Social Justice

We currently have \$45,000 to fund research projects that address one or more of the themes, thanks to previous donations to the Mission Fund and a generous decision by the NCME Board of Directors to allocate approximately \$31,000 to the upcoming Call for Proposals. If you would like to contribute, you can donate directly through the NCME website by going to <http://www.ncme.org/>, selecting "Donate," and selecting "The Mission Fund." Any donation amount is greatly appreciated.

Please be on the lookout for an email announcement about the next Call for Proposals, which will include more information about the themes and how to apply. Applications will be due in January 2022.

Finally, we have had some membership changes. Michelle Boyer concluded her term as Co-Chair after several years of service to the Mission Fund, Ada Woo was elected to serve with me as Co-Chair, and Ren Liu became our newest member. Our continuing members are Ted Daisher, Priya Kannan, Anne Traynor, and John Willse.

**NCME Annual
Conference
Program
Committee
Update
Brian C. Leventhal**



Upon sitting down to write this update, I find myself overcome with a range of emotions. For the last two months, the 2022 NCME Conference program committee has seen a tragedy and has also seen much reason for optimism.

To understand why, I must start with a bit of history. The story here begins at the 2017 Annual Conference in San Antonio. I became a member of the new NCME website committee, being chaired by then website editor, Matt Gaertner. We met as a group in Conference Room 7 of the San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter in what was only my third NCME Annual Conference. Led by Matt's incredulous sarcastic tone and chippy demeanor, we embarked on an endeavor to re-imagine the website for NCME. To a recent graduate like myself, Matt was an intimidating force (I laugh when writing this now).

Over the next few years, I developed a strong working relationship with Matt. After NCME signed a contract with our recommended vendor, Matt and I took the lead in migrating the content, enacting our vision, and making the new website fully functional. A year after that first meeting in San Antonio, we met again at the 2018 NCME Annual Conference in New York. We met with Krista Mattern and Emily Shaw (NCME program Co-Chairs, Toronto, 2019) and relayed the news that we would be running the proposal and review system for the Annual Conference. Matt and I had multiple hour-long work phone calls figuring out how to run this system effectively. Matt's sarcastic tone and light-hearted but rigorous work style never let up no matter how stressed or busy we got. As our work continued on the website, we partnered on other professional projects and developed a strong personal friendship.

Then, in July 2020, I was approached by then president-elect Derek Briggs about potentially becoming a conference Co-Chair for the 2022 Annual Conference. After lifting my jaw off the ground, my first call was to Matt. Without any hesitation he said, "There is no way I am doing this without you, so don't think that Derek making this optional means it is actually optional. You're doing it!"

As you, the members may have noticed, a lot of work, thought, and excitement went into the 2022 Call for Proposals. This stemmed from Matt's optimistic and jovial attitude, along with the anticipation of finally being able to return to some in-person capacity of the Annual Conference. Matt often spoke of grand desires for what the Annual Conference would look like by day, and equally important to him, what it would look like at night!

In one of our planning phone calls, I proposed to Matt what I considered a radical idea, the concept of demonstration-type presentations. He was immediately supportive and all-in on the idea. This was an example of who Matt was, someone who supported new, innovative ideas and was willing to experiment. He really took the idea and ran with it, putting his weight behind my idea on the call. It was a wonderful collaboration.

Then, as the proposal deadline approached in early August 2021, tragedy struck. Matt unexpectedly passed away. We lost a wonderful professional colleague

and a member of the NCME community. For me, personally, I also lost a partner, collaborator, and close friend.

In the face of this tragedy, I have found renewed reason to be grateful. In the days, weeks, and now months since Matt's passing, the NCME community has reached out to me personally with immeasurable support. There are so many people I am grateful for, far too many to list here, but there are five that I want to personally thank in my capacity as program chair. First, I want to thank Derek Briggs, NCME president, for his patience, understanding, and can-do attitude as we navigate keeping the NCME conference planning on track for a successful 2022 Conference. Second, Chun Wang, our 2022 NCME conference training session chair, for stepping up and working with both Derek and me in a role bigger than that of a typical training session chair. Third, I want to thank Andrew Ho, for joining the planning committee for a few weeks, helping us navigate the conference planning in the immediate wake of Matt's passing.

Finally, I want to introduce the two new co-Chairs for the 2022 NCME Conference, Ben Domingue and Leslie Keng, and express my sincere gratitude for them volunteering to work with me as program Co-Chairs. Ben Domingue is an assistant professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and the faculty director of Stanford PACE (an independent, non-partisan research center focused on education in California). Leslie Keng is a senior associate at the Center for Assessment. He has recently served as the program Co-Chair for the 2021 NCME Annual Meeting and was previously the chair of the Membership Committee. I am immensely excited to partner with both Ben and Leslie in planning the 2022 NCME conference.

As of writing this, the review process is well underway. Given the later-than-usual 2021 Annual Conference, the program committee has had to work with an accelerated timeline. I am pleased to say that even given the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, participation in the Annual Conference appears to be high! We have had over 500 proposals for the conference, including a mix of individual papers, coordinated sessions, demonstrations, training sessions, and graduate student in-progress research proposals. The committee is so grateful to the reviewers who have volunteered their time and to all the authors who have submitted proposals.

**Standards and Test
Use Committee
Jeffrey Steedle**



During 2020–2021, the committee proposed updates to the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*, and those updates should be under review by the NCME board. The committee is working to expand the Resources/Library page on the NCME website to include URLs and descriptions for standards and guidelines documents published by other assessment organizations. In October, the committee is expecting to begin review of the International Test Commission's updated guidelines on technology-based assessments.

**Publications
Committee**

Michael Peabody



JEM and EM:IP now offer Open Access

The NCME Publications Committee is proud to announce that the Journal of Educational Measurement (JEM) and Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice (EM:IP) are now Hybrid Open Access journals. Authors (or funding institutions/organizations) will have the opportunity to make their accepted article freely available to anyone online by paying a one-time Article Processing Charge (APC). The current APCs are \$2700 for JEM and \$3000 for EM:IP (set by the publisher and subject to change). We are excited that JEM and EM:IP authors will have this opportunity to further share their research.

Authors of accepted manuscripts who do not wish to take advantage of this opportunity to expand their readership will continue to have their articles printed under the usual conditions at no cost.

**Classroom
Assessment
Committee**

**Alison Bailey &
Caroline Wiley**



The Classroom Assessment Committee fully transitioned from the Classroom Assessment Task Force at the 2021 Annual Meeting. Please visit our NCME webpages for updates and details of our new members: <https://www.ncme.org/about/classroom-assessment>. Note also that three of the newest ITEMS modules relate directly to classroom assessment.

We want to remind the NCME membership that the 2021 NCME Classroom Assessment Conference is fast approaching. The virtual conference will take place October 21st & 22nd and is co-hosted by our colleagues at University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, George Mason University and William & Mary.



Click to register: <https://files.ctctusercontent.com/fd24a90e601/4cf52fe7-82dd-4c29-ad6d-8bedde71286f.pdf?rdr=true>

For more information, see the author guidelines for JEM (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/17453984/homepage/forauthors.html>) and EM:IP (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/17453992/homepage/forauthors.html>).

**NCME Book Series
Editorial Board
Kadriye Ercikan**



Have you Thought About Editing a Book on a Research Area You Deeply Care About?

The field of measurement is going through a disruption fueled by our societal context and technological advances. The current societal context – the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on education and the society, heightened importance of equity and fairness- combined with the opportunities and challenges brought about by digital assessments require rethinking of the role of assessment and measurement. This includes how we design and develop assessments, what constitutes evidence in measurement models, and how we interpret and use assessment results. The *NCME Educational Measurement and Assessment Book Series* is intended to highlight key issues in measurement, help the field serve education in effective ways and is an important vehicle that can assist in transforming our field. The Book Series is looking for Editors to lead books on some of the following or related topics:

- Opportunities and challenges for assessment and measurement to help address disparities in educational outcomes;
- Issues in digital assessments: interactivity, adaptivity, digital literacy, scaffolding;
- At-home testing;
- Use of response processes in measurement models;
- Integration of artificial intelligence in scoring of responses, item generation and other uses in assessment;
- Comparability: Across modes of administration, task types, AI based scores and others, etc.;
- Design and use of culturally responsive assessments; and
- Trade-offs of test-optional and other admissions criteria.

If you are interested in editing a book please send brief information about the topic the book, a short paragraph describing the rationale and contents of the book, and a few suggested authors/collaborators.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Kadriye Ercikan (kercikan@ets.org)
Chair, NCME Book Series Editorial Board

**2022 NCME Training
Committee
Chun Wang**



There are not many activities in the past 3 months regarding this committee. The near-term plans are:

We will review the 28 submitted training proposals individually and meet on October 25th to make a decision collectively. Here is a summary report of the 28 proposals, breaking down by full-day vs. half day as well as teaching mode. The proposals will be evaluated based on four criteria: relevance/importance of topic, quality of instruction, quality of objectives/innovation, and overall impression. After the decision of acceptance/decline is made on 25th, we will work on the final training schedule, i.e., some training will be provided a week prior to the actual conference remotely, whereas the remaining training will be given a day before the conference in person.