

ACS Diversity Mini-Grants

Final Report

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Project Title: Pedagogies for Embracing Intercultural Diversity

Project Date: August 24, 2007

Amount Awarded: \$2,000

1. Original Goals and Objectives

- a) increase faculty sensitivity to the felt concerns of minority students in the classroom;
- b) equip faculty to manage the dynamics of diverse classrooms with sensitivity and intelligence;
- c) create a more supportive educational environment for minority students;
- d) increase the enjoyment, success, and retention of minority students.

2. Revised Goals and Objectives

- a) introduce faculty to classroom pedagogies that encourage and enhance intercultural diversity;
- b) help faculty consider how to integrate such pedagogies in their fall 2007 classrooms;
- c) focus especially on strategies for the beginning of the course—setting a positive tone for embracing and engaging diversity throughout the semester.

3. Meeting Goals and Objectives

- a) The workshop drew 95% of Millsaps faculty members, so the vast majority of faculty members were introduced via the workshop to classroom pedagogies that encourage and enhance intercultural diversity. Those who attended the workshop received a packet of information for future reference—a way of reiterating and extending the learning.
- b) The workshop leader invited faculty to apply specific strategies such as storytelling into their pedagogical practices. He also engaged faculty in the hypothetical use of such practices during the workshop—allowing us to “try on” the strategies to see how they felt. He challenged us to consider specific courses and assignments in relation to which we might use one or more of these strategies and to make plans to actually use them.
- c) The workshop’s main focus was on how to set a classroom tone at the beginning of the semester that acknowledges and affirms intercultural diversity. Workshop participants enacted several exercises we could then use with our students. For example, we enacted a “stand up, sit down” exercise designed to awaken students to the rich diversities that already exist in the classroom and to experience those diversities as positive attributes of the classroom community and energy.

4. Evaluation/Assessment

The workshop was evaluated using these measures: attendance, observer reports, and faculty interviews.

Based on these measures, the workshop was a qualified success. Attendance at the event was very high, although by the workshop's end about 1/8 of participants had left. According to observer reports, the energy level was high among workshop participants, especially during the first half of the workshop. Numerous positive assessments of the workshop were voiced at the half-way point. By the end of the workshop, reviews were more mixed. The main source of frustration or disappointment had to do with the relative lack of attention given to the issue of race and to the pedagogical challenge of managing racially insensitive comments among students in the classroom. The consensus seemed to be that the ideas shared and practiced in the workshop for what a teacher can do to cultivate a diversity-friendly classroom environment were useful, but some attention should also have been paid to the specific challenges of managing peer-to-peer racial insensitivity in the classroom. Everyone liked and enjoyed the workshop leader, but some were disappointed by his failure to attend to one of our felt needs. Pre- and post-workshop sessions with the workshop leader were enjoyed by about a dozen faculty members and were experienced by all as beneficial. In addition, the group of students who met with the workshop leader found their session to be a uniformly positive experience.

5. Ideas for Redesign

One cannot control what a workshop leader will do. We educated, steered, and "coached" our leader as well as we could, but he seemed to miss one important need or expectation that we had for the workshop. If conducted again, we would be even more explicit about our expectations and hopes. We might even ask prospective workshop leaders if they would agree to address all our main issues and to indicate to us in advance how they planned to do so.

6. Sharing Results

We have not shared the results of our faculty workshop with others yet. We are uncertain about whether or how best to do that given the mixed reviews of the event.

7. Next Steps

Our Diversity Committee will meet throughout the fall. Our first meeting will be a discussion of how the workshop went and of how best to follow it up. We may well decide to host a follow-up event focusing on precisely the issues the workshop overlooked.

8. Financials

Please see following page.

9. Permission

The ACS has permission to post our original proposal and a summary of our work on the ACS Diversity website.

Financials

Income: \$2,000 ACS Diversity Mini-Grant

Expenses: \$2,500 workshop leader honorarium
477 workshop leader airfare
264 workshop leader hotel
640 hospitality
\$3,881.00 total expenses