

College of Arts and Sciences
Diversity Committee
Professor Douglas K. Benson Award

Biography

DOUGLAS K. BENSON

Doug Benson grew up in the high green mountains of Taos, in northern New Mexico, where Latinos and American Indians have formed the ethnic majority for centuries. As a child, he began to notice that his friends were profiled in stores, schools and traffic. He would not understand why until much later. It was there that he got his first exposure to Spanish.

Dr. Benson received the B.A. in Spanish and French from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces in 1966, after two initial years studying chemistry and physics. He also met his future wife Cecille there; they celebrated 50 years of marriage in August 2015. He holds a Ph.D. in Spanish and French Literature (1974) from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. It was during his university experiences that he began to expand his growing awareness of the cultures of Spanish-speaking peoples and to become involved in their issues.

For eleven years he taught Spanish at Hastings College in Nebraska. He was almost the only person in Hastings who spoke Spanish at first, but gradually members of immigrant families began to contact him and attend his classes.

In 1980 he was hired by the Department of Modern Languages at K-State and almost immediately made contacts with multicultural faculty and staff who generously invited him to participate in the university's diversity work. Some of these activities include:

- 1984-87:** Development Committee for the American Ethnic Studies Secondary Major Program, served on Governance Board until it became a department in 2013.
- 1989-1999:** Charter member of the President's Commission on Multicultural Affairs.
- 1995-2002:** Planning Committee for the Kansas Regents (now Michael Tilford) statewide Conference on Diversity and Multiculturalism in the University Classroom.
- 1996-2012:** Charter member of KSU Tilford Group on multicultural course transformation.
- 1997-2009:** Co-chair (with Candice Hironaka) of Community Cultural Harmony Week (formerly Racial Ethnic Harmony Week founded by K-State student Barbara Baker in 1988).
- 1999-2003:** Faculty advisor for the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO).
- 2001:** Founding member of Alianza.

Dr. Benson has published some 30 articles and book chapters on the post-Civil War poetry of Spain, Chicano poetry of the Southwest, and language teaching, and has presented more than 60 professional papers and workshops in the U.S. and abroad. He was promoted to full professor in 2004, and has received awards for teaching as well as service to multicultural students, including the Commerce Bank Presidential Awards for Excellence in Teaching (1999) and for Service to Underrepresented Students (2000), the Dr. Ron and Rae Iman Outstanding Faculty Award for Teaching (K-State Alumni Association, 2008), and the university's highest teaching award, the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars (2009-present).

The Professor Douglas K. Benson Award is a \$500 to \$1,000 student scholarship for the 2021-2022 academic year. Eligible candidates are currently enrolled full-time students in the College of Arts and Sciences with a 2.0 GPA or higher. The scholarship recipient must attend K-State as an undergraduate student during the 2021-2022 academic year and have made contributions to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging on campus.

With this scholarship, the College of Arts and Science, through the Diversity Committee, honors Dr. Benson for his tireless advocacy on diversity issues at KSU and beyond.

Required application materials

- A. A resume that includes: Personal contact information including K-State e-mail address; degree pursued, including major, minors, cumulative GPA, and year in school; scholarships and awards received; activities; and work experience. Resume help is available at the following link:
<https://www.k-state.edu/careercenter/students/resumesandcvts/index.html>
- B. Any form of expression (essay, picture, drawing, dance, music, etc.) representing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. If an essay is submitted, the essay should be no longer than two pages with 1.5 line spacing.
- C. A summary, between 150 and 200 words, describing the student's appreciation for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in a global world.

Please submit your complete application (A+B+C) to cas-diversity@ksu.edu no later than 4 p.m. on Friday, March 18, 2022.

By submitting this application, students allow us to verify their academic standing at Kansas State University.