

Resources for Community College Faculty in History

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RECENT SUCCESSES in HISTORY

Both the Organization of American Historians (OAH) www.oah.org and the American Historical Association (AHA) www.historians.org have provided invaluable resources to community college faculty. Of the two organizations, the OAH has the longest and strongest commitment to improving teaching.

Among the OAH's noteworthy supports is the Community College Teaching Workshop, which is organized by the Committee on Community Colleges, and conducted at the annual meeting. These sessions bring together faculty to address ways of more effectively teaching history. A recent session focused on the benefits and costs of using modern technology to access library and internet resources and how to respond to declines in students' the attention spans. This committee has also conducted summer retreats for community college faculty who cannot attend the annual meeting so they can brainstorm on ways of effectively teaching history to twenty-first century students. For the many who cannot attend the summer workshops, the OAH also publishes the Magazine of History www.magazine.oah.org which focuses on recent "hot" topics in history and providing scholarship, articles, and teaching strategies. This monthly publication is rich in resources. In addition, the Program Committee for the annual meeting specifically calls for sessions that are based on "collaborative partnerships among teaching historians and history educators at all levels" with an emphasis on teaching, not reading papers, and organized as roundtables or workshops". These sessions meet to an overflow audience even in the largest lecture halls.

The American Historical Association has more recently joined in addressing the needs of community college faculty and has develop its web page with a click to resources for Two-Year Community College Faculty www.historians.org/resources/TwoTearFacult.org . While this does not offer interaction for teaching faculty, it does provide invaluable resource materials. The AHA website provides other material focused on teaching. The most noteworthy is "A Status Report from the OAH Committee on Community Colleges" by Nadine Hata which was intended to raise awareness of teaching issues to the four year faculty who traditionally have not focused on teaching. And finally some historians have been beneficiaries of fund from the Teaching American History grants which bring together educators from the K-12, two and four year schools for three years to develop ways of effectively teaching history to students who grew up with technology.

WORK TO BE DONE

While both organizations support teaching and have worked to bring together the teaching faculty from the two-year schools with the research faculty from the four year schools, there is

need to focus more on the lack of preparation for the study of history that students receive in the K-12 system. With emphasis in recent years on English and math, we see many students who have no skills in analyzing primary sources, critically reading and essay, or even thinking about reading a book. These skills we see as vital in a democratic republic and we need to tackle this lack of preparation.