

**2015 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD SUSTAINER
RECIPIENT**

Dena K. Shonts, Central Piedmont Community College



Since joining the Student Life staff at Central Piedmont Community College in 2004, DENA K. SHONTS, M.A., has embodied the college's growing support for academic service-learning and co-curricular community engagement. From her time as a student at CPCC working in student government to her current role as Director of Service-Learning, Shonts has worked passionately to create meaningful opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to connect, learn, and serve with the Charlotte community. As one colleague said, "Dena is truly the face, the voice, the heart and the soul of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement at CPCC."

What began as an office of one (Shonts) on the college's central campus is now one of the leading community college service-learning programs in the state, with four, full-time community engagement staff supporting all six CPCC campuses. Under her leadership, CPCC's service-learning team provides faculty development, establishes community partnerships, cultivates student leadership, and coordinates numerous campus-wide community service events. She has worked with more than 50 instructors from departments and disciplines as diverse as human services, biology, and welding. She has cultivated relationships with 100 community partners and instituted an annual volunteer fair and partner appreciation event. Her teams also oversees a community-based work study program that hires, trains, and places more than 25 students each semester; and coordinates large-scale, campus-wide service opportunities like the MLK Day of Service, alternative breaks, poverty simulations, and Service in Action events.

Shonts chairs her school's campus-wide Service-Learning Steering Committee, and she is an active supporter of the North Carolina Campus Compact network. Shonts served three years on staff conference planning committees, and CPCC hosted the network's CSNAP Student Conference in 2013. Shonts is currently part of a network-wide task force of community college staff who are working to develop a set of community engagement metrics appropriate to the community college setting.

Shonts' efforts have helped Central Piedmont appear on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll in six of the last seven years the award was given, making CPCC the only community college in our state so distinguished. The school was just one of just two North Carolina community colleges to make the Honor Roll in 2014.

Colleagues agree that Shonts deserves no small credit for this focus on engagement. "She has added so many programs to CPCC and has helped us grow as an institution," said one nominator, "creating a true community college experience that encompasses not only academics, but a desire to make our community better."

While a student at CPCC, Shonts received several honors, including the President's Award, on the way to receiving her associate's degree in business administration. She went on to earn her bachelor's in business administration at Queens University of Charlotte, and she completed a Master's of Arts in education at Western Carolina University.