

CCCC Institutionalizes Service-Learning

Tom Deans

*Tom Deans chairs the CCCC Service-Learning Committee established in 1999. An assistant professor of English at Kansas State University, Deans is the author of **Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition** (NCTE, in press).*

Reflections: What prompted CCCC to create a national service-learning committee?

Deans: There were short-term and long-term goals. As for the short term, last spring Campus Compact issued a request for proposals to national disciplinary associations offering the possibility of grant money to support teaching and research in service-learning. A committee officially sanctioned by NCTE and CCCC was needed to write what turned out to be a successful grant proposal and then to coordinate the activities funded by the grant. As for the long term, establishing a committee is one way to foster the institutionalization of service-learning. It gives service-learning advocates an ongoing voice in CCCC.

Reflections: Who serves on the committee? How were the members chosen?

Deans: At the 1999 CCCC Service-Learning Special Interest Group and through the NCTE Service-Learning listserv, NCTE members were invited to nominate themselves or others for the committee. Those names were submitted to Victor Villanueva, CCCC Chair, who made selections from that list as well as others that he thought appropriate. I know that he wanted the committee to be diverse and inclusive with respect to both the individuals selected and the kinds of institutions represented. Current committee members include myself, Rosemary Arca of Foothill College, Nora Bacon of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Louise Rodriguez Connal of the University of Arizona, Linda Flower of Carnegie Mellon University, and Barbara Roswell of Goucher College.

Reflections: What do you expect the committee to accomplish in the next year?

Deans: Our mandate is to provide leadership for, and encourage dialogue among, members interested in connecting service-learning to college writing; to provide the membership with information, forums for communication, and teaching resources on service-learning; to encourage research on how community-based learning informs composition studies; and to encourage reflection and discussion on the ethical and

ideological implications of service-learning. So far we've been attempting to meet these goals through the projects funded by Campus Compact, including a website and this publication. For the coming year I'd like to see both of those continue and grow, and I'd like to see us pursue other grant opportunities to support teaching, research, and dialogue. Perhaps most importantly, we need to listen to the larger CCCC membership at the conference in April to find out what the membership wants and needs as next steps.

Reflections: How do you use service-learning in your courses at Kansas State University?

Deans: I've primarily employed service-learning in my upper-division expository writing and technical writing courses by having students research local community problems and then partner with non-profit agencies in addressing them through collaborative writing projects. At K-State we have a large writing program that oversees our introductory writing courses, and a next step will be to explore how we might include service-learning in those courses.

Reflections: In *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*, you describe three approaches to integrating service with writing instruction. Please tell our readers about those approaches.

Deans: The book grew out of multiple impulses: to provide an overview of this emerging movement in composition, to articulate a coherent theoretical foundation for community writing pedagogies, and to examine several courses and projects in action. In sorting service-learning initiatives according to their embedded assumptions and literacy goals, I articulate three paradigms: *writing for the community*, which includes those courses through which students collaborate with non-profit agencies and deploy workplace discourses; *writing about the community*, which includes programs through which students perform service that becomes content for their academic essays; and *writing with the community*, which includes initiatives through which students use writing as a way to collaborate directly with community members in solving local problems.

Reflections: You were asked to chair the CCCC service-learning committee because you've been particularly active in building networks among service-learning educators in composition. As you talk to other service-learning educators, what issues seem most pressing?

Deans: In the field I see wonderfully innovative pedagogies at work, increasing depth and complexity in service-learning research, and heartening commitments to democratic education. I'm also optimistic when I see the number of graduate students exploring service-learning as a site for both research and teaching. But the most persistent obstacles to service-learning seem to me the broad institutional forces at play in our colleges and universities. Service-learning, when done well, is labor intensive and time intensive. Yet traditional academic practices, faculty value systems, and departmental structures often fail to encourage innovative teaching. Moreover, while some colleges and universities have exemplary outreach or service-learning centers to assist faculty, most still don't. Many writing teachers understand that service-learning has the potential to revitalize our largely shared commitments to active learning, ethical social action, critical reflection, and rhetorical competency; but I think that most of our institutions still need to be more proactive in supporting and rewarding those teachers.

Reflections: As part of your work to support service-learning in composition, you've created a website (<http://www.ncte.org/service>). Please tell us about the website—what visitors can find there, what you've learned in the process of creating it.

Deans: The website includes resources for community-based teaching and research in English studies, as well as links to the larger service-learning community. It's a place where one can find program descriptions, syllabi, bibliographies, on-line articles, and links to national organizations and service-learning centers. Credit for the technical work goes to Heath Harding, an educational technology specialist at Kansas State, whose assistance was supported by the Campus Compact grant. We try to keep the site current with news and recent research, and visitors are invited to make contributions by adding their own course descriptions and syllabi, posting announcements, making suggestions, and so on. My hope is that as more people use the site, it will become more interactive. The website is not intended as a static repository of information; instead, I'd like this resource to respond creatively to the changing needs of teachers, researchers and community partners.

Submissions to *Reflections*

Reflections on Community-Based Writing Instruction provides a forum for scholarship on community-based work in college writing courses.

Reflections welcomes articles (1000-2500 words) that report on research; describe and reflect on curriculum or teaching practices; discuss the theoretical, political and ethical implications of community-based writing instruction; or explore connections between service-learning and current scholarship in composition studies and related fields.

We also invite announcements and abstracts (200-500 words) describing current research projects. Our intent is to encourage communication among service-learning researchers, so we will print contact information.

Contributors interested in submitting a book review (about 1000 words) or recommending a book for review are encouraged to contact the editors.

Please use MLA documentation style.

Reflections is published three times a year (fall, winter and spring). Submissions will be acknowledged upon receipt and reviewed within two months. For the next two issues, our timeline is as follows:

For consideration for the Fall issue, submit by 5/30/00

For consideration for the Winter issue, submit by 9/30/00

Electronic submissions are preferred. Please attach as a Word file to an e-mail message to Barbara Roswell. The e-mail message serves the function of a cover letter and should include the author's name and address, the title of the manuscript, and a brief biographical statement. The name of the author should not appear on the manuscript itself or on accompanying materials such as syllabi.

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