

Title of Grant: Creating Support for Teaching World History

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Abstract:

More frequent, productive communication and collaboration is needed among faculty focused on teaching a dynamically evolving World History curriculum. I proposed that I assume a leadership role in the VCCS to address this need. In preparation, and as the first step of a long-term project, I request support to attend a conference of the World History Association, an organization dedicated to scholarship, teaching, and joint ventures to develop and refine K-16 courses on global history.

Actual Outcomes:

1. Grant funds enabled me to participate in a week long World History Association Annual Conference in London in July 2008. I attended approximately fifteen presentations or roundtable discussions led by well-known, published authors and professors from around the world. One of my aims this summer was to develop and begin to hone my own world civilizations survey course following discussion of best practices with experts in the field. I feel I made considerable progress during this intensive week to develop a curriculum that offers students an opportunity to gain the international perspective they need to live and work in the global environment.

2. In October 2008, at the VCCS Social Sciences Peer Conference in Richmond, I chaired a roundtable discussion, abstract as follows:

Strategies and Resources for Teaching World History: A Roundtable Discussion

World history continues as a rapidly developing field of history with an increasing number of sections offered at seventeen of the twenty-three colleges within the VCCS. Yet, many who teach the History of World Civilizations have not taken a single world history course. Thus history faculty are often faced with the challenges of independently developing a coherent world survey narrative for the classroom. Roundtable participants shared ideas, strategies, and resources, and discussed the common problems of approach, selectivity, and coverage with those currently teaching, or who are considering teaching, the world survey.

Participants in the session discussed texts, syllabi, strategies, resources, and challenges inherent in the teaching of global history courses. I distributed copies of World History Association recommended syllabi, reading lists, on-line resources, recommended readers and other text resources and guidelines I had developed this summer for a research project I am doing with students this semester.

(Note: Based on my survey of VCCS- wide history classes offered during Fall 2008, the History of World Civilization survey is offered at seventeen of twenty-three colleges, and students may take the course in either a traditional setting or on-line at fifteen colleges. The majority of the colleges that schedule world history also offer the History of Western Civilization but, four offer only the World Civilization option. In three colleges that offer both, the same faculty members teach both World and Western surveys.)

3. I established at least ten on-going professional contacts in London. At the conclusion of the conference, Professor Laura Mitchell, Assistant Professor of World History and Africa Studies, asked if I would serve on the organization's membership committee and I readily agreed. I also agreed to serve on WHA membership panel at the American Historical Association's annual conference in New York in January 2009. Further, I plan to attend, and may participate in a roundtable discussion on teaching global history in the community college, at the World History Association's annual meeting in Salem, Massachusetts in June 2009. My active participation at these conferences, and conversation with high school and university faculty, will allow me to share cutting edge ideas and practices with history faculty, and with faculty in other disciplines within the VCCS.

4. As a result of professional contacts I established while attending the WHA conference, I was able to participate in an intensive World History Institute from July 13 to 18 at Gettysburg College. I spent the week attending presentations and sharing ideas with noted scholars and world history experts, Professor Peter Stearns, from George Mason University, Professor Michael Adas, Rutgers University, and Professor Patrick Manning, founder of the World History Institute at the University of Pittsburgh. During the institute, all shared time honored experiences, ideas, and resource material that I was able to present at the VCCS Social Science Peer Conference in October, 2008.

Other Colleges:

N/A

Discussion and Critique:

1. Students now benefit in that they are offered the opportunity to enroll in a history survey with a global focus. The world history course I am teaching this semester reflects a greater depth and perspective than I would have been able to present had I not enjoyed the benefits of the VCCS- funded grant to London. I used ideas, resources, websites, syllabus and presentation guidelines gathered at the conference in this course.

2. I am in the process of further refining my syllabus to serve as master syllabus for dissemination within the VCCS. I have initiated contact with faculty focused on the teaching of global courses and I have

shared information from the London Conference and from the Gettysburg College World History Institute.

3. As a result of my continued membership and committee work in the WHA, faculty within the VCCS will gain access to, and benefit by receiving information from, respected professional associations that focus on collaborative relationships with faculty across various academic institutional levels.

4. On a personal level, my attendance at the WHA conference better prepared me to teach a generation of students who expect and benefit from learning history from a global perspective. I am able to offer greater depth and insight on a variety of topics, to include "global sea highways" and "Twentieth Century global connections" than before participating in this summer's conferences.

5. I am collaborating with English and history faculty at my college about the WHA conference. I am currently working on a collaborative teaching proposal with two English faculty who teach world literature classes. We are considering writing a grant proposal that will enable us to work together to provide select students with an opportunity to focus concurrently on world history and literature.

While there are no glaring gaps in my work so far, the work is not done. This is a beginning of a continuing project of increasing focus on global education at my college - a project in which I plan to play an active role.

Evaluation:

This grant project was evaluated by comparing proposal goals to goals achieved prior to the conference, during the WHA meeting in London, and post- conference.

1. Method: Survey websites and VCCS World professional development opportunities to detect connections and gaps.

Result: Other than the bi-annual VCCS Social Sciences Peer Group, which this year included a limited International Education Component, there were no other system conferences featuring a global perspective with the exception of New Horizons, which often includes only select international education sessions on study abroad experiences.

2. Method: I attended WHA conference sessions to gather information on syllabi, content, presentations, and curriculum development. I will keep a journal and establish a file of material to disseminate to interested VCCS faculty and to share and discuss at VCCS conferences.

Result: Fortunately, I was able to gather a rather large assortment of material on content, cutting edge pedagogy, and text and on-line resources to share with community college faculty. I entered into discussions on best practices with prominent scholars in the field and with noted teachers and professors from around the world. Subsequently, I shared experiences and resources with faculty at the VCCS Social Sciences Peer Group in October, 2008.

3. Method: I will establish contacts and seek opportunities for professional development at the WHA association conference.

Result: During the conference, I discussed with Dr. Laura Mitchell, chair of the WHA membership committee, opportunities within the association for community college faculty worldwide, and looked for ways to bring benefits to faculty teaching global courses within the VCCS. I agreed to serve on her committee and to participate in a WHA panel at the American Historical Association annual meeting in January, 2009.

4. Method: During Summer 2008 I will work on developing a world history curriculum, in part, based on ideas and information gathered at this conference.

Result: I did make substantial progress in developing a quality course in world history. It was more challenging than I expected, particularly regarding content coverage and selection of materials. I will continue work on refining the course World Civilizations, Part I and teach several sections of this class again during Fall 2009 before teaching the second half during Spring 2010.

5. Method: I will lead a round table discussion at a VCCS conference on experiences and best practices for teaching world history.

Result: In October 2008, I led a discussion at the VCCS Peer Conference in Richmond. Ten participants shared experiences, opinions, and challenges concerning the teaching of the world survey or courses with a global focus, in general. They completed a survey and all expressed an eagerness to stay in contact by email and to help plan, or participate in, future conferences where sessions on global education are included.

6. Method: I will seek opportunities for professional development in order to expand and add depth to my world history courses.

Result: I actively sought and established contacts and opportunities at the WHA conference. I learned that Gettysburg College offers a week long World History Institute during July 2008, and I was – at my expense – able to attend that institute.

While in attendance I gathered ideas and further refined professional goals that will allow me to write more focused grant proposals in 2009, to include a VCCS Professional Development Grant and/or a Chancellor's Professorship proposal.

Dissemination:

At the October, 2008 VCCS Social Science Peer Conference in Richmond, I led a roundtable discussion entitled "Teaching World History" with ten faculty members from John Tyler, Lord Fairfax, Northern Virginia, and Rappahannock Community Colleges. I presented an overview of my experiences at the World History Association conference and the World History Institute and shared information from both organizations. I also distributed a survey to participants, asking the following:

1. Do you currently teach, or have you taught, a world history survey and/or a global studies course: If so, what is the title of the course?
2. Title and author of text readers used in your class?
3. If you do not presently teach world history, what is the nature of your interest in global studies?
4. Briefly state your philosophy on the best approach to teaching a world survey?
5. Identify one major concern or issue you have faced while teaching world.
6. How supportive has your administration been toward efforts to offer the world history survey or expand global studies offerings at your institution?
7. Do you know of any transferability issues associated with the world history survey or a global studies elective? If so, explain.
8. Do you have an interest in joining a community of world history educators? (on-line, small group discussions, or professional development seminars) If so, please elaborate.

While the session group was small in number, their comments helped point the way for my future inquiry and research. All participants indicated that their administrations were supportive in their teaching of the world history survey, most pointed to lack of background for many of their students, problems of selection and coverage were a concern, text inadequacy was discussed, and course transfer issues raised. All participants expressed an interest in establishing a community of VCCS educators who teach globally focused courses. One stated, "Yes, I think we need to share resources, keep a dialog open between us and share ideas on teaching."

Currently, I am compiling a list of VCCS faculty who teach world history and literature surveys or other courses with, particularly, a non-Western focus to enable me to establish a blog or plan a professional development program featuring experts in selected areas of global education. In addition, I am working on completing a VCCS Chancellor's Professorship application that, if funded, would afford me in 2009 the opportunity for further work on "Creating Support for World History," to include initial efforts to establish a VCCS Global Studies Peer Group.