IIPD grant recipients must report on grant-funded activities in order to remain eligible for future IIPD grant program consideration. All grant recipients are required to submit a summary report of the completed project or activity to the Grants Department at the time that they submit their IIPD Reimbursement Form.

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Date IIPD Award was received: March, 2016

Purpose of Grant: The 2016 Annual Conference of the Northeastern Political Science Association (NPSA), November 10th -12th, 2016, Boston, MA, USA

1. Describe the new avenues of instruction, including changes in curriculum, teaching strategies or other changes that are resulting from your grant-funded activity.

   It is all about engaging students. There are different approaches that we polisci instructors typically take to teaching our courses. There can be a thematic versus a historic approach, or a more global versus focusing only on the United States approach. Against what I had believed as a principle of consistency, an instructor does not need to stick with only one or two avenues throughout a semester. He or she can alternate those different approaches depending on the areas to be covered. Take the course of American Government for example, the foundations such as the US Constitution can be approached from the thematic/conceptual perspectives; civil rights/liberties can be approached from historical views; and the institutions and political behaviors can be approached from global/comparative lenses. In other words, instructors need to be flexible in choosing delivery approaches. And that should be done in accordance with the content of materials. Furthermore, flexibility entails a teacher’s ability to seek and create teaching moments in class. Sometimes, being spontaneous can be useful. In fact, improvise and you can find teaching moments.

   That said, no matter which approach is adopted, it ought to be incorporated with the inquiry method of instruction, by which I mean the students should arrive at an understanding of concepts by themselves. But questions ought to be asked to arouse curiosity first. Then, students are led to explore for answers on their own. Later they would present them in oral or printed format. They were able to use for their presentation USA TODAY newspapers on the GRCC campuses, but that newspaper is not available anymore due to budget cut. I learned from other schools in this conference that students there are more encouraged to build research skills with electronic devises. They are instructed to not just explore but also construct surveys or even create websites. It seems that electronic devises are not only for teaching, but also for learning. It
is definitely something I’d research for a new avenue. Indeed, electronic devises should not be regarded as nothing but disruptive in class (as discussed below).

2. How will the grant-funded activity result in an impact on student learning and enhancements to student success?

Certainly, the bottom line is how student learning may be enhanced. While we try to improve teaching ourselves, we should never lose sight of student learning as the end result. Some scholars in the conference talked about the decline in the profession of political science, which is evidenced by the low student enrollment and the cutting down of faculties. With that in mind, I can see a lack of motivation in our current students. Although motivational issue is now always easy to define, we all know it when we see it-- unmotivated students have an attitude that seems to say: “I don’t care.”

Well, it is imperative now to spark their interest before and while we conduct teaching. Listening to classroom lectures can be difficult because their attention spans are way shorter (somewhere it says that sustained attention is about 10 minutes on the average). I learned that a few things can be done during a class period. For example, instructors may have students participate in a debate about a sensitive and controversial issue or play a video to enlighten a certain concept that is too abstract to comprehend. Changing pace of lectures and combining lectures with stories are also effective in attracting and holding their attentions.

Along with the motivational problem, distraction can be another one. Students nowadays can’t resist the temptation of electronic devises. Perhaps I will need to emphasize classroom behavior with a special note on electronic devises. That is to ban them. However, I doubt that it can really stop students in that some of them in their adolescent years just can’t help but. It will obviously bring out disciplinary issues which I always hate to get involved.

Nevertheless, if we change the angle, electronic devises could be guided to affect students positively. How about making them into cooperative and collaborative learning, in which students can work together with instructors? In fact, I tried this technique in my classrooms before. Students were called upon to google answers and read ebook chapters. Along this line of thought, I will do more, including assigning reading and home work digitally. Of course, it gives rise to another question: Do students understand and retain what they are reading digitally as well as they do paper texts? I hope so, so long as it is carefully planned and executed. All in all, the purpose is to change their attitude and make them aware that the responsibility for learning rests with them.

3. What steps are you taking to assess the impact of this activity on student learning?

A direct way of assessing the impact is to observing positive outcomes, or lack of it, in students’ willingness to take ownership of their own education. If there is such willingness, then I should be able to see the positive impact. That is when I sense the students’ heightened intellectual curiosity, motivated attitudes, and emotional connection to the course materials.

Another way is formal one, and that is the writing assignment for comparison. In my FPE, I indicate that two short essays are assigned at the onset and the end of semester so that students
demonstrate their knowledge of certain topic. The intervening variable is the teaching strategies I learned from the conference. This before-after comparison is old fashioned but effective. With a rubric, I will compare them to see any improvement, or lack of it, in their understanding, reasoning, and analysis.

4. How are you engaging others in the learning process and disseminating activity results with the wider campus community?

**NOTE:** If shared learning activities have not yet taken place, an addendum to this report must be filed with the Grants Department describing shared learning activities prior to applying for another IIPD grant, as required by IIPD Guidelines.

IIPD has a website where grant reports can be posted. I believe this venue of dissemination is terrific with wider campus community. I will still share with my colleagues in the department whatever experience I feel valuable and valued. This can be done in face to face meetings or chats or email.

5. Describe how the grant-funded activity is supporting the objectives of your department and your existing job responsibilities.

The objective of the Department of Social Sciences is to make sure students meet the requirement of graduation. Therefore, the department needs to graduate them into the society to make a living. Well at the same time, it is also the duty of the department to make them civic-minded for living a meaningful life. My job is tied with these goals. I see myself as a vehicle in the department to create and reinforce these values. In this regard, along with my colleagues, we are collectively responsible for our students to realize their responsibilities and empowering them to serve the communities and the nation.

6. How has this grant helped in fostering your professional development goals?

In my 2016-2017 FPE plan, I stated that I would attend this conferences to find better ways to foster my professional development. Indeed, this conference has made me realize that there are much room for improvement in my teaching strategies and methods. Equally, the kind of connection I established during the conference enables me to learn from counterparts of different regions. Networking through conferences promotes exchange of ideas.

7. Please add any other comments you would like to include in this report.

None.