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Judy Sharkey, Associate Professor of Education, travels to Columbia

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Judy Sharkey

Associate Professor of Education - College of Liberal Arts

Professor Sharkey traveled to Colombia in July to establish a collaboration with faculty colleagues at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (UDFJC) in Bogotá.

Community Literacies in Language Teacher Education: Colombian and US Perspectives and Possibilities



Judy Sharkey, center, with Colombian colleagues Dr. Adriana González Moncada of la Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín (left) and Dr. Amparo Clavijo Olarte of the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá.

With funding from the CIE and the Center for Humanities, I traveled to Colombia this summer to begin an international collaboration with Dr. Amparo Clavijo-Olarte at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (UDFJC) in Bogotá, Colombia. Our project, "Community Literacies in Language and Literacy Teacher Education," grew out of our conversations at the Second Annual Conference on Professional Development for Foreign Language Teachers at the Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia (August, 2008). While taking advantage of the Medellín metro and metro cable system, we discussed the challenge of preparing teachers to serve successfully our culturally and linguistically diverse schools in a time of increased standardization, particularly in testing and curriculum. We were inspired by two of the community initiatives in Medellín: the megalibraries project and the "metro culture" campaign, and our conversation turned to how we could develop a collaborative project that emphasized the importance of local knowledge in teacher education, a project that would integrate more community-based field experiences and opportunities into our courses so that our students would see their urban communities as rich resources for curriculum.

My summer 2009 trip allowed us to begin formalizing our collaboration, moving from shared interests to joint activity. During an amazing two weeks in Bogotá, we toured four major libraries in the city and began drafting community investigation assignments for students. With the help of several of Dr. Clavijo's students, we formed "school barrio" teams and did preliminary language and literacy investigations within a three-block radius of our assigned schools. We reconvened several days later, shared our initial findings, and discussed next steps. Drawing on my work in Manchester, I gave a talk to the graduate faculty in the applied linguistics program at UDFJC on the role of community-based pedagogies in teacher education.

Our collaboration will continue in a number of ways including presentations at the Colombian Teachers of English Conference in early October, Dr. Clavijo's visit to UNH in late October, and co-designing a summer course on community literacies to be taught at both institutions. We would like to include more UNH and UDFJC students and faculty in the project through course work and joint investigations, and we are exploring ways to achieve this goal.



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