
Community College Corner

Reflections on a History

Robert D. Campbell

After working in the two-year college environment for twenty-nine years, I've now relocated to The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and so this will be my last column as Chair of the ACM Two-Year College Education Committee. It's more than fitting to use this opportunity to reflect on the auspicious history of this Committee.

Three people got together one evening during the SIGCSE symposium in Cincinnati in 1986, and the conversation among Dick Austing, John Impagliazzo and Joyce Currie Little centered on the next phase of action to take in association with the continuing emergence of two-year colleges as a factor in the higher education landscape. You see, for nearly a decade a small but visionary group had pursued this matter by way of sessions and workshops at SIGCSE symposia, even formulating and publishing two initial sets of guidelines via funding from SIGCSE. Determined to continue acting on their insights, the group now organized as a task force chaired by Joyce Currie Little, and was awarded funding support from the ACM Optional Contribution Fund. This seed money successfully launched the second decade of activity, and enabled the group to refine and pursue their thoughts, which came to focus on the computing curricula and associated matters unique to the two-year college setting. To this day, this vision is the tenet of the Committee's work.

Significant funding by the ACM SIG Board to the ad-hoc Two-Year College Education Committee soon supported this mission. Karl Klee and Helene Chlopan now joined the original group of three. John Impagliazzo chaired the Committee, which had the special purpose of producing a comprehensive set of curriculum guidelines. The Committee created the Two-Year College Computing Curricula Task Force, with the five members of the Committee constituting its Task Force Steering Committee. This Task Force created a far-reaching, forward-thinking, and extensive set of curricular materials. For the first time then, faculty and administrators in associate-degree granting institutions had computing curricula guidelines specific to their unique environment; the ACM Education Board produced and endorsed this effort.

In 1991, the Education Board, chaired by Joe Turner, chartered the Two-Year College Education Committee as a standing committee. Since John Impagliazzo was not a member of a two-year college, he relinquished his position

as committee chair and Karl Klee became its new leader concurrent with the Committee's new stature. The Committee began to pursue a breadth of activities in service to its mission, engaging many members of its constituency in a variety of initiatives. This established what would become a well-deserved reputation as one of the most prolific units of the Education Board.

In subsequent years, the Committee membership evolved: Helene Chlopan leaves (1993); Bob Campbell joins (1993); John Impagliazzo leaves (1996); Clare Smith serves a six-month term (1996); Fay Cover joins (1996); Joyce Currie Little leaves (1999); Elizabeth Hawthorne joins (2000); Dick Austing leaves (2001); and Fay Cover leaves (2005). Throughout the years the Committee members have benefited from and appreciated the ongoing support of the Education Board, its many colleagues in SIGCSE, the ACM Headquarters staff and leadership, and of course the many two-year college faculty and administrators who constitute a vital and vibrant segment of higher education.

I urge readers to visit the Committee's website at www.acmtc.org to take advantage of the many resources assembled there. The most recent initiative has been the development of curriculum guidelines for transfer programs in computer engineering. In addition, the Committee constructed narrative to edify website visitors on the distinctions among the computing sub-disciplines; this facilitates the use of the posted two-year college guidelines in software engineering, computer engineering, computer science, information systems, and information technology. A collection of dissemination products from Committee activities is readily available as well.

My fourteen years as a member of the Two-Year College Education Committee, the last six serving as Chair, have been filled with memorable and rewarding experiences. My very good fortune has been the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with the extraordinarily talented, dedicated, and gifted individuals who had the wisdom and foresight to establish the Committee initially and the drive to solidify a foundation of accomplishment. I want especially to thank Karl Klee personally for his leadership, mentoring and friendship, which I will always value and hold in the highest esteem. I extend my very best wishes to those who will continue to carry forward the vision and mission of the ACM Two-Year College Education Committee. As I exit my direct involvement with the two-year college environment, the words of Joyce Currie Little capture my feelings beautifully: "We know you don't ever 'leave the love of the two-year college level of education.' It is the most important aspect of the American dream of being able to better oneself and move up in the world. ... That major purpose always rang true to my students, and I came to appreciate it more because of them."

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Education Committee