Grand Rapids Community College Foundation
Instructional Improvement and Professional Development (IIPD) Grant Report Form

IIPD guidelines require that any individual who receives an IIPD grant must submit a report on their activities within 60 days of completion of the activities. This report must be received by the GRCC Grants and Resource Development Officer in order to be considered eligible for an IIPD grant in a subsequent year. Submit your report to the Grants and Resource Development Officer, mezzanine level, College Park Plaza Building.

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Date of IIPD Award (insert year award was received):

October, 200_ March, 2008_

Purpose of Grant: To participate in Labour Crossings: World, Work and History, International Conference, assess the impact of globalization on the indigenous people of Botswana, and examine human impact on the natural landscape

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Please respond to the following questions related to the activity for which you received grant funding and attach your report to this form.

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

The ways in which this particular activity has resulted in positive changes relating to matters associated with curriculum are numerous, but perhaps the most significant change is the addition of a new geography course to the curriculum, Sustainability in the Face of Globalization: Southern Africa. Though this has been approved as a seminar (study abroad/hybrid) course, which will first take place in the Summer of this year, it is anticipated to be offered every other year. Below is a brief description of the study abroad component of this new course:

_The field experience is based upon extended fieldwork that has taken place a number of times in southern Africa over the past three years. Students will be able to engage in “doing geography” by experiencing an active role on the cultural landscape. Visiting a rural Shenganni village that only received electricity in 2007, walking the streets of Soweto where race riots took place in the 1970s, close-up viewing of the truly majestic African wildlife and their interaction with their environment from a Land Rover in the Bushveld, and trekking to the tip of the Cape of Good Hope, which separates the Indian Ocean from the Atlantic are just a few items on the projected itinerary that provide students with a way to integrate their knowledge gained in the classroom and online to the real world, and apply critical thinking skills that can be applied elsewhere during this era of globalization._

Revised 2/07
Tentative Itinerary

Day 1: Travel by air to South Africa
Day 2-3: Explore the greater Johannesburg area in an effort to understand South Africa’s Apartheid world. The life world perspectives of White Afrikaaners are examined by an in-depth visit to the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. By the same token, life in the Black community of Soweto is investigated with visits to the home of Nelson Mandela and the Hector Pieterson Apartheid Museum included.
Day 4-7: Explore the Bushveld, including its flora and fauna, of northeastern South Africa by taking part in a safari led by licensed guides and trackers.
Day 8-10: Travel by air to the southern fringes of the continent and explore the Capetown vicinity. Students will visit the Robben Island prison where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated, examine the coastal geography of the Cape Peninsula, investigate the urban geography of Capetown, and explore the viticultural landscapes of southern South Africa.
Day 11: Return by air to Grand Rapids

In addition to this course, instruction in world regional geography, cultural geography, and physical geography has been enhanced through the introduction of new content knowledge gained while in southern Africa. For example, my interviews with indigenous people of the Kalahari has provided insight concerning their world views. A visit to a lion captive breeding program not only enabled me to refresh my studies in this area, but also further develop my skills in matters biogeographic and make a contact for possible internship opportunities for students in Zambia. Dialogue with a Dutch missionary enabled me to gain an understanding of the efforts made by the West in diffusing Christianity to the residents of a relatively undeveloped region. Time spent in a hospital allowed me to acquire knowledge of illness, disease, and health care systems throughout Subsaharan Africa. And conferring with academic colleagues enabled me to share ideas concerning sustainability, development, cultural imperialism, and changing landscapes throughout the Third World. All of these learnings are added to my courses, for they undergo continual modification and revision. Moreover, these courses are supported by the knowledge gained from these activities and illustrated with photographs of landscapes, both natural and cultural, that I’ve studied, traversed, and explored. Geography is not static; it is dynamic and ever changing, and these activities are essential to remain up-to-date and maintain a high level of credibility.

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

Students will benefit substantially in a number of ways from this activity. The most obvious positive result is that they will be able to learn from the knowledge and experiences that I will share, both in the classroom and in public forums. Yet, perhaps the most significant impact will be on those students that enroll in the South Africa study abroad course. Students will learn much through online instruction before leaving to go across the Atlantic where they will explore much of South Africa for a very low cost. In fact, with me they will experience more of Africa in 12 days than most people will see in a month. Not only will they be able to consume this new knowledge by doing geography, and not only will they integrate their learning from books, discussions, and observations of the landscapes into an analytical framework for critical thinking and problem solving, they will develop leadership skills, a normal outcome of study abroad experiences, which will bolster their levels of success throughout their lives.

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

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The impact of this activity on student learning is being assessed both subjectively and objectively. In an objective manner, students are examined with regard to these topics, as continual revision of lectures and examinations has become an essentiality in some geography courses, and part of that revision is based upon knowledge gained by attending conferences and engaging in foreign fieldwork. This is particularly the case in *World Regional Geography*, which happens to be one of the highest demand courses because of its requirement for a number of undergraduate degrees at GVSU, Ferris, MSU, Davenport, Western, and others. In the *Cultural Geography* course, students find the discussions of women’s empowerment issues in Africa, Apartheid, and ethnic diversity in South Africa to be particularly captivating, as has been evidenced by essays students have written, which demonstrate a substantial depth of understanding. In the *Physical Geography* course, students have been enthralled by oral descriptions and illustrated lectures on African wildlife and the ways in which the complexities of the natural environment are intertwined to create distinctive biomes, often affected by humans as agents of change. New laboratory exercises and revised exams reveal much about how this added material to the course has been digested, analyzed, and displayed. In addition to examinations, however, I find through surveying students, they believe they are better able to understand more about particular places and problems associated with them, when they are able to relate various facts to my stories and photographs.

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 Office describing shared learning activities prior to applying for another IIPD grant, as required by IIPD Guidelines.

I have engaged in dialogue about these things with colleagues in the Social Sciences Department and beyond. I am involved in college and community forums (e.g., Black History Symposium and Conference of the Americas), which incorporate discussions of these matters. Additionally, I offered a guest lecture in a class on African American History that enabled students to compare the experiences of American Blacks with South African Black and Coloured people during Apartheid. This proved to be enlightening to many because I was able to offer some special insight concerning the perspectives of Blacks and Coloureds in both urban and rural regions of South Africa, which was gained from a number of interviews, in addition to the viewpoints of American Blacks in the rural South and Urban North. This lecture sparked a number of questions and comments, and I am considering preparing it for a conference presentation.

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

My pledge to provide “a Harvard education at a K-Mart price” has not been challenged, and it is imperative that I keep this goal in focus, for the Social Sciences Department is committed to providing the best quality education that can be offered, and students are not short-changed. My duties are principally devoted to teaching geography, and performing this task in an era of globalization requires continual professional development in the form of conference participation and world travel. When my C-3 funds were exhausted, I used my own funds to engage in research in Mexico several times, as well as India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China, and Vietnam. I also used my own funds to participate in conferences throughout the U.S. This is the type of activity I am compelled to engage in, in order to maintain an extraordinary level of teaching effectiveness, and that is a principal goal I continue to pursue. Moreover, this activity supports our efforts to continue to internationalize the
curriculum as we seek to develop an International Studies major that will rely on study abroad experiences. The South Africa study abroad course is a reality, as is one on Mexico, and we hope to add a service learning course in Vietnam. The point is that we go outside the traditional classroom to engage in learning so that we can be the best teachers in the social sciences that we can be----and we seek to show our students how to excel as well.

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

My own professional development goals have developed considerably as a result of taking part in this activity. As GRCC's only geographer, I am tasked with learning all about the world and everything in it, and because my education and research experience cover both the realms of physical and human geography, confronting people and places face-to-face enhances my understanding and ability to determine "the why of where." The more I learn about different parts of the world, the more I realize what little I know. My FGIP refers to conference presentations and international travel with the intention of engaging in foreign fieldwork as being essential for professional development. I am convinced these goals are sound, and my efforts to achieve them have been realized at great benefit to the campus community and myself. This grant has opened my eyes more to the social geography of indigenous societies in Subsaharan Africa, the role of women in Botswana and South Africa, and the nature of study abroad program development in the Third World. New study abroad geography courses under the framework of Sustainability in the Face of Globalization have been added to the curriculum in Mexico and South Africa. This new curriculum enables students to open their eyes to parts of the world they would likely never see otherwise, and in the case of Subsaharan Africa, an undeveloped region quite different than the U.S., students are able to gain experiences and develop unique perspectives about environmental, cultural, medical, and political matters that will spark their development as leaders when they return to the U.S.