

# The Professionalization of Two-Year College English Faculty: 1950–1990

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This essay chronicles the early efforts of two-year college English faculty to forge a professional identity.

Two-year colleges have long struggled with questions of status and identity. As recently as October 2004, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* featured a colloquy titled “The Identity of Community Colleges.” In “Two-Year Colleges Face an Identity Crisis,” one of a series of accompanying articles published that same week, Jamilah Evelyn wrote, “As politicians try to pump the institutions’ job-training components while hordes of high-school graduates—shut out of four-year institutions by rising academic standards and cramped capacity—flock to their open doors, the *identity and stature* of the nation’s 1,200 community and technical colleges have perhaps never been more in flux” (italics mine). Citing the complexity of their mission—part liberal arts, part occupational training, part remedial education, part general-equivalency-diploma preparation—Evelyn argues that even though two-year colleges have educated a governor, members of Congress, a space-shuttle commander, and a poet laureate, they are “at the bottom of academe’s hierarchy,” and, “when it comes to society at large, they get little respect.” This, of course, is not new.

For most of the twentieth century, two-year college faculty were heir to many of the same issues of status and identity that plagued their institutions. Because the majority of two-year colleges were under the control of local secondary-school districts—and faculty and administrations were often hired from local secondary schools—the professional identity of two-year college faculty was tied more closely to their local communities than to the disciplinary communities or professional organizations of their university colleagues. Not surprisingly—especially given their institutions’ teaching mission—it wasn’t uncommon for two-year college faculty, over time, to lose touch with scholarship, the currency of the discipline. In *The American Community College*, Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer note, “For most instructors, the longer they are at the college, the weaker their affiliation with an academic discipline becomes” (96). The cost of this disciplinary estrangement was never more evident to two-year college English faculty than

during the 1970s and 1980s, when they watched the field of rhetoric and composition virtually grow up around them. Because they weren't in a position to contribute to the growing body of scholarship—ironic when one considers that two-year college English faculty teach more composition courses than do university faculty—two-year college English faculty eventually found themselves in the awkward position of being “gatekeepers for standards they did not create and do not control” (Alford and Kroll v). In short, two-year college English faculty, through no fault of their own, paid a considerable price for not participating in the scholarship of an emerging field.

This lack of a clear national identity was remedied somewhat in the 1990s with the ratification of the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA). However, TYCA is a relatively recent phenomenon, and newcomers to the ranks of two-year college English faculty may not be aware of the rich, sometimes difficult, history that led to its emergence. This essay will explore the period from 1950 through 1990, focusing specifically on two crucial periods in the history of the professionalization of two-year college English faculty: the period during which the two-year college regional organizations and their oversight committee, the National Junior College Committee, were formed, and the period during which members of this oversight group realized that in order for two-year college faculty to truly claim their place in the fields of English studies and in NCTE, they would need to form a new organization. As this essay will show, although the regional organizations provided a rich professional home for many two-year college faculty, they were not able to provide faculty with a national voice in higher education. For that, they needed TYCA.

### **Early History with CCCC**

The beginning of the professionalization of two-year college English faculty can readily be traced to the mid-1960s with the birth of the six regional organizations and the National Junior College Committee (NJCC). But the story actually begins more than a decade earlier, with the formation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. In her 1977 history of CCCC, Nancy Bird notes that from the very beginning CCCC took care to involve two-year college faculty. Representatives from all of the junior colleges in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio were invited to participate in the April 1–2, 1949, Conference on College Freshman Courses in Composition and Communication in Chicago, the first meeting of what was to become CCCC (35). Within a few years CCCC started to recognize the unique needs of two-year college English faculty and began offering sessions specifically for them. The first to appear was a 1956 session titled “Communication in General Education in Technical Schools and Community Colleges,” which focused on the problems associated with teaching first-year composition and technical writing (Bird 63). Other sessions followed, and soon CCCC became one of the first disciplinary homes for at least a small group of two-year college English fac-

ulty. Unfortunately, because travel funds for two-year college faculty were relatively scarce, few were able to travel to CCCC. For this and other reasons—a heavy teaching load, lack of institutional support for professional development, and, in many cases, a lack of training to engage in scholarship—two-year college English faculty were not seen as viable members of a postsecondary disciplinary community. In her history of the two-year college regionals, Elisabeth McPherson writes that courses offered at junior colleges often didn't transfer to universities, and that junior college faculty were considered “second rate at best, refugees from the high schools who might be improved with a little help” (“Where” 93). She continues:

One of the earliest conferences I ever attended, in the midfifties, was at the prestigious university in my state. A few representatives of the university English department sat us down in a room [...] and condescendingly explained to us what college English was supposed to be. They asked us no questions and they didn't let us ask any. We didn't go home inspired; we went home angry. (93)

While two-year college faculty were told by some, in not so many words, that they didn't really belong in higher education, the public disagreed.

### **The Problem with Two-Year College English: Two Studies and a Conference**

The early 1960s witnessed both a rapid rise in the number of two-year colleges being built and in the number of students walking through their doors. Because a new breed of student was entering college, many with the intent to transfer, this phenomenon was of no small concern to university English faculty; consequently, both NCTE and CCCC helped sponsor two published reports and a conference, each with the purpose of examining the teaching of English in the two-year college and making recommendations for its improvement. The findings of these reports and the conference led to the formation of the two-year college regional organizations in 1965, the first official move to professionalize two-year college English faculty.

In November of 1963, Albert Kitzhaber, the incoming president of NCTE, published a report that served as a double-edged sword for two-year colleges: *The Two-Year College and the Teaching of English*. While it did bring to light a number of problems two-year college English programs were experiencing and initiated a joint effort by NCTE and CCCC to help out, it also proved especially harsh; and, because of both Kitzhaber's professional stature and the report's wide circulation, it no doubt had a devastating impact on the status of two-year college English faculty and their programs, for years, if not decades, to come. Referring to the two-year college as “one of the most remarkable phenomena of American education at the present time” (1), Kitzhaber cited the reasons for his report: the rapid growth in the number of two-year colleges, the rapid growth of their enrollment, the fact that two-thirds of full-time students at two-year colleges intended to transfer to four-year institutions, and the fact that all of these students and many terminal students were required to take one or two semesters of English. He wrote:

In light of these circumstances, therefore, it is clear that the state of English teaching in the nation's two-year colleges must be a matter of pressing concern to the entire English teaching profession, and in particular to the National Council of Teachers of English, as the largest and most comprehensive professional organization in our field. [. . .] We need to see whether there is something the profession and the Council ought to be doing to help in this enormous and complex enterprise—to identify whatever problems may exist, then to assist in working out solutions. (2)

Indeed, Kitzhaber found much that concerned him: using his own study and citing others, he argued that the split mission of the two-year college, which involved trying to meet the needs of both transfer and terminal students, was highly problematic; that students entering two-year colleges were academically inferior to those entering four-year colleges; that rates of attrition were “ruinous”; that very few faculty held PhDs; and that 75 percent of junior colleges were under the control of local secondary-school districts. This resulted in the “least desirable features of the schools—excessive workloads, unevenly prepared staffs, low professional status for teachers, often an unintellectual if indeed not an anti-intellectual atmosphere” (15).

Turning to the English programs themselves, Kitzhaber cited the predominance of remedial and subremedial courses to accommodate students who, having been turned away or discouraged from attending four-year colleges or universities, were now enrolling in community colleges. He commented on the low standards and expectations of these courses and their content, what he referred to as “mechanical drill of the most stupefying kind—endless workbook exercises on correct usage, study of spelling lists, punctuation rules” (8). He did acknowledge that a few junior colleges felt that not all of their students were low-level, and that some even thought they had enough advanced students to support offering an accelerated composition sequence; however, he offered this caveat: “one should not entirely rule out the possibility that this may sometimes be only another instance of the strong desire among many junior colleges to enhance their status by indiscriminately copying features of the four-year institutions” (11). Kitzhaber concluded that the study “presents enough evidence to enable us to identify a number of serious problems and raise several troublesome questions” (13).

Although Kitzhaber did offer recommendations—for example, he suggested, among other things, separate English sequences for terminal and transfer students—what stands out is his indictment of the English faculty and their courses at two-year colleges. And, given his prominence in the profession, his report likely did considerable harm to the discipline's perception of two-year colleges. Because he described their attrition rates as “ruinous,” their course content as consisting of “endless workbook exercises” and “mechanical drill of the most stupefying kind,” and their attempts to “enhance their status by indiscriminately copying features of four-year institutions,” and because he suggested that those teachers who came from high schools (the majority) were generally ill-prepared to teach the academic curriculum, the report became an indictment that had the potential to shape perceptions of two-year college English for generations. Indeed, if Kitzhaber's had

been the only voice heard, it would have been difficult for anyone to believe that anything worthy of the term “higher education” ever occurred there.

Fortunately, Richard Worthen, English chair at Diablo Valley College in California, didn’t remain silent about Kitzhaber’s analysis. In a follow-up report to the 1965 National Conference on the Teaching of English in the Junior College at Arizona State University in Tempe, where he heard Kitzhaber speak—and in preparation for which he had read Kitzhaber’s report—he wrote: “I have to say in all friendliness, to put some point to my remarks, that Al Kitzhaber’s report [. . .] takes the meat axe to us. I suggest that he urges onto us some metaphors out of the university life that are obviously beloved to him but that would, I fear, squeeze the juice out of us as an institution” (23). Worthen then addressed specifics. Regarding the lack of merit pay at two-year colleges, he wrote:

The junior college is a new kind of institution, native to the American ground, still evolving and very likely to make an important contribution to American democracy if it is allowed to develop its own character. We are very much inclined to keep our focus on teaching. As I read about the evolution of the multiversity, I get the impression that those who spend the least time teaching enjoy the most prestige and are the best paid. That’s a kind of reward for merit that we don’t care to emulate in the junior college. (24)

In short, Worthen was arguing for a new kind of institution with a distinct identity in American higher education, one that couldn’t be measured by the same criteria as American universities. Even though Kitzhaber’s criticism indicated a failure to understand this, his findings were correct in spirit: two-year colleges desperately needed help.

While Kitzhaber was compiling his report, in April of 1962 the executive committees of NCTE and CCCC met and commissioned a more comprehensive joint study to be carried out by an ad hoc committee chaired by two two-year college faculty members: Samuel Weingarten of Chicago City Junior College and Frederick Kroeger of Flint City Community College in Michigan. Citing the “phenomenal growth of the two-year college” and the accompanying predictions that by 1970, 75 percent of those who entered college would do so at a junior college, Weingarten and Kroeger set out to evaluate “the adequacy of [the] instruction in the skills of communication” (xi) at two-year colleges. Two surveys were sent out—one to English department chairs and one to English teachers—to all of the schools listed in the *Junior College Directory* and the *Junior College Index*. Faculty members at 239 colleges responded, among them 187 department chairs and 292 teachers. The study’s findings, published by NCTE in 1965 as *English in the Two-Year College*, were similar to, but less harsh than, Kitzhaber’s. Citing problems of student preparedness arising from the colleges’ open-admissions policies, curricular problems arising from the two-track system, and various other problems relating to the colleges’ close associations with secondary schools—heavy teaching load, large class size, and difficulty attracting and keeping good teachers—the committee made many recommendations, including this one related to professional organizations: “We recommend

that the present two-year college members of NCTE and CCCC take steps to establish affiliate organizations of two-year college teachers which will serve regional needs” (85). It was this final recommendation, that NCTE and CCCC help establish regional organizations, that took root, forming the regional system that still exists today under the umbrella of TYCA.

Professional interest in two-year college English during this period culminated in February of 1965, when NCTE and CCCC sponsored the Tempe Conference mentioned earlier. Participants included a number of established scholars (including Kitzhaber, Richard Braddock, and Edward P. J. Corbett), the chair and past chairs of CCCC, leaders of NCTE and MLA, and a number of two-year college English faculty and department chairs. Seventy-three faculty and administrators participated in the conference, the theme of which was now familiar: to identify and consider problems in two-year college English and propose possible solutions. Papers and findings from the conference were published by NCTE in Jerome W. Archer and Wilfred A. Ferrell’s *Research and the Development of English Programs in the Junior College: Proceedings of the Tempe Conference*.

Reactions to the conference were positive. James Squire, NCTE’s executive secretary and one of the attendees, commented that this conference marked a time when “two-year college teachers of English for the first time nationally met their colleagues from the universities in a serious discussion of professional issues” (qtd. in Hook 206). Two attendees, Robert Danielson, English chair at Grossmont College in California, and Fred Gwynn, English chair at Trinity College and Associate Director of English Programs at the MLA, were asked to write postconference reactions that would appear in the book. Danielson wrote, “I believe the major documents of the Tempe conference [. . .] all say one thing: Help! We in the junior college are actively and insistently seeking help from our professional colleagues in the colleges and universities; we are seeking help from our professional organizations” (110). Gwynn wrote, “The value of the ASU conference and report for me, and I hope for this audience, is that we must wake up, and we must catch up on junior college English” (117). While there were no specific recommendations for a new professional organization for two-year college English teachers—although Weingarten reiterated his call for a professional organization in his paper, which also appeared in Archer and Ferrell’s collection—the mandate from the conference was clear: two-year faculty needed help from NCTE and their four-year college and university colleagues. Clearly, this would prove to be a turning point for two-year college English faculty and their programs, and the beginning of establishing a national identity.

### **The Birth of the Regionals**

What followed was a busy time in the history of two-year college English. McPherson situates the birth of the regionals in the same era as Vietnam War protests, campus sit-ins, the burgeoning women’s movement, and the ongoing Civil Rights movement, all of which were motivated by the belief that “the underprivileged should

be cared for, those too weak to speak for themselves should be given a voice" ("Remembering" 137). These same beliefs were behind the two-year college movement, in which thousands of students who might previously have been denied a college education were flocking to their doors.

As a result of the aforementioned studies and the Tempe Conference, leaders of NCTE and CCCC were convinced of what they had suspected: two-year college English faculty needed and wanted help. On April 7, 1965, the CCCC Executive Council "approved a plan presented by NCTE Executive Secretary James Squire for a series of regional conferences. Jointly sponsored by NCTE and CCCC, these meetings were to be set up by the junior college representatives who had attended the Tempe meeting. NCTE/CCCC were to help with the planning and the funding, and supply main speakers for the conference" (Bird 91). McPherson writes that the idea for regional conferences took precedence over a national gathering, as travel funds for most two-year college faculty were in short supply; many more would likely be able to attend local meetings ("Remembering" 140).

The seven regional conferences took place in 1966 between February and April:

February 18–19	Loop Junior College, Chicago, Illinois
March 4–5	San Bernardino Valley College, San Bernardino, California
March 11–12	San Antonio College, San Antonio, Texas
March 18–19	Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, North Carolina
April 1–2	Cazenovia College, Cazenovia, New York
April 22–23	Clark College, Vancouver, Washington
April 22–23	Forest Park Community College, St. Louis, Missouri

McPherson writes that CCCC and NCTE, acting both as "midwives" and as "generous godparents," were very supportive of this first round of conferences, covering most of the expenses and providing nationally known keynote speakers ("Remembering" 140). These seven regional conferences were eventually combined to form six regions, as the groups that met in Chicago and St. Louis, because of their geographic proximity, combined to form one. The following six regions were chartered: the Northeast Conference, the Southeast Conference, the Midwest Conference, the Southwest Conference, the Pacific Northwest Conference, and the Pacific Coast Conference. (Although the boundaries were later redrawn and a seventh regional was added to accommodate California when TYCA was formed, this grouping is still mostly intact.)

In the midst of this first round of regional conferences, the 1966 CCCC met in Denver. At their March 23 meeting, the CCCC Executive Committee "approved a proposal for organizing six regional conferences on a four-year experimental basis as an integral part of CCCC" (Bird 91). NCTE and CCCC moved quickly to get the two-year regionals organized. In September, 1966, NCTE cre-

ated a temporary post at its headquarters—the Director of Two-Year College English Programs, filled by Richard Worthen—to coordinate the affairs of the two-year college regionals. On October 16–18 of that same year, CCCC and NCTE sponsored a meeting at headquarters with the six regional steering committee chairs, the six chairs of the spring conferences, the respective chairs of CCCC and the College Section, and a representative from the Modern Language Association (91). After three days of meetings, the group had drafted the by-laws for the Regional Conferences on English in the Two-Year College. CCCC also lent each of the regional organizations seed money to go toward future conferences until they became self-supporting enterprises. The movement to professionalize two-year college faculty was gaining momentum, and other advances were on the horizon.

With six regional organizations now in place, the next step was to create an oversight committee. In November, at the 1966 NCTE Annual Convention in Houston, the CCCC Executive Committee formally approved the creation of a National Junior College Committee (NJCC), a group that would oversee the activities of the regionals and publish a newsletter. (In 1979 the NJCC became the National Two-Year College Committee, and in 1986 the National Two-Year College Council.) This group consisted of seven members: an elected representative from each of the six regions and the editor of the newsletter. The six regionals held their first official conferences in the spring of 1967, this time “assuming complete responsibility for planning their own programs. The response of the participants was overwhelmingly enthusiastic” (Bird 92).

CCCC was quick to grant the new NJCC professional recognition. At the 1967 NCTE Annual Convention in Honolulu, the CCCC Executive Committee approved a constitutional change that granted all seven members of the NJCC an ex-officio voting seat on the CCCC Executive Committee. Increasing the EC’s size to thirty-five members, with one-fifth representing two-year colleges, concerned some. Bird writes:

Not every member of the committee felt comfortable with this decision, even though it passed unanimously. [. . .] However, the Executive Committee members were apparently convinced of the need to expand their circle to allow the two-year colleges a voice commensurate with their numbers. (92)

Within the span of two years, two-year college English faculty had achieved unprecedented gains in establishing a national presence: six regional conferences, a national group with elected representatives, and seven seats on CCCC’s Executive Committee. Firmly vested in a national organization, they now had a forum for voicing and addressing relevant issues.

Over the next two decades, the regional organizations all grew along their separate trajectories. Bird reported that between 1968 and 1975 the regional organizations “continued to function and, in some cases, flourish” (134). In 1968 more than twelve hundred people attended the six regional conferences, and by 1975–76, attendance had grown to fifteen hundred (134). Nell Ann Pickett, former editor of *TETYC*, remembers that two-year college English faculty had been isolated



from one another and the rest of the postsecondary community for so long that it took “several generations to get the feeling of belonging to a larger organization.” But as they grew and became self-supporting, the two-year college regional organizations came to be the professional home for many two-year college faculty. The regional organizations, other than through their elected representative who served on the NTCC, had little contact with NCTE, however. Most members did not belong to the national organization and had little interest in doing so.

### **The Crisis of Status and Identity**

Beginning in the 1980s, members of the NTCC felt a growing discontent with the limitations of being a CCCC committee. As such, they had no real voice within NCTE. However, while this was a matter of concern to those who worked on the national level, the majority of two-year college English faculty were very happy with their regional organizations and simply weren't interested in CCCC or NCTE. The experience of Paul Bodmer, former NTCC/TYCA chair and current NCTE Senior Program Officer for Higher Education in Washington, DC, will serve to illustrate how many at the time viewed both their regional organizations and the national groups, CCCC and NCTE. Bodmer, an English teacher at Bismarck State College in North Dakota, joined the Midwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College (MRC) in the early 1970s. From the beginning he saw the MRC, not CCCC or NCTE, as his “major professional development resource”:

While attending the regional conference and becoming colleagues and professional friends with the regular MRC attendees, I heard from some of the members about how cold and uninviting the national conventions of NCTE and CCCC were. Because the regional meeting was so rewarding, when circumstances placed the CCCC convention in a convenient locale for me, I chose not to go, not wanting to waste my time with a bunch of esoteric academics talking way above my interests (and possibly my head). In other words, I was rooted and happy in the regional and had no intention of going national. (“TYCA Breakfast” 1)

Bodmer's perception was not uncommon, which is one of the reasons most two-year college English faculty had little interest in NCTE. It's important to note, however, that members of the NTCC—those who had experience at the national level—felt strongly about maintaining ties to CCCC, even though the regional organizations were the professional home for the majority of two-year college English faculty. But in 1986, when Bodmer was elected chair of the MRC's Regional Executive Committee (REC), his trajectory diverged from that of most of his colleagues. His first national convention was the 1986 CCCC Annual Convention in New Orleans. He had expected not to enjoy himself, but to his surprise found it to be a “tremendously stimulating and exciting national convention” (1). What he did not find, however, was a community of two-year college English faculty. There was simply no forum for them to meet. Mark Reynolds, former editor of *TETYC*, tells a similar story:

We had a sense that there was no place for us on the national scene. Those of us who had been working nationally couldn't see any results. We met at NTCC, but had nothing to show for those meetings. Most of us found very little of interest or relevance to us as two-year college teachers at the annual NCTE conferences. We found more at the annual CCCC meetings because of our strong involvement with teaching composition, but even then, we had to take what we got there and make the applications ourselves to two-year college classrooms and students.

It was at this point in the history of NTCC, the mid-1980s, that regional leaders began talk of a national gathering. Bodmer writes that when he met with NTCC for the first time in New Orleans, he "joined the discussion that seemed most interested in maintaining a loose national framework that helped the regionals work" ("TYCA Breakfast" 2). He found that what was true in his region was also true in others, that members generally enjoyed their "parochial conferences" and had little interest in the national scene. But he also learned that faculty from all of the regions—given their teaching load, work with nontraditional students, and sense of alienation from the larger professional community—had similar concerns. Bodmer wrote of his first NTCC meeting: "Our conversations continued to come back to the idea that we gained so much from a national sense, that we thought our members would as well, so we toyed with the idea of a national two-year college convention as a one-time event" (1–2). Chuck Annal, then representative of the Northeast Region to the NTCC, also remembers talk of a national gathering:

When I served on NTCC as the northeast rep it was clear that two-year people were anxious to establish a more independent identity, since what they did was significantly different from what the CCCC people did. Probably the most dramatic expression of that feeling was the vote of NTCC to support the concept of a national conference. [. . .] What we conceived was a national version of the regional conference, with emphasis on good teaching practices in writing and literature. I'm not sure we felt we could pull this off, but felt it was time to make a dramatic statement to establish our separate identity. (E-mail)

Fearing a potential exodus of two-year college teachers, CCCC leadership had concerns about a national gathering of two-year college faculty. In a letter dated February 17, 1989, Annal, then chair of NTCC, wrote to Andrea Lunsford, chair of CCCC, laying out the reasons NTCC was pushing for a national conference. Annal reiterated that this was to be a one-time gathering and constituted no threat to NTCC's relationship with CCCC. He argued that a one-time conference would enable two-year college faculty to

draw a collective strength and begin to sense who we are as a group. Certainly the regional conferences have gone a long ways towards fostering this collegiality, and those of us who attend always come away with a sense of renewal about the profession. I know, however, that whenever I attend a national conference, like CCCC or NCTE, that sense of renewal is even stronger. As I come in contact with colleagues outside of my region, I realize that we really do have a national

identity as a group, an identity with very clear outlines that transcend our regional differences.

While the national meeting never occurred—finances were a concern, and some felt that CCCC's interest in working with NTCC had been rekindled—the concern Annal expressed, namely, that two-year college faculty needed a voice of their own, was gaining strength.

### **The First Two-Year College Breakfast**

While two-year college faculty occasionally presented and sat on panels at CCCC, there was no official forum for them to gather and network, which was precisely what they needed to establish a sense of national community. The situation for two-year faculty took a turn for the better when U.C. Berkeley's Donald McQuade became program chair for the 1990 CCCC in Chicago. McQuade was interested in helping raise the visibility of two-year college faculty and became the first CCCC program chair to develop a two-year college strand, where the sessions conducted by and for two-year college faculty were identified as such. McQuade also wanted to celebrate the silver anniversary of the two-year college regionals in Chicago the following spring. Before the NCTE Annual Convention was over in November, Annal had convinced Bodmer to coordinate the celebration. When Bodmer was back at his home in Bismark, he called McQuade to discuss their options. What emerged was the idea of a breakfast for all two-year college faculty.

The breakfast was held at the 1990 CCCC Annual Convention at the Palmer House in Chicago at seven o'clock Saturday morning. Even though Bodmer had mailed invitations to all faculty listed on the regional rosters and close to two hundred people had responded and picked up their tickets at the conference, because of the early hour he was concerned that not many people would show up. He need not have worried; a steady stream of people began arriving and, shortly after seven, the room was full. As previously agreed, Annal, as NTCC chair, would say a few words, and then Bodmer would welcome everyone. Bodmer remembers:

When I approached the microphone to greet everyone, it really hit me that here, in one place, at CCCC, was a cross-section of the professional English faculty members at two-year colleges across the country. My comment to the group was that I wished they all had the view I had, because now I could see a national body. For me, that was the real beginning of TYCA. ("TYCA Breakfast" 4)

The breakfast was so successful that instead of being a one-time event, the NTCC made it an annual event at CCCC, although now the costs are covered by attendees purchasing tickets.

The breakfast occurred at a time when the NTCC felt thoroughly disenfranchised, despite efforts by their four-year colleagues to bring them into the fold. It was this sense of invisibility, lack of a clear professional identity, and lack of a voice at the national level that led to the reform that was about to occur. And when

two hundred two-year college faculty were assembled at CCCC for the first time, it became clear, at least to some, that a national organization was the answer.

### **The Time for Change**

Two-year college English faculty had made enormous gains since the regional organizations were formed in the mid-1960s, but in the late 1980s the NTCC knew it was no longer able to meet the needs of its constituents. The original purpose of the NTCC had been to oversee the regional organizations and to act as a liaison to CCCC and NCTE. Therefore, the council was made up of a chair, six regional representatives, the editor of *TETYC*, the Executive Director of NCTE, and a liaison to the College Section. As noted earlier, the six regional representatives and the editor of *TETYC* sat on the CCCC EC as voting members. However, while all of these represented significant gains for two-year college English faculty, the NTCC was still a CCCC committee and had no real voice or status in NCTE. It had no revenue stream, hence no ability to develop initiatives or programs, nor did it have any strength in its bargaining position. In addition to its lack of status and voice within NCTE, it knew it had many disenfranchised faculty across the country. As long as it remained a committee of CCCC, a deeply embedded position within NCTE, the NTCC was powerless.

Well aware that two-year college faculty saw to the literacy training of almost half of America's undergraduates, members of the NTCC felt they deserved to sit at NCTE's table in a role that acknowledged the importance of U.S. community colleges: they wanted a recognized identity within NCTE, a direct voice in their own destiny, and a share in the leadership. It was a cause for which they were willing to fight. Yet there were a number of impediments to their achieving these goals: lack of awareness about two-year colleges and what they did, little funding for professional growth, failure to participate in the profession's scholarship, and, perhaps most damning of all, the self-defeating attitude of two-year college faculty themselves. Helon Raines, the person who coordinated what was to become the upcoming reform, wrote:

An unrecognized element of the profession, we have acted as oppressed groups often do, isolating ourselves from those with more prestigious positions and wearing our oppression like badges of honor.

In addition, this oppression image has fostered an even more insidious deterrent to our assuming full roles in education—we often are hostile to those among us who create the programs, who do research, and who speak out to the larger community. The oppressed oppressing one another is a common phenomenon, but one which we cannot afford. (104)

Clearly, the identity crisis two-year college English faculty were experiencing was the result of many forces, not the least of which was their perceptions of themselves. More accurately, though, this lack of a clear national identity arose from the

difficulty two-year college English faculty had trying to negotiate their roles as teachers in a professional community that privileges the scholar.

Raines issued a call to arms to both two-year college English faculty and to NCTE. Miles Myers, NCTE's Executive Director, responded, suggesting that NTCC recommend a new structure that would help them achieve their goal of a respected national identity. And in 1990 and 1991, they did just that. By the time Raines became chair of NTCC in November of 1991, the group knew that the time was right for change, and they had some clear ideas about what they wanted. Two-year college English faculty were sufficient in number and potential influence to carve out a respected national identity, and TYCA was their chosen vehicle. Although the creation of TYCA was more difficult than anyone anticipated—it took more than three years before it was officially ratified and another two before their inaugural celebration at the 1997 CCCC—two-year college English faculty finally had an organization whose achievements over the next decade would help establish them as a force in higher education. ◀

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