

# NEH Workshops for Community College Faculty

— Dave Bush

The National Endowment for the Humanities has sponsored week long workshops for community college faculty during the last three summers. Through the *Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshops for Community College Faculty*, participants attend lectures delivered by leading scholars, tour historic sites, and have the opportunity to undertake archival research.

Workshops are open to part-time and full-time faculty in the humanities and social sciences.

The NEH offers a \$500 stipend and additional funds to offset travel costs.

I have attended two workshops. In 2006, I flew to Ohio, and spent a week at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center studying the politics and culture of the Gilded Age. This workshop included lectures and discussions, access to the Hayes' archives, tours of Hayes' home and Cleveland's Millionaire's Row.

The next year, I spent a week (six hot and humid Southern days), at the University of Mississippi discussing "The Memory and Commemoration of the American Civil War." As part of this workshop, participants studied the monuments at Shiloh National Military Park and toured the Corinth Civil War Center.

Both workshops were well organized, informative, and directly applicable to my classroom teaching. In addition, I was able to exchange pedagogical methods with community college faculty from throughout the country and across disciplines.

There are two downsides to the *Landmarks* program which hit part-time faculty the hardest. First, most workshops are scheduled in the middle of the summer and therefore conflict with the summer semester. However, both years I was able to find a workshop offered during the break between my spring and summer classes.

The other downside is that the small stipend and travel allowance may or may not cover the costs associated with the workshop (books, room and board, and travel). The first year all my costs were covered by the stipend and travel money, but the second year, because of an expensive flight, I had a couple hundred dollars in out-of-pocket expenses. Some faculty I spoke with had the extra costs reimbursed from their college's staff development funds. And this may be an option for some part-time faculty.

Even with these two drawbacks, the workshops are excellent, and I plan to apply for workshops next summer.

Six workshops are being offered in 2008: "Concord, Massachusetts: A Center of Transcendentalism and Social Action in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," "African-American History and Culture in the Georgia Lowcountry: Savannah and the Coastal Islands, 1750-1950," "Henry Ford and the History of American Industry, Labor, and Culture," "Landmarks of American Democracy: From Freedom Summer to the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike," "Illustrating the Gilded Age: Political Cartoons and the Press in American Politics and Culture, 1877-1901," and "Revolution to Republic: Philadelphia's Place in Early America."

The application deadline for next summer is March 17, 2008.

For additional information on the workshops and to download an application, go to the *Landmarks*' website <http://www.neh.gov/projects/landmarks-college.html>.

— Dave Bush, a founding member of CPEA's executive council, is an adjunct history instructor in Louisville, Kentucky.

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"maximum" number of hours. Therefore, all hours over 30 are ignored, reducing one's final STRS retirement compensation, which is already paltry, by at least \$500 to \$600 a month.

Adult education teachers state-wide have long clamored for wages and benefits on par with contract teachers. Fortunately, in Monterey, owing to rigorous efforts by our teacher's association and owing to the placement of new administrators with a more humanistic bent, adult education salaries have increased so that full-timers now earn nearly \$50,000. Naturally, these gains were encouraging, in part because STRS has always pledged that final retirement compensation is based on a teacher's *highest annual salary*.

But the 30-hour-a-week definition means our retirement compensation is calculated on a fictitious limit of only \$31,400, regardless of how much we actually earn a year. This effectively turns all 40-hour-a-week employees into part-time employees.

Not even classified employees have their actual yearly salary "discounted" by \$20,000 or more when their retirement is computed. Therefore, under such a policy, gardeners and custodians can receive much better retirement benefits than adult education teachers. Yet the injustice even surpasses this absurdity: For if these full-time adult education teachers were granted Social Security benefits instead of STRS benefits, they would receive much more per month after retirement than through the STRS' pension, but they are caught in a dual-sided Catch-22: forbidden to participate in Social Security and required to join STRS.

In 2002, STRS established the Defined Benefit Supplement Account (DBS), which slightly improved the disparities that befall adult education instructors, but this supplement does not rectify the injustice inherent in this \$31,400 ceiling, for the DBS does not yield a dollar-and-cents equivalent to the tremendous dismissal of the actual hours we teach and the hundreds of dollars we lose every month after retirement. Moreover, the Defined Benefits Account, begun only a few years ago, was not retroactive. Hence, adult education teachers were never compensated for working under an injustice for decades.

Supposedly, the education code mandates equality for each class of teachers, yet in this case, adult education teachers who work *more than 30* hours are actually penalized. This occurs because the 30-hour limit was established to grant a full year's worth of service credit to adult education teachers who work *at least 30* hours a week. The negative result of this policy is that teachers who work *more than 30* hours do not receive full credit for their annual income. Never was there a more fitting example of the old adage, "Robbing Peter to pay Paul."

The faulty logic is clear if one considers how it would sound if retirement compensation were calculated in this fashion only for blacks or only for women or only for any other voiceless and powerless group. Moreover, could there be a greater insult to adult education teachers, who are clearly being marginalized as second-class employees and who are denied treatment equal to contract teachers and classified employees? How can retirement for contract teachers and all other employees be calculated



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