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

Report Form

Name: Dr. Robert M. Hendershot  
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Date of IIPD Award (insert year award was received):  March 2011

Purpose of Grant:

To facilitate my participation and presentation at the 10th Annual Transatlantic Studies Association Conference at the University of Dundee, Scotland, UK (and related book project).

Please answer the following questions. Attach additional documentation if necessary:

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 processes of researching, writing, and presenting my scholarship through publication and conferences have always informed my teaching. Having these scholarly experiences allows me to better serve my students as I guide them in their own learning, research projects, and presentations.

And furthermore, attending this conference allowed me to access cutting-edge scholarship and research that will be incorporated into each of my history classes.

Finally, I also plan to offer a seminar course on the historical influence of the Anglo-American Special Relationship upon the underdeveloped world. Students in this specialized course will study the impact that the relationship has had upon each partner’s foreign policy, and how this impact has shaped American and British diplomacy and military action around the planet and over time. Particular case studies will include the late-nineteenth century Great Rapprochement that occurred over Venezuela, the twentieth century partnership during the world wars, the cold war era divergences caused by the Suez Crisis in Egypt and the American war in Vietnam, and more recent cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq. Students in this course will read analyses by historians and political scientists (their reading list will conclude with the forthcoming volume mentioned above), and they would also be able to pursue their own research on a topic related the themes of the course. The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Archives will be a particularly valuable resource for students taking this seminar course.

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

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In addition to the points made above, student learning will be assessed in a number of ways. Going beyond assessment of their performance on exams, quizzes, and research papers, I will also use student feedback forms (administered at multiple points throughout the semester) to assess their comprehension and analysis of course information.

Furthermore, attending various sessions and workshops at the Transatlantic Studies Conference provided me with the latest scholarship in the field of transnational history and the history of the Atlantic World in general. I am now able to review and assess the content of the college's various world history course offerings. The studies of international relations and the roles of race, gender, ethnicity, and class that were be explored at the TSA Conference will consequently become part of the social science curriculum here at the college and thus help students to develop global perspectives on important issues (including international diplomatic systems and alliances, trade, diversity, conflict and peace building, energy, sustainability, and human rights).

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

Following the publication of my book about the Anglo-American Special Relationship in late 2008, I was very pleased by the positive reactions of other scholars of transatlantic relations. Especially gratifying was the invitation I received to participate in a new book project with some of the top academics in my field. Coordinated by Prof. Alan Dobson of the University of Dundee (and President of the TSA), this volume will explore the contemporary state of the unique bilateral relationship shared by the United Kingdom and the United States. Each chapter will explore a different aspect of the Special Relationship, such as nuclear connections, economics/trade, diplomatic partnerships, and cooperation within the intelligence community. In particular, I was asked to contribute the chapter on the influence of perceived cultural bonds within the relationship. I enthusiastically accepted this invitation, since it provides me with the opportunity to extend my analysis of perceived cultural connections into the current era of international relations.

Rutledge Publishing has accepted our joint proposal, and the book contract has been signed. The other contributing authors and I will submit the final versions of our chapters by October, and the resulting volume should be released in 2012.

Part of the plan for the book project was for each of the authors to present a draft of their chapter at this July's TSA conference at Dundee University. This way, the authors obtained a detailed understanding of each other's work, received valuable feedback, and were able to coordinate the themes of our book. We also conducted several roundtable discussions during the conference, thus allowing us to share our work with all conference participants and benefit from their comments as well.

In addition to the publication of the book discussed above, I plan to discuss my own work and the other scholarship I will be exposed to at the conference with my colleagues here at GRCC. We in the Social Science Department are always keen to learn about one another's work and the fresh ideas within our various subfields.

Revised 10/09
4. Describe how the grant-funded activity is supporting the objectives of your department and your existing job responsibilities.

Any activity that increases one’s knowledge of their field and allows them to make a contribution to that field would fit with the goals and objectives of the Social Science Department.

As a historian here at GRCC, I have the responsibility of making contributions to my field while also remaining well apprised of recent relevant scholarship. I also have the responsibility of making my students knowledgeable of the most up-to-date research and analyses available. Attending and presenting at the TSA Conference allowed me to fulfill these responsibilities.

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

In my FGIP, I stated my intent to attend academic conferences that are relevant to my field of Anglo-American foreign policy and relevant to my work as the college’s world historian. I also stated my intention to continue being an active scholar, researcher, and writer. This grant has helped me to fulfill each of these professional development goals.