

The Appalachian Teaching Project 2012

From Belfast, Northern Ireland to Central West Virginia: A Comparative Exploration of Conflict and Poverty in relationship to Community Sustainability and Economic Development

Can the infusion of a July 2012 student travel and research experience to Northern Ireland, along with extensive research in West Virginia, be used to assist a triad of Central West Virginia communities to assess and enhance their community profile?

**The Frank and Jane Gabor WV Folklife Center
on the campus of Fairmont State University
and Pierpont Community and Technical College**

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(ATP Project Date)
February 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013
(Date this document was submitted)
May 2013

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Final Report Narrative

Name of Project: *From Belfast, Northern Ireland to Central West Virginia: A Comparative Exploration of Conflict and Poverty in relationship to Community Sustainability and Economic Development*

Grant Period: February 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Grantee Name: Frank & Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center on the campus of Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community & Technical College

Project Director: Dr. Judy P. Byers/ Mr. Noel W. Tenney

Description of Project:

Background:

By conducting a comparative research exploration of conflict and poverty in relationship to community sustainability and economic development, students discovered the parallels between the historic interrelatedness of the Ulster Scots of Northern Ireland and the Scotch-Irish pioneer settlers of north central West Virginia; examined the cultural, geographical, and social community conditions of each area; and projected interchangeable solutions to the similar societal needs.

Central West Virginia and Northern Ireland, having the same historic root base, are both cultural areas where conflict (religious, class, economic, and etc.) is sometimes resolved with violent reaction, either on a group basis or personal level. When poverty, unemployment, incomplete education, lack of economic opportunity, and the dissolution of cultural and community values are the overriding factors of a region, then the atmosphere is ripe for conflict to emerge.

This project began the development of a model that surveyed, defined, and addressed conflict problems and possible varied resolutions while examining projects, such as the East Belfast Mission in Northern Ireland and the Appalachian Ministries Network operating through such activities like the Heart and Hand House in Philippi, West Virginia.

Community Partner and Central Focus of the Research Project:

Fairmont State University students partnered with various branches of the West Virginia United Methodist Conference; the East Belfast Mission in Northern Ireland; as well as four Appalachian Ministries Network [the Heart and Hand House, Inc. (Philippi), Upshur Cooperative Parish House (Buckhannon), House of the Carpenter (Wheeling), and the Scotts Run Settlement House (Monongalia County) in West Virginia] that are all projects or organizations of the United Methodist Church. These were the field study organizations that this project visited.

This project focused on the work of these United Methodist Conference activities in Northern Ireland and West Virginia, in relationship to conflict resolution, leadership, and economic development planning.

Course Number, Name, and Instructor:

FOLK 3350 - Roads to Appalachia Study Abroad through Northern Ireland (Spring/Summer 2012)

FOLK 4400 – Directed Folklore Studies (Fall 2012)

Instructors – Dr. Judy P. Byers & Mr. Noel W. Tenney

Project Goals/Objectives:

Students built upon first person experiences of their 2012 Road to Appalachia Study Abroad through Northern Ireland. With various field studies in West Virginia, students developed leadership skills and became active learners and participants by adapting previously observed and learned concepts from their study abroad. Research, field study, observation, community interaction, and intellectual discussion were the basis for a successful outcome of this project.

Activities that Met the Goals/Objectives:

Students enrolled in a pre-travel course (Folk 3350, Roads to Appalachia) involving selected readings, presentations, and historic reviews on both the story of the Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland and the Scotch-Irish pioneers in West Virginia. Part I provided an historical and cultural context (Spring 2012, Fairmont State University) to support Part II which was the actual sixteen day travel study to Northern Ireland (July 13-28, 2012). Students viewed and interacted with avenues of major conflict resolution through lectures, interviews, and discussions with individuals who were involved in “the troubles” and the “reconciliation movement” while in Northern Ireland.

During the Fall 2012 course (Folk 4400, Directed Folklore Studies), students conducted research through the above mentioned West Virginia Methodist Church projects and developed a model that included conflict resolution, community sustainability, and economic development for these central West Virginia “distressed” regions, all based on concepts from the Northern Ireland experience, student research, and field studies in West Virginia.

Project Outcomes:

Students:

- Introduced the East Belfast Mission, Northern Ireland and the United Methodist Conference mission communities in West Virginia to the 2012 Appalachian Teaching Project in various encounters during the summer and fall of 2012.
- Visited various museums, libraries, and heritage tourism centers in Northern Ireland and analyzed their marketing structures, education activities, sales and promotion, and cultural preservation, as possible economic development application in West Virginia.
- Participated in academic sessions, discussions, and field studies on the historic context of Northern Ireland with emphases on the “troubles” and the “reconciliation” that have evolved in that region over the years.
- Prepared and conducted surveys, interviews, and testimonies through oral history gatherings in both Northern Ireland missions and West Virginia United Methodist Conference mission settings.
- Researched and developed suggestions that were submitted to the chosen West Virginia Methodist Conference mission organizations that address economic sustainability, continuing education, and community betterment.
- Used a multi-media approach to present suggestions to West Virginia United Methodist Conference mission organizations.

- Presented an aspect of their project to a senior community education group called “Life Long Learners,” November 2012.
- Presented an aspect of their project before a symposium of sociology and other social science students, November 2012.
- Presented their compiled project and poster to the Appalachian Teaching Project through the Appalachian Regional Commission’s Conference in Washington D.C. in December 2012.
- Displayed an aspect of their compiled project on the Gabor WV Folklife Center Exhibit table at the Appalachian Studies Conference at Appalachian State University, NC, March 2013.
- Presented their project before the visiting East Belfast Delegation as a part of Northern Ireland Week, April 1-5, 2013, at the United Methodist Wesley House, serving Fairmont State University in Fairmont, Marion County, West Virginia.
- Presented the research outcomes at the Celebration of Student Scholarship at Fairmont State University, April 23, 2013.
- Will present a poster session at the annual WV United Methodist Conference gathering in Buckhannon, WV, on June 2013.

Activities:

Students gave the following presentations:

- Presentation before Life Long Learners, November 14, 2012
- Fairmont State University Campus Visitation Day, November 10, 2012/March 23, 2013
- Marion County History Expo, April 6, 2013.
- Fairmont State University, Celebration of Undergraduate Research at Fairmont State University, April 23, 2013

As an extension, our ATP students participated in a week long “Northern Ireland Week,” April 1-5, 2013, held on the campus of Fairmont State University and WV Wesleyan College. The Northern Ireland delegation was made up of Dr. Johnson McMasters (the professor from Trinity College, School of Ecumenics at Dublin and Belfast who taught our course in Northern Ireland during the Roads to Appalachia Study Abroad in Northern Ireland, Summer 2012; Rev. Gary Mason (one of the leading negotiators during the peace “Reconciliation” in the 1990’s and again in late 2012, founder and director of “Skainos” East Belfast Mission’s “Outreach Center for Educational and Community Sustainability and Development”); Mr. Gary Krooks (Lay Leader in the Methodist Church of Ireland, social worker, and administrative staff at “Skainos”); Joyce Mason (Educational Director at Skainos); Sandra Krooks (administrative staff at Skainos). This student participation included various class lectures and discussions, receptions, and a special seminar on “The Troubles and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland.” Plus, they presented at the United Methodist Wesley House for the visiting delegation and other United Methodist dignitaries about their work on the four missions of central West Virginia.

NORTHERN IRELAND WEEK*

APRIL 1-5, 2013 – Schedule of Events

Northern Ireland Delegation:

Dr. Johnston McMaster and his wife, Jonene; Rev. Dr. Gary Mason and his wife, Joyce; and Mr. Gary Crooks and his wife, Sandra, also from Belfast and the East Belfast Mission

Saturday, March 30:

J. McMaster's arrival via air from Minnesota to Pittsburgh, 1:17 p.m.

G. Mason and G. Crooks arrival via air from Dublin to JFK.

Easter Sunday, March 31:

7:00 A.M.: J. McMaster to speak at Sunrise Service for Fairmont Council of Churches

10:45 A.M.: Attendance at service and Easter Cantata at Central United Methodist Church [Easter dinner following church service hosted by Rev. Ellis Conley and Mrs. Conley]

Monday, April 1:

10:00 – 11:00 A.M.: J. McMaster to speak at Life Long Learners (Community Adult Education)

11:00 – 11:50 A.M.: G. Mason to speak to two combined classes: Group Disturbances, CRJU 3330 (Jennifer Myer, Criminal Justice) and Social Problems, 2200 SOCY (Dr. Craig White) 12:00 NOON: Orientation Luncheon for Northern Ireland delegation and a few campus guests, approximately 15 people at the Folklife Center.

3:00- 4:00 P.M.: Both J. McMaster and G. Mason to meet with Honors students and speak on Peace Building (Dr. Ken Millen-Penn and Dr. Robert Baker, facilitators)

5:30 – 7:00 P.M.: Reception at Shaw House hosted by Fairmont State University President Dr. Maria Rose. Special Guest: Mr. Kostas Skordas, Acting Director of the Appalachian Regional Commission, (ARC), Director of Regional Planning and Research\Application Teaching Project.

7:30 – 9:00 P.M.: Major campus and community presentation by both J. McMaster and G. Mason, focusing on the “Troubles and Reconciliation in Belfast and Northern Ireland.”

Tuesday, April 2:

8:00 – 9:15 A.M.: G. Mason to speak in Social Stratification Class, SOCY 3325 (Dr. Craig White)

10:00 A.M.: G. Mason and G. Crooks to meet with Rev. Conley, District Superintendent, and other local ministers of the Clergy of the Mon Valley District of the United Methodist Church (Rev. Richard Bowyer, facilitator)

11:30 – 12:15 P.M.: G. Crooks to speak on Irish folklore, FOLK 2200 (Dr. Judy Byers)

- 2:00 – 3:00 P.M.: Both J. McMaster and G. Mason to speak before a special seminar on Models of Reconciliation, SOCY 4497 (Dr. Craig White)
- 3:00-4:30 P.M.: G. Mason to speak in a specialty class on Terrorism, 4405 POLI/SC and CJ (Dr. Patricia Ryan)
- 3:00-4:00 P.M.: J. McMaster to speak in class on Recent Europe, HIST 4431, (Prof. Ned Radulovich)

Wednesday, April 3:

- 9:00 – 9:50 A.M.: J. McMaster to speak to combined classes Survey of British Literature II (Yeats and Seamus Heaney), ENGL 3314 (Dr. Angela Schwer) and Ethnology, SOCY 3301 (Dr. Dan Gurash)
- 1:00- 2:00 P.M.: G. Mason to speak at Life Long Learners (Community Adult Education Program)
- 1:00 – 1:50 P.M.: J. McMaster to speak to Honors section of Introduction to Sociology, SOCY 1110 (Dr. Craig White)
- 5:00-7:00 P.M.: Both J. McMaster and G. Mason to participate on a panel with one or more other professors on Violence Prevention as part of the Faculty Interchange Program, open to campus and community (Dr. Tad Kato, facilitator and Rev. Richard Bowyer, moderator)

Thursday, April 4:

For the entire Northern Ireland delegation, the morning part of the day will be spent in travel to various historic sites (such as Monongah and the Philippi Covered Bridge and Museum) on route to West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WV.

Schedule at Wesleyan:

- 11:00 – 11:45/ Noon: Both G. Mason and J. McMaster at Center for Community Engagement/WE LEAD (student led service and justice group)
One of the issues under study for leadership development this semester is “(1) application of leadership knowledge and (2) skills after college/the different shapes community development and social justice work can take in the real world.”
- Noon: Lunch at Wesleyan Dining Center
- 1:00 – 2:15 P.M.: Both G. Mason and J. McMaster to participate in International Relations, Political Science course (Dr. Michael Bobic)
- 2:30 – 3:45 P.M.: Both G. Mason and J. McMaster to participate in Contemporary International Issues course (Dr. Bobic)
- 4:00 – 5:15 P.M.: Delegation to visit the Upshur County Historical Society facilities and memorabilia (Archivist/Director Noel W. Tenney, facilitator)
- 5:30 P.M.: Dinner on Wesleyan campus
- 7:00 P.M.: G. Mason and J. McMaster to present Brad Long Peace Lecture: “Troubles and Reconciliation in Belfast and Northern Ireland” [open also to community with reception to follow]

Friday, April 5:

- 10:00 – 10:50 A.M.: G. Mason to speak in combined classes, Introduction to Geography, GEOG 2010 (Dr. Tulasi Joshi) and Minority Groups, SOCY 4450 (Dr.Dan Gurash)
- 11:30A.M.: Entire Irish delegation will be guests at a luncheon with Directors of four West Virginia Mission Projects [House of the Carpenter in Wheeling, Scott's Run Settlement House in Osage, Heart and Hand in Philippi, and The Upshur Parish House in Buckhannon], hosted by the Wesley Foundation (Rev. Sarah Rettig, Campus Minister for Wesley Foundation, facilitator). Also invited will be the Fairmont State University scholarship students who visited and researched these missions, comparing their sustainable community and economic development efforts with that of East Belfast Mission which they also visited (July 13 – 28, 2012) as part of their Roads to Appalachia through Northern Ireland Study Travel Abroad, an academic program of the Frank and Jane Gabor WV Folklife Center, FOLK 3350, directed by Dr. Judy Byers and Professor Noel W. Tenney with Rev.Richard Bowyer. The students presented their findings before the Appalachian Teaching Project Conference sponsored by the Appalachian Regional Commission in Washington, DC, December 2012. Other invited guests will include Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball of the WV Annual Conference and Rev. Ellis Conley, Superintendent of the Mon Valley District of the United Methodist Church.
- 2:00 P.M. Visit Pricketts Fort and the School of the Long Hunter (Director Greg Bray, facilitator). Continue to Jackson's Mill and other area historic sites. Farewell Dinner at Stonewall Jackson Resort. (Rev. Richard Bowyer and Judy Byers, facilitators)

Saturday, April 6:

- 9:15 A.M.: J. McMaster, departure from Pittsburgh Airport Later morning departure for G. Mason and G. Crooks via automobile to Washington, D.C. after visitation to the Mountain State History Expo, sponsored by the Marion County Historical Society (Rev. Richard Bowyer and Dr. Judy Byers, facilitators)

*Students from the ATP project were involved in various components of the scheduled activities.

The following links represent student work and involvement:

- Frank & Jane Gabor WV Folklife Center website:
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/folklife/>
- FSU Now, "Northern Ireland Week"
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/fsunow/photos/northern-ireland-week>

- FSU Now, “Northern Ireland Week to Be Proclaimed in Fairmont”
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/fsunow/academics-events-global-connections/northern-ireland-week-be-proclaimed-fairmont>
- FSU Now, “Students Participate in 2012 Appalachian Teaching Project”
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/fsunow/academics/students-participate-2012-appalachian-teaching-project>
- FSU Now, “Presentation to Focus on Northern Ireland and West Virginia”
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/fsunow/academics/presentation-focus-northern-ireland-and-west-virginia>
- FSU Now, “Roads to Appalachia-Travel Study Abroad to Northern Ireland”
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/fsunow/category/tags/frank-and-jane-gabor-west-virginia-folklife-center?page=1>
- FSU Now, “Roads to Appalachia Trip to Northern Ireland Planned”
<http://www.fairmontstate.edu/fsunow/academics/roads-appalachia-trip-northern-ireland-planned>

Problems Encountered:

Overall, this project was well received by the many components of the United Methodist Appalachian Ministries Network including Heart and Hand, Inc. (Philippi), Upshur cooperative Parish House (Buckhannon), House of the Carpenter (Wheeling), and the Scotts Run Settlement House (Monongalia County). There were no real problems with this project.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

Although our students will not be participating directing in any continuation of this project, the Northern Ireland components are continuing to use our student’s ideas and interactions. The ATP students work will be reviewed in the “Skainos” *Everybody Matters Newsletter* of the East Belfast Mission. Hopefully, with our input, the West Virginia United Methodist Appalachian Ministries Network will benefit from the acknowledgment of their outreach efforts.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Our ATP students had a great combination of experiences in both working in Northern Ireland and with the various ministries here in North Central West Virginia as they were always watching and looking for applicable techniques to apply to their community partners’ efforts.

We would like to thank Kostas Skordas, Acting Director, Regional Planning & Research, ARC for his campus visit to Fairmont State University, on Monday, April 1, 2013, for the beginning of Northern Ireland Week. We recommend that the ATP concept be continued with the possibility of other small grants from the ARC for continuation of specific projects that have begun with the work of the ATP.

Attachments:

FSU_Bowyer Letter.pdf – Letter of reflection by Dr. Richard Bowyer

FSU_ ARC ATP 2012 Brochure.pdf – Brochure developed by ATP students as a handout for program.

FSU_ Northern Ireland Photographs.pdf – Photographs of ATP Students taken during their trip to Ireland.

FSU_ATP Research Photos.pdf – Photographs taken during research trips throughout West Virginia.

FSU_Powerpoint Final.pdf – Students' final project

FSU_CelebrationStudentScholarshipProgram.pdf – Program excerpt from student presentation.

FSU_Newspaper &TV.pdf – Excerpts of articles from Times West Virginian and WBOY TV.

FSU_Itinerary Ireland.pdf – Itinerary brochure

FSU_WV Site Brochures.pdf – Brochures from partnership sites in WV.