

2011-2012 Grant Proposals

Ruth Henderson

"Assembly-Expanded Perspective on Learning Conference" Pedagogy Travel Grant

1) **Proposal** to attend the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning's Conference in Estes Park, Colorado June 28th-July 1st 2012

2) Project Description:

This conference will focus on the transformative power of mindful practices in an educational context.

Mindful/contemplative pedagogy involves teaching methods (such as various forms of meditation, deep listening and reflective writing), which are designed to cultivate deepened awareness. Students can't solve a problem, or answer a research question until they fully apprehend what the question is and can state the question clearly.

Gaining such clarity is a process, and mindfulness/contemplation is a way of resting in the uncertainty until the question becomes clear, without a frustrated seeking after the answer. Mindful pedagogy guides learners in the practice of this skill, which the poet John Keats called the negative capability. The point is not to abandon traditional scholarship but to ground it, to personalize it and to balance it with approaches that include epistemological dimensions not addressed by the limits of logic.

The mindful practices that are integral to my teaching at Stonehill College's Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, will be enhanced by engaging with other like-minded educators at the conference. I look forward to learning new ways to promote mindfulness in my classroom.

3 & 4) Benefit and Community Outreach Plans:

Because the conference topic is perfectly aligned with my pedagogy, Stonehill students in my classes will directly benefit from my participating in this conference. The Center for Teaching and Learning hosted a roundtable discussion on Contemplative Pedagogy in 2010 (see below) and my plan to offer a round table discussion on what I've gained from the conference could benefit the Stonehill faculty who are already working with this pedagogy. Faculty who might want to learn how to incorporate some of these approaches in their teaching could also benefit. In addition to the roundtable discussion, I plan to submit an essay to the Journal for the Assembly of Expanded Perspectives on Learning discussing my use of mindful practices in my classes.

Conference Description:

Inviting the Edge: Mindfulness in the Writing Classroom and Beyond

This conference will explore how mindfulness can transform our teaching, our learning, our thinking, our writing, and our ways of being in the world. In addition to reflecting intellectually on the conference theme, participants will have opportunities to experience various mindfulness practices.

"Mindfulness" can be a map for exploring "the edge" in meaningful human relations with attention, presence, and awareness. Its practices foster inner and interpersonal harmony, but they can also provide a rhetoric and a politics that mine chaos and discomfort, and negotiate difference and disagreement.

For Reference:

Center for Teaching and Learning Spring 2010 Teaching Roundtable Series

CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGY

What do yoga, tai chi, or mindfulness meditation have to do with liberal arts pedagogy? How can a moment of silence enhance critical thinking and reflection? Is there a place for contemplation in our curriculum? Are contemplative practices an effective antidote for our "culture of distraction?"

Contemplative practices are as old as the world's religions and have become a part of mainstream popular culture.

Chris Ives (Religious Studies), Greg Shaw (Religious Studies), and Todd Gernes (Director of Undergraduate Education and the First Year Experience) will host a discussion about the ways in which higher education has embraced contemplative practices. Learn about the emergent field of Contemplative Studies and how you might get involved.

Budget:

Travel: 269.60

Accommodations: 330

Registration: \$150