

# Two Year College English Association (TYCA)

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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. Add web links if available.**

My disciplinary professional organization is centered on pedagogy (the parent organization is the National Council of TEACHERS of English), and it supports teachers at all levels in many ways, including professional development (through conferences, a professional online network for sharing ideas, publications, webinars, mentorships/early career educator programs, workshops, etc.), policy advocacy (NCTE has a DC office and actively advocates on behalf of literacy education at all levels and develops partnerships with other related organizations; it also regularly briefs members on local, state, and national policies that impact English educators at all levels, and it develops "policy statements" as needed that members can use to address administrators, legislators, and other stakeholders, ranging from "Students' Right to Their Own Language" to class size statements to writing assessment statements), and shared research (NCTE encourages and even funds literacy-education-related research; NCTE is also leading the effort to create the National Center for Literacy Education, a collaboration among various disciplinary organizations, community organizations, and business/professional organizations, to research and promote quality literacy education). Overall, I think professional development is NCTE's forte; however, its attention and commitment to educational policy makes it somewhat unique among disciplinary organizations, and I appreciate NCTE's efforts on this front, as it supports teachers and students in broader (and often more significant) ways.

The college-level branches of NCTE include CCCC and TYCA. Like NCTE, CCCC sponsors research and publication, and it also encourage member activism in areas of interest or need, ranging from computers and composition to diversity and from current issues, like dual credit/concurrent enrollment, to long-standing concerns, such as working conditions for adjunct and concurrent faculty. All groups have a space/community within the conference, the Connected Community (professional social network), and the various publications. I find CCCC's strength to be in the varied voices and varied ways members can be involved; members seem more invested when they can research and interact with others with similar research, teaching, or political interests, and CCCC is good at facilitating these interactions.

[TYCA](#), the organization I lead, is one of the most recent additions to the NCTE family, and it does not have its own separate budget, and thus cannot sponsor research and publication to the same degree as its "parent" organizations. However, TYCA has a long-standing (45 years+) regional network consisting of seven regions, joined by a common purpose and common

governance, each of which hosts an annual regional conference (and in some cases, state conferences) and some sort of publication (ranging from online newsletter or biannual regional journal publication). The smaller, more local regional organizations can be much more responsive to members' needs and tend to focus primarily on teaching and learning activities. Conference sessions are generally focused on pedagogy and the settings are more informal and interactive, with plenty of time/space for "teacher talk," so valued and, unfortunately, so limited in higher education. Professional development and collegiality are hallmarks of the TYCA organization. The younger, national organization doesn't host its own national conference, but it does sponsor a journal, and it does try to address issues affecting two-year college nation-wide, such as dual credit/concurrent enrollment, adjunct/contingent faculty, developmental education. The national TYCA organization has centered on representing two-year colleges--bringing their voices and their concerns to the conversations and decision-making within NCTE/CCCC and outside the disciplinary organization.

**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.**

Developmental education (math, reading, and writing) is an essential part of the community college mission of providing students access to higher education, but these essential courses in the "basic skills" are often viewed negatively, underfunded, and ineffective. They also tend to be seen as the purview of the math or English department (or of a separate "basic skills" department) rather than essential learning--"student skills," critical thinking, reading, writing, and quantitative literacy--which are necessary for and are the responsibility of all disciplines. Some of the most successful efforts I've seen in terms of developmental education have come through learning communities, which provide a supportive, engaging, and challenging intellectual environment through which students are initiated into the academic discourse community at the same time they build their skills. These efforts in concert with better efforts at placement, assessment, and advising can help students get on a path to success--in college or in a career pathway as well as in civic life. I'd like to see disciplinary organizations begin conversations and generate ideas/support materials for how all disciplines can help students be successful vs. relegate responsibility for "college skills" elsewhere.

Also, in general, I think community college instructors would benefit from and appreciate opportunities to talk about teaching and engage in classroom-based research with others in their discipline. Given that about two-thirds of community college faculty are adjunct, many lack access to a supportive teaching community, and disciplinary organizations can be the "go to" place for this sort of professional development and professional interaction. Professional organizations can also serve as a clearinghouse for pedagogical scholarship. Teaching loads for community college faculty tend to be much larger than those of their four-year college counterparts and support for research activities is far more limited. Disciplinary organizations can be the ones to provide a space for publishing teaching tips, effective programs, sample assignments/syllabi, and classroom-based research and, in doing so, show their valuing of and commitment to the pedagogy of their discipline.