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CCCC Position Statement

A statement on an education issue approved by the CCCC Executive Committee

CCCC Statement on Community-Engaged Scholarship and Pedagogy in Rhetoric and Composition

Conference on College Composition and Communication

November 2023 (replaces the CCCC Statement on Community-Engaged Projects in Rhetoric and Composition, April 2016)

Executive Summary

The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) recognizes the need to promote and support the broad range of community-engaged teaching, scholarship, and projects of its members. It does this while working to ensure the ethical and collaborative nature of the work from an antiracist, anticolonial, anti-ableist perspective. CCCC urges administrators, chairs and directors, and others involved in evaluating the work to understand the expertise, collaborative and reciprocal imperative, and additional time and intellectual labor involved. This statement reflects the flagship organization's affirmation that community-engaged work should not be misunderstood or misclassified as service but rather as a central scholarly and pedagogical pursuit of the disciplines of rhetoric, composition, and communication.

Preamble

The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) represents teachers and scholars of writing and speaking whose work in and beyond colleges and universities regularly extends to sites for online learning, professional workplaces, and communities near and far-flung, large and small, in a range of spaces and time frames. CCCC continues to affirm the importance of community-engaged scholarship and pedagogy in rhetoric and composition. The revised iteration of this statement provides guidelines for ethical, justice-centered community engagement.^[1]

Collaboratively written by community-engaged scholars and teachers, this revised Statement on Community-Engaged Scholarship and Pedagogy in Rhetoric and Composition provides guidelines for defining, assessing, and valuing ethical community-engaged work that colleagues may undertake across career stages, ranks, and roles. As such, it underscores the multiple benefits community-engaged work can have for community organizations and residents, research and teaching faculty, adjuncts, graduate students, university staff, campus workers, and undergraduates, as well as participating campuses and disciplines associated with CCCC. We offer this statement as a resource for instructors, researchers, students, staff, and administrators looking to engage in their communities more ethically, centering justice-oriented frameworks over university/institutional agendas.

At the same time, to gain support for community-engaged work that can be misunderstood as volunteerism, charity, or service, instructors, researchers, graduate students, and staff often must explain the value to colleagues and administrators who do not prioritize an

engaged curriculum but will value enhanced student learning, enthusiasm, engagement (Deans; Ash and Clayton; House), and institutional benefit (Bringle et al.). The Coalition for Community Writing's [Tenure and Promotion Resources](#) are useful, as well, in building a case for the many benefits of community-engaged scholarship and teaching that extend beyond service. As a resource for instructors, staff, students, and administrators, this statement, we hope, will serve to credit teachers, researchers, and programs appropriately for their contributions to university-community partnerships that are anchored in scholarship and designed to enhance community capacity and student learning.

^[1] While we use “community-engaged,” we understand that people define this work in multiple ways—community-based, community-accountable, community writing, public writing. We suggest that people consider histories, affordances, and constraints of any term used.

Defining Community-Engaged Writing Scholarship, Projects, and Pedagogies

Community-engaged scholarly and pedagogical work often involves non-hierarchical, collaborative relationships between community partners and community-engaged university representatives. The community-engaged work that develops from these relationships and addresses community-identified conversations, needs, and ideas involves collaborations between one or more academic institutions and one or more local, regional, national, or international community group(s).

We want to iterate from the onset that people who work in universities and colleges are also community members, and that universities and colleges are parts of the communities that house them (Itchuaquiyac; Monberg; Goldblatt). The distinctions between university/community and town/gown are often arbitrary and can reify false ideas of knowledge production as coming only from universities (Kannan et al.). Rather, as the Coalition for Community Writing attests, we understand that knowledge is not held solely in university settings, but flows between communities. Ethical community-engaged projects take an asset-based, reciprocal approach to knowledge production and cocreation. Recognizing, respecting, documenting, and citing community-generated knowledge production is a key component of community-engaged writing work.

Ethical community-university relationships promote *reciprocity* rather than *extraction* of resources (Bernardo and Monberg; Powell; Shah; Opel and Sackey)^[1], *cocreation* of research or course-based projects rather than *imposition* (Itchuaquiyac; Kannan et al., “Unmasking”), and an *assets-based* rather than *deficits-based* approach (Green). Working in collective and collaborative spaces with distributed labor and often non-hierarchical leadership structures requires a decentering of university conceptions of siloed knowledge and productiveness.

Created, primarily, at the behest of and in collaboration with community partners, community-engaged writing scholarship and teaching can take many forms, shaped by local resources and needs, including public writing and public rhetorics, community-based research, community literacy, ethnography, service-learning, community publishing, and advocacy and activist writing. To help guide ethical collaboration in this work, we appreciate community-generated philosophies of “nothing about us without us,” nuanced considerations of “access,” and “solidarity not charity” from disability justice activists and organizers (Hubrig 2020). This work can yield a variety of outcomes, including:

- collaborative writing (e.g., Jackson and Whitehorse DeLaune;, Roossien and Riley Mukavetz; Rahe and Wuebben);
- Archival collections/artifacts of public and intellectual value (e.g., Cushman; Rawson, “Rhetorical Power”; Pauszek);
- theater and public performances (e.g., Heath; Jolliffe; Long et al.; Lariscy; Moon);
- public events (e.g., Richardson; House);
- or policy debates (e.g., Villaseñor et al.; Wan).

Community-engaged work may encompass the following shapes:

- accounts of prison literacy work by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated writers (e.g., Barrett et al.; Cavallaro et al.; Rahe and Wuebben) as well as outside writers (e.g., Jacobi; Hinshaw; Middleton; Todora);

- rhetorical histories of African American, Tribal Nations/Indigenous, trans and queer, Latinx, Jewish, disabled, and immigrant communities (e.g., Driskill; Riley Mukavetz; Grobman et al.; Lathan; Legg; Lyons; King; Gubele and Anderson; Kinloch et al.; Pritchard; Rawson, “Digital Transgender Archive”; VanHaitsma; Ruiz; Alvarez; Hsu, “Afterword”; Smilges);
- oral histories, ethnographies, and digital storytelling projects with local, historically underrepresented groups (e.g., Richardson; Moss; Carter and Conrad; Kinloch et al.; Licona and Gonzales; Roossien and Riley Mukavetz);
- community literacy research with youth, teens, and K–12 teachers (e.g., Baker-Bell; de los Ríos and Molina; Lewis Ellison; Richardson; Alvarez);
- cultural literacies, disability literacies, queer literacies (e.g., King et al.; Haas, “Wampum as Hypertext”; Wieser; Hubrig, “We Move Together”; Cedillo, “What Does It Mean to Move?”; Hsu, *Constellating Home*; Pritchard);
- or community-generated publications about local and global contemporary issues such as houselessness, policing, and international political and social movements (e.g., Mathieu; Kuebrich; Kannan et al., “Unmasking”; Baniya; Parks and Popovic); as well as scholarly publications that articulate, theorize, and/or assess these efforts and their (potential) value to both the discipline and the communities.

Existing in relation to cocreated goals and aims of all of the partners involved, some community projects are long-standing and sustainable, while others are *short-term*, or open-ended (Cella and Restaino). Some community-engaged scholars work with social agencies to compose innovative curricula distributed through localized publications or popular websites for non-academic audiences. Still others—responding to the needs of a wider public that includes employers, citizen groups, legislators, and general readers—promote or advocate for research-based approaches to literacy development in blogs, videos, newspapers, newsletters, public interviews, public events, or testimony before government officials. Additionally, some community-engaged work in our field involves partnerships with organizations situated outside of the academy, such as community nonprofits, faith-based groups, museums, hospitals, prisons, tutoring centers, and multilingual learning programs.

Working in such contexts requires considerable time and disciplinary expertise. Likewise, the production of effective community interactions, events, and artifacts that differ from traditional scholarly modes of communication involves both deep disciplinary knowledge and extensive critical and collaborative intellectual labor. One of the most important aspects of effectively and fairly evaluating community-engaged work is to recognize the incredible scope and variety of activities that constitute quality, ethical, and successful examples of public disciplinary expertise.

As a result of the goals and plans made in collaboration with community partners, community-engaged writing courses may have students researching and producing written, spoken, digital, and/or multimedia projects about, as, with, or for university and community-based organizations that address systemic social issues and movements such as literacy, poverty, food and environmental justice, racial justice, disability justice, and more. Courses may be built around syllabi that combine academic and community-based research, assignments, and readings, developed in conversation with community partners. This work helps to enrich educational experiences and encourages students to understand real world applications of rhetorical situations and theories, affordances of a wide variety of genres, how to write for a variety of audiences, considerations when writing for circulation, community listening, how to practice critical reflection, and other ways in which to use writing in public contexts.

^[1] Here, and with all of the sources we cite, we recognize the tremendous number of scholars and subjects we have not included in citation simply because of lack of space. We encourage people to peruse back issues of journals such as *Reflections*, *Community Literacy Journal*, and *Spark*. A more substantive list of relevant resources and journals is included at the end of this statement.

Values, Critical Consideration, and Valuing of Community-Engaged Work

In the section below, we highlight some of the critical values of community-engaged work and detail ways in which these principles shape how these efforts can and should unfold across institutional contexts.

Community-engaged work must be antiracist. Here, we understand antiracist praxis as dismantling white supremacist institutions and the very epistemologies that prop up white supremacy itself (Davis et al.). In community-engaged settings, antiracism can take on many forms: divesting from the harms of white Mainstream English (Baker-Bell); centering Black dispositions as well as Black communicative and rhetorical practices (Mckoy et al.), and critically interrogating—and working to overturn—the roots of anti-Black violence (Baker-Bell et al.).

Regardless of context, however, such ongoing work must neither recenter nor reify structures of whiteness (Kynard, “Teaching While Black”; Maraj). Though we have conceptualized antiracism in community-engaged work through the lens of anti-Blackness, we recognize and uphold the antiracist work of scholars engaging in anti-oppressive praxes across other race and ethnicity markers as well (e.g., Monberg et al.; Browdy et al.; Gonzales et al.; Arellano et al.).

So too is it imperative for community-engaged work to be anticolonial in nature. We use the term “anticolonial” because we recognize that decoloniality and decolonization are complex processes that have been conceptualized differently across contexts. To that end, we not only defer to Indigenous scholars and activists in defining this term, we also call for those involved in community-engaged work to adopt anticolonial dispositions including, for example, value systems that prioritize communities over individuals. That means recognizing the ongoing violences of settler colonialism—the dismissal, erasure, and destruction of non-western ways of knowing and being (Haas, “Toward a Decolonial”; Driskill; Smith)—and actively divesting from and dismantling these structures (Simpson; Tuck and Yang). Anticolonial community-engaged work also necessitates that settlers continue to center Indigenous communities, knowledges, theories, and method/ologies—and continue to practice accountability toward Indigenous people and communities (Riley Mukavetz and Tekobbe).

At the same time we acknowledge that, as the world becomes increasingly global and interconnected, impacted by international capitalism and neoliberalism, we take a “glocal” stance that respects the global manifest in the local. We must work to center the non-US views, experiences, languages, and cultures of those in our midst—be they immigrants, refugees, and/or English language learners in our schools (Alvarez; Crandall; McDonald; Meier).

To these ends, we must recognize how settler colonialism, whiteness, and ableism collude to shape the temporalities that govern life and work in the academy, along with its historical relationship to nearby communities. We must also strive to decenter such ideas of settler time and white time in community-engaged work (e.g., Riley Mukavetz and Tekkobe; Mills; Ore et al.). In response, several scholars have proposed alternative ways to conceive of space and time. We can look to “crip time” and Indigenous understandings of time and presence, which acknowledge the ableism and settler colonialism of normative timeframes, to guide these efforts and, instead, understand time as multiple, shifting, and flexible—experienced differently by bodyminds (Samuels and Freeman; Kafer; Ore et al.; Hsu, *Constellating Home*).

Carefully-built and maintained relationships require time and cannot necessarily be bound by semesters and academic calendars. Pressures on faculty and graduate students to hit institutional benchmarks quickly and often can be at odds with relationship-focused timelines, and this dissonance needs to be considered in evaluation. Institutions might acknowledge the additional labor and the longer timelines frequently required in community work through extra course credits; as valid criteria for tenure, promotion, and hiring; and through course releases or sabbaticals for the time required to build relationships and partnerships.

We know that instructors and students on an individual basis cannot meaningfully shift conceptions of productivity and what counts as scholarship without significant changes to disciplinary and institutional frameworks and definitions for success. If an institution wishes to move beyond mission statements—that claim to value community-based scholarship and engagement—and to actually reward engaged work, significant changes must occur in terms of what counts as scholarship versus service, and what is valued. We need to consider the value (and time it takes) to establish relationships and cocreate meaningful collaborations with community partners. This may mean valuing the process as much as (or sometimes more than) the product, whatever the product might be. If we teach our students

the value of process, so, too, should we value our colleagues' processes in community-engaged research and teaching, and the relationships that ground them, which should "move at the speed of trust" (brown).

It means valuing coauthored scholarship in different ways because a key feature of community-engaged work is to foreground community voices. This collaborative approach to writing, sometimes involving multiple members of a project including community partners, undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty, is sometimes at odds with reward structures that encourage single authorship over coauthorship—which may entail writing for a non-academic audience, and publishing/disseminating work in less traditionally academic spaces, rather than just conferences and peer-reviewed scholarly journals.

In other words, because a central tenet in community-engaged work is reciprocity, we cannot simply consider "value" from the traditional, narrow point of view of universities and colleges. Writing and circulating scholarship to multiple audiences, perhaps at the request of a community partner, may result in public writing and projects not always recognized as "legitimate" scholarship by academic institutions. It may be counted as service. We suggest that universities and colleges expand what counts as scholarship beyond the traditional peer-reviewed article or book. In fact, we hope that this Statement suggests the need to interrogate "evaluation" as a practice to begin with: We need to be more critical in understanding that there is no "objective" evaluation, and that evaluation is always in service to some agenda/stakeholder. We may ask, then, why some universities do and others do not count engaged scholarship as scholarship. Community-engaged frameworks for evaluation might help us push back against racist, classist, and ableist evaluation practices that have been central to universities (e.g., Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections*; Martinez; Cedillo, "Diversity, Technology, and Composition").

At the same time, community engagement means challenging what counts as *knowledge* and upending typical university/college attitudes about who are the creators of knowledge (House; Rios; Shah). We must be willing to listen and engage with community perspectives, especially where they challenge our own understandings of community issues (e.g., Kannan et al.; Flower; Parks and Popovic; Shah; Itchuaqiyag). That means taking seriously the embodied and affective experience of minoritized and multiply minoritized people whose knowledge has been historically excluded from colleges and universities. As Hubrig notes in their introduction to *Spark*, vol. 4, we need to understand, as a starting point for community-engaged work, that the academic institutions that sign our paychecks often do very real harm—including to the very communities we are trying to engage. We can't engage in and with these communities in good faith while not being willing to acknowledge that harm (Jackson and Cedillo; Hubrig, "Liberation"; Itchuaqiyag; Hsu 2022).

Many community-based projects are intensely local, and many blend pedagogical and scholarly methods and methodologies, making it difficult to define community-engaged work or establish set evaluative criteria. The Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification offers one resource; the Imagining America initiative (Ellison and Eatman) instigated by the White House Millennial Council offers another. There are several disciplinary models as well for acknowledging and rewarding community-based projects for the ways they build and reflect disciplinary knowledge, produce new, hybrid forms of theoretical and applied knowledge, and promote connections among colleges, universities, and different communities. Perhaps the best resource for making the case for community-engaged work in rhetoric and composition, for evaluating that work, and for changing institutional criteria for graduate training, hiring practices, and merit, reappointment, tenure, and promotion comes from the Coalition for Community Writing, including their Engaged Faculty Initiative and Engaged Graduate Student Initiative.

Recommendations

As community-engaged efforts in CCCCs and affiliated disciplines expand, we call for the following to be centered in community-engaged scholarship and pedagogy:

- Deliberate, ethical, and intentional foregrounding of community voices and intellectual/ethical frameworks that are prioritized over university and scholarly research agendas in community-engaged work. Valuing community intellectual/ethical frameworks involves familiarizing ourselves with the history, perspectives, and intellectual frameworks of community partners and places.

- Dedication to the principle that community partners must *be partners* by being able to consent and withdraw consent from the partnership, and by having opportunities to shape the work *throughout the process* of engagement.
- Community-engaged pedagogy involves a sustained *process* of learning and development. Students and scholars involved in community-engaged work should familiarize themselves with ethical conversations and the intellectual history of community-engaged work *before* they begin the project, with ongoing critical reflection. These discussions need to happen before we enter community spaces, remembering that we are guests in someone's home.
- We must recognize that community-engaged scholarship may diverge from institutionally-sanctioned formats, and—in accountability and solidarity with those communities we form partnerships with—the scholarship/artifacts produced *should* take forms that are ultimately legible in those communities. Whereas academia typically draws hard lines between “scholarship,” “teaching,” and “service,” community-engaged scholarship and pedagogy requires we rethink this configuration, understanding how this work overlaps and intersects.
- Meaningful, ethical community engaged scholarship and pedagogy (*the only* way this work should be done) requires a great deal of time and energy. To facilitate the required depth of engagement, universities/colleges need to adjust how this work is understood and evaluated at all levels across institutional contexts. We urge departments, programs, and administrators to shift expectations and policy as they apply to hiring practices and other assessments at all stages of professional development to better acknowledge the time and intellectual labor of community-engagement.

Resources

To support building community partnerships:

- [CCCC Strategic Action Task Force Resources](#)
- [Coalition for Community Writing](#)
- [Creating Coalitional Gestures](#)

To support teachers (and institutions) who engage in this work:

- [Coalition for Community Writing Tenure and Promotion Resources](#)
- [Pedagogue](#)
- [Teacher-Scholar-Activist](#)

To support work that centers community languages, cultures, and values:

- [Black Language Syllabus](#)
- [CCCC Asian / Asian American Caucus Bibliography](#)
- [DBLAC: Digital Black Lit and Composition](#)
- [Digital Transgender Archive](#)
- [Disability Studies in Composition: Position Statement on Policy and Best Practices](#)
- [Education, Liberation, and Black Radical Traditions for the 21st Century](#)
- Kimberly Wieser's [American Indian and Indigenous Bibliography](#)
- [Latinx Caucus of CCCC. NCTE CCCC Latinx Caucus Bibliography](#)
- [This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice](#)

Related Journals

- [Community Literacy Journal](#)
- [Constellations: A Cultural Rhetorics Publishing Place](#)
- [Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics](#)
- [Latinx Writing and Rhetoric Studies](#)
- [Literacy in Composition Studies](#)
- [Reflections: A Journal of Community-Engaged Writing and Rhetoric](#)
- [Spark](#)

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