

FINAL REPORT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROJECT

Attending Phi Alpha Theta National Conference

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This final report addresses the results of a professional enhancement project funded by an ATU Professional Development Grant. The project was approved in late 2013 and completed in January 2014. I received \$703 in the form of a PDG, plus \$200 from Department funds and \$300 from A & H College funds. This report follows the instructions provided in the Guidelines for Professional Development Grants.

A. Title Page (see above)

B. Restatement of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

As the new faculty advisor to the ATU chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society, I attended Phi Alpha Theta's national convention, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on January 2-5, 2014. The convention served two purposes. It was an academic conference with paper sessions but it also included workshop sessions intended to help faculty advisors and student leaders seeking to enhance and strengthen the activities of the local chapter. I applied for a professional development grant to cover the costs of travel and conference attendance.

C. Review of the Professional Enhancement Opportunity

Phi Alpha Theta (henceforth PAT) is the national history honor society. Arkansas Tech has had a local chapter since 1996. To the best of my knowledge, no ATU faculty advisor has attended the national convention until this year. The PAT national convention focuses on the work of students: three-quarters of the presentations are by students, both graduate and undergraduates. I estimate that about 600 students and faculty members were in attendance at the Albuquerque convention. My attendance allowed me the opportunity to establish contact with national PAT officials and with other faculty representatives from our region. I was asked to chair two sessions with presentations by undergraduate and graduate students. Furthermore, I attended workshops for faculty advisors and student leaders with an aim towards enhancing the activities of the local chapter. A stronger local chapter can provide leadership and professional opportunities to our students, as well as offering many opportunities for faculty members to interact with students outside of the classroom, to serve the university in new ways, and to serve the historical profession. After attending this convention, I am better suited to further these goals.

D. Summary of Experiences

At the conference, I chaired two panel sessions:

Panel 2-05 "Religious History" with presentations by students from Sam Houston State, Brigham Young, and New Jersey City University.

Panel 8-03 "Religious History" with presentations by students from Grove City College (Penn.) and Rollins College (Flor.).

Both sessions offered plenty of time for me to make extensive comments on the papers, to allow for abundant questions from the audience, and for me to get acquainted with the student presenters. The enthusiasm of the young historians was infectious and I returned determined to encourage our own students to participate in future conferences.

I also attended a number of sessions, including one on "Teaching Historiography to Undergraduates" and another on "How to Plan a Successful Regional Conference," both of which offered relevant information for my teaching and my role as faculty advisor.

I was also able to make contact and network with several leaders of Phi Alpha Theta, including Kyle Day of UA-Monticello, who serves on PAT's national advisory board and is very active at our own state's PAT conference, and Jochen Burgdorf of Cal State Fullerton, who also serves on the national advisory board and is the faculty advisor for one of the largest and most active chapters in the country.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Arkansas Tech University has hosted the Arkansas Regional PAT Conference in 2001, 2006, and 2011. I have offered to help host the 2016 meeting at ATU and the regional organization has accepted that preliminary offer. My experiences at the national convention will strengthen my ability to organize and help to host the regional conference. Hosting the regional conference will be a great opportunity for our students and faculty to take active roles in presenting papers, chairing sessions, organizing the conference, and meeting other students and professors from around the state. Finally, hosting the regional conference will enhance ATU's reputation around the state and offer a fine opportunity to show off our campus and hospitality to visitors from around the state.

2. I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the students I met at the PAT conference. I recognized what a wonderful opportunity it is for students to have a conference that focuses on their work, at their level of ability, without the intensity and scrutiny of a "faculty-driven" conference. It was also clear to me that our students at ATU need to participate in more regional and national conferences in the field of history. Following my experience at Albuquerque, I did bring two ATU students to present papers at this year's state conference at ASU-Jonesboro. Along with Dr. James Moses, I have encouraged our graduate students to participate in the Mid-America Conference on History, to be held this fall at UA-Fort Smith. So far, three of our students have been accepted on the program and others will surely attend.

Both of these developments were encouraged and supported by my attendance at the national Phi Alpha Theta conference. The Professional Development Grant has already brought about tangible results.