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## **A Letter from the Interim President-Elect October 2019**

***NOSS exists to assist education professionals in making a positive difference in the lives of students.***

Dear Members,

I recently presented an informational session on NOSS at the National College Learning Center Association Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. It was well attended and participants were interested in several issues regarding our recent organizational name change. Some were unclear as to why and how this was done. Some wondered how it impacted the direction and services offered by the organization. And some were even unaware that NOSS was formerly the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE). As we move forward, it's important to communicate about these issues directly with our membership. Here, and in the coming months, NOSS will attempt to clarify the process, reasoning for, and implications of our name change.

It is helpful to understand the organizational name change in the context of the recent history of the developmental education discipline. In the preceding decade or so, developmental education underwent a massive amount of scrutiny and change. Over the years, a handful of national and regional studies had reported inconsistent student outcomes results from traditional developmental education course sequences. But irrespective of the mixed research results, the large percentages of students entering open access colleges under skilled for college level work had garnered the attention of philanthropists, "non-profit" think tanks, and even some state legislatures. Suddenly, maligning remediation as a barrier to student success, or "higher education's bridge to nowhere" (Complete College America, 2012, p. 1) was now the order of the day. The unfortunate historic conflation of "remediation" with "developmental education" rendered harm to the discipline, and likely to the morale among many who served therein.

The resulting reforms pitched as systemic solutions include a scaling back of student skills assessment, elimination of standalone remedial courses, mainstreaming into corequisite courses, and an increased reliance on academic support services. As with many educational interventions, some of this work has been helpful, and some has been harmful. None of it is comprehensive or holistic. It remains unclear as to whether broad scale improvement in student outcomes has been attained through developmental education reform.

Back to NOSS and the name change. The fallout from reform had an especially adverse impact on the former National Association for Developmental Education (NADE). The ensuing dismantling of the field led to a decline in NADE membership and conference attendance of nearly 50% during the 2014 to 2018 period. Some of the membership during that time expressed to the NADE Board and Conference Planning Committees that professional development in developmental education was no longer supported by their institutions.

The 2018 NADE Board decided to consult with the membership to discuss the implications of reform on the organization. At that time, a poll was administered to the membership to inquire as to:

- how reform impacted developmental education and the organization,
- whether or not a name change was needed, and
- what suggestions did our members have to offer?

The results were tallied and our members had decided that a name change was in order. We then followed up with a ballot containing the top name suggestions from our members. From those, the new name was chosen.

The *National Organization for Student Success* was proposed and chosen by the membership. This is the second time in the 43-year history of the organization that a renaming had occurred. For more on the language and variety of terms that has defined our field over the years, please see: Arendale, D. (2005). Terms of endearment: Words that define and guide developmental education. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 35(2), 66-82.

Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ689656.pdf>

Where possible, please help spread the word regarding the name change and the reasoning behind it. We appreciate your involvement in NOSS and the contributions that you make to improve the lives of students.

Sincerely,

D. Patrick Saxon  
NOSS Interim President Elect

## Reference

Complete College America. (2012). *Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere*. Retrieved from [https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server\\_files/files/CCA%20Remediation%20ES%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/CCA%20Remediation%20ES%20FINAL.pdf)

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