

**Innovation in Teaching and Learning Grant Proposal Teaching
about Race and Racism in the Walla Walla Public Schools
Helen Kim and Susan Prudente
Final Report, January 2018**

- **Did recipients complete what they set out to complete?**

The proposed goals of this project were the following:

1. Curricular Goal: Institute an experiential learning component that is linked to theoretical and empirical underpinnings provided in Whitman classes.

This curricular goal is currently in progress. Professor Kim received approval to teach a Special Topics course in Applied Sociology (Sociology 294) during Spring 2018. However, it is unclear, at this point in time, whether this course can be turned into an ongoing course that has a Whitman Teaches the Movement field component as a major portion of the course. Currently, one student who participates in WTTM is enrolled in this course. She is placed at Prospect Point Elementary School and will likely be reflecting on her WTTM experience during January 2018 as part of her work in Sociology 294.

2. Co-Curricular Goal: Advance Whitman Teaches the Movement (WTTM) to incorporate on-going education regarding current-day issues of race and racism. This would extend the long-standing goals of WTTM which have focused on the instruction of Civil Rights history lessons.

Susan and Helen held multiple conversations with one another and with members of the School Board and Walla Walla Public Schools staff regarding this possibility. These have remained on-going conversations for a number of reasons. First, we began our ITL during the Fall of 2016 in an election year. The election of President Trump simultaneously raised the importance of extending WTTM at the same time that it illuminated the constraints during an election year for WWPS to advance any kind of substantial changes because of the extremely tenuous political climate.

In addition, WWPS is in a holding pattern regarding curricular changes and possibilities at the federal and state level, which impact the curricular possibilities at the local level. We began to have conversations with various key staff regarding this possibility. However, it became clear that this transitional moment did not allow for anything substantive to take place immediately. We imagine that we can revisit these discussions at a different time in the not-too-distant future given that a year has passed

since the Presidential election and tactics to implement strategic planning initiatives for WWPS are now underway.

- **What are the products of their efforts in terms of content, format, and public dissemination?**

Because of the obstacles detailed above, our products were minimal. However, Professor has developed a Special Topics course with a syllabus.

One important WWPS change to note: In our application we noted that Christy Krutulis, who was the Principal at Berney Elementary School, had offered Berney as a site for a pilot project. However, before we began our ITL, Christy had recently moved from her position as Principal to a staff position with WWPS. This move eliminated the possibility of working with Berney during the time of our ITL. We could potentially revisit Berney as a possible site if we were to launch a similar pilot project.

- **Do any of these have potential long-term positive effects on the curriculum or academic program more generally?**

Given the recently announced Mellon Grant to help the college infuse diverse perspectives into the curriculum and promote community engagement, we could imagine resources from these monies dedicated towards increasing SEC staff capacity to help with a project like ours.

- **How many students were directly involved or indirectly impacted by the grant?**

We involved students who were interns or who had participated as teachers in WTTM. Our time with them was useful in terms of thinking about their experiences on the ground with WTTM and the possibilities of potentially growing the program at some point in the future.

- **Did the project enhance the quality of learning experiences offered to students?**

An answer to this question is tough to know at this point, given that the Special Topics course is currently underway.

- **What evidence do you have that demonstrates impact on student learning (if applicable)?**

No evidence at this point in time.

- **What were the limitations or failings of this project, and how, in retrospect, might they have been better addressed or remedied?**

There were numerous limitations. As stated before, a major limitation was undertaking this ITL, in particular, during an election year in which a President who has polarized the country along many demographic lines, including race, was voted into office. At the level of the Walla Walla Public Schools and all across the country, having structured conversations regarding race and racism were seen as potentially feeding into this polarization during a time when increased calm and stability were priorities.

In addition, it became clear that WWPS teachers are very hesitant to give up precious class time to increase time given to non-curricular learning that takes away from class time that can be used to achieve their immediate curricular goals. This is understandable. We are exploring the possibility of a program that would take place after school.