

Community College Efforts from the ASA

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1. From your perspective, what are the two things that your disciplinary professional organization or discipline-based NSF-funded project does particularly well in support of your work as an educator? Please be specific about how this activity works and why it is effective.

One of the things that ASA has done tremendously well over more than 30 years is work to support the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology, as well as the practice of scholarly teaching. This work was started by Hans Mausch and carried forward over a 24-year career by Carla Howery in the ASA Academic and Professional Affairs Program.

In addition to the tremendous leadership of individuals such as Mausch and Howery, the effort has been effective because of the passion and commitment of member sociologists. The ASA Section on Teaching and Learning is the community embodiment of that commitment, and is vibrant and professionally supportive of teacher-scholars at every level – as evidenced by the fact that every third year the Chair of the Section must be a sociologist located in a community college setting. The Section's listserv is the virtual town square of this community, with frequent discussions of teaching approaches and new resources and issues connected sociologists across the country.

The journal, *Teaching Sociology*, is another strength of the association. Published quarterly, the journal "publishes articles, notes, and reviews intended to be helpful to the discipline's teachers. Articles range from experimental studies of teaching and learning to broad, synthetic essays on pedagogically important issues. The general intent is to share theoretically stimulating and practically useful information and advice with teachers."

TRAILS, the Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology, is the Association's newest venture in supporting sociologists as teachers. TRAILS is an on-line, peer-reviewed library of teaching and learning materials in sociology. Launched in May of 2010, sociologists can upload teaching resources they have created (including syllabi, class activities, assignments, Power Point presentations, video, and images), along with supporting documentation such as learning goals and assessments, user notes, and an abstract. These submissions are then reviewed by a subject-area Associate Editor and subsequently by the TRAILS Editor. If a resource is accepted for publication it appears in TRAILS along with a cover page that includes a suggested citation. After accepting the user agreement and paying a small yearly subscription, sociologists seeking ideas for teaching can search TRAILS and download and adapt any TRAILS resources for their own classroom use. TRAILS currently has 819 subscribers and receives approximately 1000 unique visitors per month. Although still in its infancy, TRAILS already provides a new form of evidence of teaching excellence for teacher-scholars in sociology who publish their

pedagogical resources there. It also provides a new way to bring quality teaching materials based on cutting-edge research to sociology professors across the educational spectrum.

2. If you could propose (and obtain funding for) one new activity to engage community college instructors in professional associations and other discipline-based projects related to teaching and learning, what would it be? Describe the activity, explain why it is needed and why it is not currently available.

As I mentioned in my profile, the ASA has just launched a new three-year Task Force on Community College Faculty, charged with investigating the characteristics, professional identity, advocacy and professional development needs of sociologists working in community colleges. The Task Force's report will undoubtedly point toward a variety of specific activities that could benefit and engage community college faculty, and will provide insights on how to prioritize them, but without the benefit of those insights, one possible activity would be to create a community college workshop that would help draw sociologists from community colleges together with faculty in four-year institutions to exchange pedagogical approaches and research findings. Working groups would build materials for specific courses, incorporating cutting edge-research into engaged, interactive teaching activities. Each team would produce a series of resources that would be published in TRAILS, expanding the impact of the project. Community college faculty who joined the association could be given a subscription to TRAILS as a free benefit of their membership, helping to assure the diffusion of the materials.