

Report: Faculty Inquiry Group “Writing and Community Engagement”

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In our FIG, “Writing and Community,” participants read a series of essays from Deans, Roswell and Wurr’s *Writing and Community Engagement: A Critical Sourcebook* (2010). The conversations that ensued were lively and productive, ranging from questions about political theory to reflections on the practical implementation of community-based writing in specific assignments and courses. Over the course of our meetings, a number of group members developed an interest in starting a community writing center that would help local groups and individuals use writing to pursue democratic goals. As the FIG ends, we have made plans to meet up over the course of the upcoming year to plan and implement a pilot project at Lane.

MEETING ONE: 6/27, 1 hr

In Attendance: Aryn Bartley, Amy Beasley, David Bockoven, Joshua Daniels, Polina Kroik, Siskanna Naynaha, Gail Stevenson, Drew Viles, Jennifer Von Ammon

To prepare for the first meeting, we:

- Read the introduction and table of contents of Deans, Roswell and Wurr’s *Writing and Community Engagement: A Critical Sourcebook* (2010).

At our first meeting, we:

- Introduced ourselves and talked about our experiences with and interests in community-engaged writing philosophies and practices.
- Made a plan for Meeting Two.

MEETING TWO: 8/1, 1-1/2 hrs

In Attendance: Beth Aydelott, Aryn Bartley, Amy Beasley, David Bockoven, Polina Kroik, Gail Stevenson, Drew Viles, Jennifer Von Ammon

To prepare for the second meeting, we:

- Considered the questions “What is a community?” and “What does a community do?”
- Read two foundational works from our text, namely Brandt’s “Sponsors of Literacy” (Ch. 1, pp. 15-33) and Deans’s “English Studies and Public Service” (Ch. 9, pp. 97-116).
- Read another essay of our choice from the book to share with the group.
- Posted discussion questions on the group blog and/or brought questions to the meeting.

At our second meeting, we discussed topics like: definitions of community; ways to engage students in community-based writing; the challenges we face in doing so; the impact of the internet on understandings of community and responsibility; specific ideas for community-based assignments and projects; whether or not service learning should be mandatory; and issues of power and privilege.

Near the end of our meeting, Gail Stevenson introduced an essay from our text that described a community writing center in Salt Lake City. We decided to read two essays for the next meeting: the essay she had read and another about a similar project.

MEETING THREE: 8/15, 1-1/2 hrs

In attendance: Beth Aydelott, Aryn Bartley, Amy Beasley, David Bockoven, Joshua Daniels, Polina Kroik, Gail Stevenson, Jennifer Von Ammon

To prepare for the third meeting, we:

- Read two essays about community writing centers: Higgins, Long and Flower's "Community Literacy: A Rhetorical Model for Personal and Public Inquiry" (Ch 13, pp. 167-201) and Rousculp's "When the Community Writes: Re-envisioning the SLCC DiverseCity Writing Series" (Ch 27, pp. 386-400).
- Read another essay of our choice (optional).
- Posted discussion questions to the group blog and/or brought questions to discussion.
- Reflected upon possible community-writing assignments, courses, and/or centers.

In our third meeting, we discussed topics like: the ideological underpinnings of community writing centers; the practical challenges attendant to such projects; the role of authority in democratic writing projects, both inside and outside of the classroom; the degree to which we should encourage students to choose their own topics vs. arguing from others' perspectives; how to motivate and inspire our students; the role of risk-taking in the classroom, and its relationship to grading practices; the place of narrative in the writing classroom; the role of the writing classroom in "training" civic writers; the ideology and utility of conventional genres, skills, and styles; and the politics of facilitation.

At the end of the meeting, we began to discuss ideas for starting a community writing center at Lane. We decided to focus on this possible project in the fourth meeting.

MEETING FOUR: 8/20, 1-1/2 hrs

In attendance: Beth Aydelott, Aryn Bartley, Amy Beasley, David Bockoven, Joshua Daniels, Polina Kroik, Gail Stevenson

In our fourth meeting, we:

- Comprised a list of questions and ideas about the mission of, implementation of, and funding for a community writing center at Lane.
- Came up with a plan for the coming year.

BLOG:

Early in July, Siskanna Naynaha made a blog for communicating and posting reflections and discussion questions before our meetings. The blog address is <https://blogs.lanecc.edu/rhetorical-carnivals/>