

American Colleges of South Mini-Grant Proposal Final Report

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Institution: Morehouse College

Title of Project: *Toward a Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College*

Date(s) of Project: January – May 2008

Amount Awarded: \$8,500.00

1. Original Goals and objectives

Our original goal was to develop a social justice-centered humanities and social sciences learning community (LC) as an infrastructure for sustained interdisciplinary course development, co-curricular activities, and future academic programming. We pursued this goal as a complement to the Morehouse College mission of seeking to train socially conscious and ethical men with minds disciplined through critical and clear thinking about global history and culture. Our efforts, assisted by the ACS Mini-grant, were largely met with success in terms of facilitating strategic planning, pedagogical preparation, discourse and training all related to social justice, ethics and the learning community pedagogical infrastructure. Both principal investigators contributed from within our specific disciplines of English, African American Studies, and History, yet eagerly sought out collaborations with faculty and students from other disciplines. Our enthusiasm was reciprocated by the vigorous efforts of Cynthia Hewitt (Sociology) who participated in all phases of our objectives and offered a critical yet constructive perspective of our goal and the stalwart support of Terry Mills (Sociology), Dean of Humanities, and Social Sciences who offered us the vision of division-wide support.

Our course on writing, social ethics, and texts will apply significant elements of each discipline's methodology. The discipline of English contributes an approach to establishing a voice for those often voiceless in Western society as well as the tools of writing composition and research for expression of one's values and opinions.

Objectives:

- a) To provide faculty development and training in the learning community concept and interdisciplinary course development;
- b) To structure faculty input into interdisciplinary course development and integrative opportunities related to the Humanities Lecture Series;
- c) To develop a plan for sustained activities that will foster the Humanities and Social Science learning community;
- d) To explore themes of social justice as a rigorous scholarly and pedagogical criterion consistent with incoming President Franklin's vision of the Morehouse Renaissance.

2. Any changes made in goals/objectives to date.

The goals and objectives have remained the same.

3. In what ways were the goals/objectives met? Please give examples.

We were successful in our objective of providing faculty development and training in the learning community concept and interdisciplinary course development. The ACS Mini-grant allowed the principal investigators to host workshops with Dr. Phyllis Dawkins and Dr. Sandra Flowers, who discussed collaborative research and teaching aspects of learning communities and developing integrated writing assignments within the learning community context. These small group sessions were very constructive and allowed the PIs to work with other faculty interested in participating in interdisciplinary courses. The participation of Drs. Ligon and Jackson of the English Department, Cynthia Hewitt of Sociology, and Hasaan Crockett of Political Science, among others was greatly appreciated.

Our goal of developing a plan for sustained activities that will foster the Humanities and Social Science learning community was partially achieved. Faculty participants have expressed an interest in reconvening and collaborating on various projects. The Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences appointed faculty to explore the learning community concept and develop the Humanities Lecture Series. However, no formal plan as to who would take the lead beyond the work of the course and the lecture series.

- a) Both principal investigators contributed from within our specific disciplines of English, African American Studies, and History, yet eagerly sought out strategic planning collaborations with faculty and students from other disciplines, including:
 - i. Cynthia Hewitt (Sociology) who participated in all phases of our objectives and offered a critical yet constructive perspective of our goal and the stalwart support;
 - ii. Terry Mills (Sociology), Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences who offered us the vision of division-wide support;
 - iii. David Morrow (Music), Marcellus Barksdale (History & African American Studies), Hamid Taqi (Political Science), and Michael Janis (English) were invited to participate in focused meetings on developing a social justice learning community. We were able to work closely with Professor Janis and plan in the future to collaborate with Professors Barksdale and Morrow.

- b) Pedagogical preparation. By collaborating with Dr. Hewitt, we successfully explored intersections and linkages among themes of social justice as a rigorous scholarly and pedagogical criterion through the refinement of the course, *Global African Identity: An Exploration of Ethical Texts Across the Diaspora*. We were able to develop a curriculum plan including:
 - i. Learning outcomes, which are consistent with Morehouse College's General Education Core Curriculum Pilot Project (see attachment)
 - ii. a reading list (See attachment, "Ethical Texts and the Quest for Social Justice in the African Experience,")
 - iii. and tentative format for the course, African American Studies 212 consistent with the departmental goals, objectives and policies of the departments of History, Sociology, English and African American Studies Program.

- c) The workshop and lectures of Dr. Thèophile Obenga and Oyeronke Oyewumi lead to conversations between Dr. Hewitt, Dr. Livingston, community activist, Larry Williams, Dr. Obenga and Dr. Oyewumi concerning the possibility of planning a conference on social justice within the African Intellectual Heritage. This international meeting will explore themes of social justice as a rigorous scholarly and pedagogical criterion consistent with President Franklin's vision of the Morehouse Renaissance Man.
- d) Dr. Sandra Flowers, who discussed collaborative research and teaching aspects of learning communities and developing integrated writing assignments within the learning community context. These small group sessions were very constructive and allowed the PIs to work with other faculty interested in participating in interdisciplinary courses, particularly:
 - i. Drs. Jocelyn Jackson and Allison Ligon (both from English) participated in the Integrated Writing Assignments Workshop with Dr. Sandra Flowers;
 - ii. Hasaan Crockett (Political Science) participated in the Learning Community Workshop with Dr. Phyllis Dawkins
- e) Our goal of developing a plan for sustained activities that will foster the Humanities and Social Science learning community was achieved. Drs. Hewitt, Creque, and Livingston met with other faculty and supportive members of the activist community to plan and implement a Study Abroad program.

4. Describe the evaluation/assessment process used. Summarize the results of this process. Include any instruments used to evaluate/assess your project.

Activities

Faculty Development Workshops

- a. Faculty Workshop One: Establishing a Social Justice Learning Community, with Dr. Phyllis Dawkins, Director of Faculty Development, Johnson C. Smith University. Five members of the learning community participated in this seminar, four of whom anticipate teaching in the interdisciplinary core course. The out come was the integration of learning objectives and some sample assignments for the interdisciplinary course. See "African American Studies 212: Global African Identity – An Exploration of Ethical Texts Across the Diaspora," A Performance Criteria, attached.
- b. Faculty Workshop Two: "'Ajobi' and 'Ajogbe': An African paradigm of Family Bonds and Peaceful Co-Existence," with Dr. Oyeronke Oyewumi, Associate Professor, Sociology, State University of New York, Stony Brook, and Dr. Thèophile Obenga, Professor, Africana Studies, San Francisco State University (Discussant). This was the first of the Humanities Lecture Series. It was attended by 17 faculty members and 36 students. Participants received invitations, which clearly stated our goal of having their input on the development of a social justice focused course relying on texts with ethical meaning. Thirty members of the

learning community received invitations. Assessment was carried out using qualitative methods, primarily through in-depth interview. Several themes were repeatedly stressed:

- i. The need for a second Nile Valley Conference to highlight the interconnectedness and origins of social justice thought throughout Africa's long history and across its massive geography. This conference will bring together African scholars, social scientists, philosophers, scientists, and classical African scholars to trace the development and spread of knowledge from the Nile Valley civilizations of Egypt and Ethiopia.
- ii. Comments to the Session on Family given by Dr. Oyewumi included repeated stress on the importance of re-visiting the concept of "gender," in the African context. Several participants stressed that they had not thought about how historical accounts could be misconstrued because names, such as Yoruba names, could be used for men or women. Some taken-for-granted assumptions were displaced with the talk given by Dr. Oyeronke Oyewumi.
- c. Learning Community Guest Lecture: Dr. Thèophile Obenga, Professor, Africana Studies, San Francisco State University. This Keynote Address was held in the evening in The Leadership Center Auditorium and was attended by approximately 300 people, including several renowned Africa scholars, faculty, students and honors high school students and their teachers. It was very successful in drawing together a diverse audience committed to scholarship around justice and ethics in society with a focus on the African heritage. The seminar was followed by two contact group sessions, where feedback was obtained toward our objectives, one immediately following the presentation, with eight participants and the following morning, with five key individuals. The following points were stressed:
 - i. The need for the Justice Course to highlight scholarship from with the African tradition of Humanities. The promotion of an African Humanities tradition as part of the learning community outcomes.
 - ii. The importance of bringing together the publications and speeches from the First Nile Valley Conference and making those available via the website and publication. What works developed as a result of the last Nile Valley Conference?
 - iii. Concrete plans emerged in terms of delegation of responsibilities to begin organizing this major event.
 - iv. A goal was set to integrate new dimensions in the study of African Humanities to bring the opus of work up to contemporary times by looking at new work, including hip hop, poetry and videos which incorporate themes and content from ancient African sources.
 - v. A desire was expressed to begin an educational pipeline, which would mentor young scholars from the high school level and train teachers in K-12 to be part of this effort at producing African Humanities scholars with a focus on the traditions in justice and ethics.
 - vi. The importance of ethnobotany, or the study of how humans interacted with the plant world to achieve their civilizations' stability and prosperity, and health and well-being was stressed. This includes the guidance of behavior through myth and lore, with respect to herbs and plants use.
 - vii. A list of renown invitees was drawn up with the understanding that Morehouse College, through its President, has made a pledge to work toward hosting such an event.
- d. Faculty Development Workshop Three: "Humanities/Social Sciences Learning Community," with Dr. Sandra Flowers. Six Learning Community members attended this seminar,

including four who would participate in the core course in development. The focus was on development of integrative writing assignments. There was discussion of the Study Abroad Program the learning objectives of which are integrated with those of the learning community. This program in development, called Morehouse Pan-African Global Experience, will bring Morehouse students and others students to Africa in courses taught by Morehouse faculty with collaboration from Ghanaian faculty. A core course for the study abroad, "Village Life and the World-System in Cyber-Space," was discussed and a draft proposal developed. (See attached). This course would integrate social science interviewing skills, with presentational skills of the humanities as the outcomes will be processed into videos for sharing with communities on campus and off in the United States and in Ghana. Other writing assignments were discussed.

5. If you were to redesign your project, what would you do differently and why? {What are the "lessons learned"?.

- a. It is important to involve more people at the initial planning stage. It was appropriate for two members to write the grant, however, gaining the buy-in of more of the intended participants ahead of time is likely to have secured their attention and time commitment up-front and would make organizing events easier.
- b. More funding could have been set aside for obtaining the workshop speakers; travel and lodging costs required additional resources. Additionally, more clerical support was needed.
- c. Additional training of a broader number of faculty in the learning community concept and benefits so that more will become creative in its use.

6. Next steps:

- a. Launch the website and complete the brochure. Seek to provide training in the use of collaborative calendars and meeting planning.
- b. Seek additional faculty training in developing curriculum.
- c. Begin meeting bi-weekly in August to plan 2008-2009 activities, including Africa Awareness Week.
- d. Establish the Nile Valley Conference Planning Committee, identify sources of funding, and prepare initial proposal.
- e. Launch the Ethical Texts African American Studies 212 course in January 2009.

7. Budget

Approved budget

Line Item	Cost	Qty	Total Program Costs
<i>Faculty Development</i>			
Guest Speakers	\$1500.00	2 Guest Speakers	\$1500.00
Faculty Development Training Conference	\$2700.00	2 faculty	\$2700.00
Workshop Training Materials	\$100.00	13 faculty	\$1,300.00
<i>Lecture Series and Course Development: Social Justice and the Humanities</i>			
Website/Brochure	\$1500.00		\$ 1500.00
Course Materials/ Supplies	\$1500.00		\$ 1500.00
Grand Total			\$ 8,500.00

Budget Modification

Line Item	Original Cost	Qty	Total Program Proposed Costs
<i>Faculty Development</i>			
Guest Speakers (Dawkins- 1,000; Flowers- 800; and Obenga- 800)	\$1,500.00	3 Guest Speakers	\$2,600.00
Faculty Development Training Conference	\$2,700.00	2 faculty	\$1,100.00
Workshop Training Materials	\$ 100.00	13 faculty	\$1,300.00
Refreshments for faculty sessions	0.00		\$ 600.00
<i>Lecture Series and Course Development: Social Justice and the Humanities</i>			
Website/Brochure	\$1500.00		\$ 1000.00
Course Materials/ Supplies	\$1500.00		\$ 1300.00
Student Graphic Artist	\$ 0.00		\$ 300.00
Administrative Support	\$ 0.00		\$ 300.00
Grand Total			\$ 8,500.00

8. Dissemination

The activities of the Social Justice Learning Community have been widely shared on campus at departmental meetings. The project was the subject of a presentation at the CETL Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The core faculty involved in course development attended the SCAASI Conference as a group.

9. Permission Statement

ACS has permission to post the original proposal, Toward a Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at

Morehouse College, and a summary of the work on the ACS Interdisciplinary website:
<http://www.colleges.org/newmodels/interdisciplinary/index.html>