SUMMER RESEARCH GRANT FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING

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Christopher Borick
Political Science Department

SECTION 1.A – Description of Project - During the Fall semester of 2005 I will be teaching a course entitled Public Health Policy. The course is a survey of contemporary issues related to the provision of health care in the United States. From disease control to the provision of health insurance, government plays a central role in the field of American health care. Therefore, this course provides attention to numerous aspects of government interaction in medical care, including the funding of research, regulation of pharmaceuticals, management and prevention of epidemics, and the provision of Medicaid and Medicare. The class is designed for political science majors as well as students interests in pursuing careers related to health care. Course requirements will include a substantial research paper and required service experiences in local health care locations such as Allentown’s health department and local medical clinics. Classes will be conducted primarily in a lecture and discussion format, with the exception of the project at the heart of this proposal.

As I have found in other classes, simulations can be a valuable compliment to other pedagogical practices. Through placing students in settings where they must make decisions that mirror real life scenarios, I believe a situation is created that adds value to such tools as lectures and readings. In the case of public health policy there are many possible applications of simulations. In particular, I’m seeking this grant to develop a simulation that examines the decision making process that is used by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in addressing a potential outbreak of an infectious disease. Given financial constraints, incomplete medical information and the presence of media and public pressure, how do decisions get made? To accomplish the goal of creating this simulation, I will need time to develop a list of individual biographies for the officials involved in the decision process and a detailed packet of information by which decisions will be made. In addition, I will train students on how to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a policy making tool. GIS will allow them to integrate geographic and public health data into an integrated decision making process.

SECTION 1.B - The Encouragement of Innovative Teaching – This project will allow me to employ a method of teaching that encourages students to experience the dynamic and complex nature of policymaking within the realm of public health. By providing a forum for students to apply the knowledge acquired through lectures and readings, I in essence seek to create a political science laboratory. In this laboratory students will have the chance to test the theories and concepts they learn in the class in a setting that mirrors the characteristics of real world political situations. From experience with simulation projects in my Environmental Politics and Introductory Democracy
courses I find that these teaching techniques enhances the ability of students to more fully grasp and appreciate the complexity and tradeoffs inherent in creating public policies. I will also employ the use of appropriate technology to the simulation through the incorporation of GIS, thus allowing students the opportunity to use tools commonly available to officials in the field of public health.

SECTION 1.C – Pedagogical Approach – The pedagogical approach of this project is based on the principles of active learning. I believe student learning is maximized when they can engage material in multiple ways. More specifically the opportunity to step out of a traditional class setting and into an environment where students become active participants in the public health policymaking process helps to complement the readings and lectures that are utilized throughout the course. This process is designed to connect students to course material in a personalized manner.

SECTION 2. Project Budget - I am requesting a summer research grant of $1,500 to complete the previously proposed project. I estimate the following amount of time for the development of the epidemic management simulation:

A) Development of role biographies for 25 students (20 hours)
B) Development of epidemic scenario, including scientific data, financial estimates, public opinion (35 hours)
C) Development of instructions for the use of GIS in the field of public health, and the creation of a hypothetical data set of epidemic data. (45 hours)

TOTAL HOURS (APPROXIMATE) = 100 Hours

I have received two grants from the Faculty Center for Teaching. In 2001 I received a grant for the development of two simulations in my Introduction to Democracy and Environmental Politics courses. The amount of the grant was $1,250, with the award used for time to create a constitutional convention simulation and a congressional subcommittee simulation. This process involved the development of roles, simulation rules, model legislation and evaluation techniques. I have employed these simulations each semester since the summer of 2001. In 2003 I received a grant of $1,500 for the development of a course unit in my Parties and Election course that integrated the use of public opinion data and technology into a simulated campaign management experience. This fall I again employed that unit in my course in conjunction with the presidential election.

SECTION 3. Summer Professional Commitments – During the summer of 2005 I will be involved in a number of activities at the college. First I will be serving as a summer advisor during the month of June. I will also be working on the final stages of a public policy book that is scheduled to be published later this year.
SECTION 4. **Project Assessment** - To assess the impact of this project on student learning I plan to employ multiple instruments. First, I will develop a pre-test instrument in which students are asked to write a short paper in which they give me their reactions to the public health scenario that will be focused on in the simulation. After the simulation is completed I will implement a post-test instrument in which students will be asked to once again address the public health scenario, given their experiences in the simulation. By comparing the pre-test and post-test results I hope to gain a sense of the value-added components of the experiential exercise. If the simulation is successful, students should be able to recognize more of the constraints on public health officials than demonstrated in the pre-test. Optimally, after the simulation is complete, students will identify factors facing policy-makers (such as short time frames) that add greater complexity (and error) to possible solutions.