

**Final Report – Professional Development Grant
Association for Applied Therapeutic Humor**

Penny P. Willmering
Professor and Director of
Rehabilitation Science
Department of Behavioral Sciences
Witherspoon Hall 336
Arkansas Tech University
Russellville, AR 72801
479-968-0461
Email: pwillmering@atu.edu

Date Granted: October 12, 2015
Final Report Submitted: January 20, 2016

**Final Report – Professional Development Grant
Association for Applied Therapeutic Humor**

RESTATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This grant helped to fund my attendance to the Association for Applied Therapeutic Humor in Mesa, Arizona.

REVIEW OF THE WORK / PROCEDURE

I co-presented a presentation entitled, *Crip Jokes: The Appropriate Use of Disability Humor*. In addition, I spent an entire day attending Humor Academy, Level 1. The Humor Academy is a three-year program that entitles individuals to attain the designation of Certified Humor Intervention Professional. Since leaving the conference, I have been engaged in the study of humor and meeting with my fellow students as we study the neurobiology of humor, therapeutic uses, and ongoing research. After I finish the three years, I will be able to add the CHIP designation to my professional counseling license, and apply the information to my pedagogy.

Attending the conference facilitated my understanding of how humor is used across varied human service disciplines to assist in physical and psychological healing, and improve quality of life for many individuals. It also allowed me to talk with others about a potential humor and disability research agenda.

OUTCOMES

I attended the conference and presented the beginnings of my next research project. I also met many others conducting research in the area of the psychological and physiological effects of humor and learned about research I can take back into the classroom. In addition, I was the first recipient of the William B. Fry Scholarship, which supports new researchers in the area of humor. The scholarship paid for the Humor Academy day and I was honored at the luncheon, during which it was announced I was from ATU.

CONCLUSIONS

The grant funding enabled me to attend the conference and learn beneficial concepts both for my new research agenda and for classroom application. Current trends in positive psychology, such as humor, have been demonstrated to have beneficial effects for persons with disabilities. The connections I made at the conference will help me as I move forward in looking at the role of humor and adaptation to disability.