

Grant Summary Report - Ben Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Initiative

Award #: S-ECAPY-11-CA-059(SS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2011 program was a success in exploring intersections among new media, public advocacy, and social enactment. New elements in 2011 included enhanced integration of academic and engagement (across classes, trip, and civic engagement), improving Internet usage via social media network (before, during, and ongoing), and designs with smaller groups, more activity, and better management of a more bottom-up learning environment.

Importantly the highly interactive formats stressed face-to-face bonding; forging strong relationships. It has been our observation that in comparison to years past there has been strong quantitative and qualitative post-institute Internet traffic among participants involving social reinforcement, but primarily (on the Facebook sites at least) the emphasis involves launching projects, recruitment for peer participation, news from their participation in community and embassy events and politics from civic to activism, travel plans, information on non-US opportunities, and much more.

The story of the Ben Franklin Institute is best documented at <http://bftf.org>, the program's web page. Overall Satisfaction with their BFTF experience on a five point scale was 4.89. Additional evaluation data, open-ended and quantitative are provided in the interim narrative report.

In addition we have funded follow-on projects involving numerous fellows across countries and years. Fellows also initiated many activities on their own initiative, many of which are chronicled at the website.

From our perspective the outcome of the program that matters most was not the curriculum or activities per se, but rather the personal empowerment the fellows discover in themselves. Dozens of the fellows have found ways to return to the US for higher education and have stated to us that participating in BFTF made the difference in their admittance. Many more Fellows have become civically engaged in their countries. Simply put, they believe they can change the world and that they have the character to do so.

Program summary: Women Changing the Face of Leadership at Simmons College

Simmons College implemented a women's leadership exchange program for women from sub-Saharan Africa, from June 17 to July 21, 2012. Our theme, *Women Changing the Face of Leadership*, emphasized the ways in which women provide new insights and examples about what leadership can be, both in the U.S. and globally, past and present, at individual and societal levels. Twenty African women participated, supported by ten Simmons undergraduates with diverse backgrounds. Participants acquired leadership skills, a deeper understanding of women's history, experience in service learning, and knowledge about U.S. culture and democracy. Participants brought their new skills, insight, and support network to create concrete solutions to challenges in their home countries.

Through follow-on activities coordinated in accordance with our long-term objectives - 6 months after the completion of the Institute the participants would be able to: (a) identify an explicit challenge facing their home community; (b) combine their leadership skills with their knowledge of women's history to develop potential solutions to this challenge; and (c) communicate with alumnae from both Simmons and ECA who can provide resources to help implement solutions and leverage the synergy present on Facebook. The students took the initiative to follow-up on the Institute, by setting up their own Facebook page and today the students still communicate on Facebook. Furthermore, participants identified an explicit challenge facing their home communities and submitted proposals to Simmons College for a small grant competition. Simmons received 5 proposals. Proposals were read, evaluated, and funding recommended as follows: Vashti H., Liberia, \$1000; Emilia B., Mozambique, \$1000; Mary B., Sierra Leone, \$1000; Aminata J., Sierra Leone, \$1000; and Emily K., South Sudan, \$1000. Participants were instructed that an evaluation report would be due after the funding was received and they had time to implement their programs. Long term objectives were met with the class of 2012.