CCTL GRANT APPLICATION

APPLICANT INFORMATION

A. Application Grant Year (e.g. 2019-20): 2019-20

B. Project Title: Bridging the Reading Gap: Moving Pre-Freshmen beyond their Reading Histories to Effectively Read History in College

C. Applicant Name(s): Sharon Green, Ed.M. sgreen@niagara.edu; 716-286-8071.

D. Department(s): Academic Success Center

E. List any / all CCTL grants received in the past 5 years. Include grant year, project title and list highlights of the outcomes (presentations including brown-bag sessions, publications, main results).

In the past five years, I received one CCTL grant, in 2014, for this project: “Increasing Student Engagement in Reading by Creating YouTube Interviews.” I shared the results in my presentation at the CCTL conference in January 2015.

Outcomes: Many CRL 101 students dislike reading and before college read few full books on their own. In CRL 101, students must read one of six high-interest nonfiction books. To increase active engagement with this reading, my 2014 CCTL grant project introduced a new assignment: in small groups, students made short YouTube videos in which they simulated interviews with people in the book. The post-project assessment that I administered revealed these outcomes:

- 79% of the students reported that they read their book to the end.
- 76% reported that they skimmed or re-read parts of the book as they prepared their video.
- 42% reported that they read their book more carefully because they had to write a script for the video.
  (These three outcomes were most significant because in the past some students struggled just to finish the book.)
- 26% reported that creating the video enabled them to better understand the book.
- 29% reported that they liked working with other students in their group because if they had questions about the book they could ask others.
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1. Describe the goals of the project and the impact the project will have on active and/or integrative learning in higher education. Discuss both your courses/discipline and transferability to the Niagara University community and higher education more broadly.

For many years, the NUOP Pre-college Summer Program consisted only of non-credit skills courses, and I taught “Introduction to College Reading.” In 2016, we transformed the summer program to include a three-credit course, HIS 199, taught by Dr. Michael Durfee. This change has significantly improved the program experience for students. To allow adequate time for HIS 199, we had to blend our three skills courses into one, LSK 200, “Introduction to College Academics.” Ironically, although HIS 199 requires considerable reading, I now have less instructional time to guide students as they transition to the rigors of college reading.

Many NUOP students enter college with a weak reading history for reasons such as attendance at low-performing high schools; limited outside-of-class reading expectations before college; home or community environments devoid of reading; work and/or family responsibilities that left little time for leisure reading; or time away from school. Some NUOP students are also non-native speakers of English.

Just days after high school graduation, NUOP pre-college summer program students must complete substantial reading for HIS 199: 13 chapters from the textbook Major Problems in American History since 1945, as well as the 123-page book George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution 1963-1994 by Dan T. Carter. The latter has been particularly challenging for program students. My project aims to enhance reading instruction to increase students’ understanding of this book that is central to Dr. Durfee’s HIS 199 course.

This book, as well as the textbook chapters, pose many challenges: a level of sophistication (word choice; sentence structure; concepts; length; and assumption of background knowledge that students may lack) markedly different from what many students are accustomed to. In past summers, some students skimmed; others simply tried to memorize facts; still others didn’t complete the reading. My role in LSK 200, which I wish to strengthen through this project, is to help students change these habits and increase their college-level reading proficiency, both literal and analytical, before their freshman year.

2. Provide a brief literature review and describe how your project would further develop the discipline.

Considerable research in the field of developmental education describes strategies to help under-prepared students successfully transition to college. According to Stahl and Boylan (2003), “Most of today's developmental students avoided college preparatory courses in high school and only decided to attend college either late in their high school careers or after graduation” and “minority students tend to be disproportionately represented in developmental education” (5). This describes many of our NUOP Summer Program students.

Effective reading is vital to success in college, and much research has also been devoted to helping students develop requisite reading and study skills through developmental education courses and programs. According to Mulcahy-Ernt and Caverly, “Useful student-oriented study-reading strategies are those that emulate mature, successful readers in academe” (180). The components of this project aim to move students in this direction.

Further, Holschuh and Aultman describe the importance of guiding developmental college students to strengthen their literal and analytical comprehension skills: “…teaching students to isolate [key information] is…crucial [yet] many students encounter difficulty in isolating important material” (133). The first component of my project (the literal comprehension questions to accompany the Carter book) is designed to accomplish this. Holschuh and Aultman also stress that “Annotation is a logical ‘next step’ in teaching students how to isolate key information” (133), and annotation “…goes beyond …isolation [because] students are actually transforming information by changing or personalizing it in some way” (134). The double-entry journal component of my project is designed to do this.
3. Detail how active and/or integrative learning will be studied to accomplish the goals described in (1). Identify potential problems you may encounter and alternative tactics or strategies you would implement if these occur.

The goal of this project is to help students better comprehend the Carter book because understanding this book is essential to succeed in Dr. Durfee’s class. In the past, this book, although relatively short, challenged students.

In each of my fifteen 75-minute sessions with students, they will silently read for about 50 minutes. To guide students’ literal comprehension, I will write questions to accompany each chapter, listed chronologically. The questions will be designed to help students more fully understand the Carter book on a sentence- and paragraph-level (see Appendix 2 for sample questions).

Vocabulary is a particularly acute deficit for many summer program students, and “...students’ vocabulary appears to be a substantial predictor of academic performance in general (Turner and Williams 65). Therefore, some of my questions will integrate challenging words that students may not know, to move students beyond the all-too-common habit of skipping over unfamiliar words to become more active, curious readers willing to use context clues and a dictionary. I will also prepare a list of the 30 words most frequently used in Carter’s book (for example, the word “explicit,” which many students do not know, appears at least eight times in the book). In Week 1, students will define the words and then refer to the list as they read.

To promote analytical comprehension while reading more actively, students will respond to the Carter book by writing entries in a modified double-entry journal, with pages divided into two columns (see Appendix 2). In the left-hand column, students will summarize key points, including page numbers to develop the essential habit of citing. In the right-hand column, students will jot reactions such as: What surprised you? What confused you? What angered you? What references were unfamiliar? Does this remind you of anything you’ve observed or experienced? How does this connect to Dr. Durfee’s lecture? What do you think will come next?

The double-entry journal approach to annotating is intended to move students beyond surface reading and become more actively engaged with reading. This approach is particularly well suited to a history course. Before college, students tend to perceive history as a series of names, dates, and events to be memorized. However, college history asks students to think about, analyze, and even question events, people, and decisions, and this is certainly true of Dr. Durfee’s approach to HIS 199. This double-entry journal approach can better prepare students to contribute to class discussions in HIS 199. It can also help students write the required precis assignments for HIS 199. Further, Dr. Durfee will reward students for writing these entries by including credit in his course grade.

The remaining 20 minutes of each session will be devoted to discussing and refining what students wrote. In small groups, students will share their entries, checking their comprehension against one another.

The goal of this project – moving pre-freshmen beyond the ways they read (or did not read) before college – is at the heart of active, integrative learning. The NUOP Summer Program is designed to provide a bridge between high school and college for disadvantaged students. The more students practice active reading habits during the summer program, the greater chance they will extend these habits into their fall courses and beyond. And the more they hone their literal and analytical comprehension skills, the better prepared they will be for future college courses.

A potential problem with this project may be adequate time for students to read the Carter book, in addition to the textbook chapters, answer the questions I will write, and write the double-entry journals. This will be addressed on Monday through Thursday evenings, when students attend required study sessions. These study sessions, which will be monitored by peer counselors whom the NUOP Program director is currently seeking, give students additional time for reading and responding. I will train the peer counselors so they are familiar with this project and the reading assignments. In addition, the NUOP program assistant director is currently seeking a graduate intern for the program. If one is found, s/he may be available during my class or during the evening study hours to help students with their reading and responses.
4. Clearly describe the assessment techniques you will use to evaluate the effectiveness of the active and/or integrative teaching strategy (e.g. pre-post testing, surveys, anecdotal evaluations, etc.). Optionally provide attachments as an appendix if assessment instruments are already developed.

I will circulate as students are answering the literal comprehension questions and as they write their entries, pausing to assist students as needed. At the end of most classes, I will provide the answers to the literal comprehension questions, so students will have immediate feedback. However, I will occasionally collect and correct them after class. In addition, I will periodically collect, read, and comment on their journal entries. This will give me an opportunity to diagnose reading problems, which I will address through individual assistance. Dr. Durfee will also occasionally review journal entries so he can gauge students’ understanding of the Carter book.

At the end of the summer program, I will administer a Likert-type assessment to learn how students feel about the reading strategies in this project. I will also communicate regularly with Dr. Durfee about his observations of students’ understanding of the reading and any impact on their performance on his tests and written assignments. Further, I will administer a second Likert-type assessment during fall semester to determine if students are applying the reading strategies from the NUOP Summer Program to their fall courses, and if so, if they find the strategies helpful.

(Note: My reading support with NUOP Summer Program students is part of LSK 200, which also includes Martha Krupa’s writing support and Ginny Pasceri’s study skills support. The three of us collaborate to give each student one final grade – “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” – for all three areas. Because of this collaborative grading, final course grades in LSK 200 cannot reliably assess students’ reading gains based on this project.)

5. Provide a detailed implementation plan (timeline) of activities you will undertake for this project. When will the project be enacted in the classroom? When do you anticipate completion of the project? Dissemination of the results?

- May-June 2019: I will re-read Dan T. Carter’s book, write the literal comprehension questions, compile the list of often-used vocabulary words in the book, and prepare students’ double-entry journals.
- July 3-July 26, 2019: I will carry out the project during the 2019 NUOP Summer Program.
- August 2019: I will analyze the results of the project.
- 2019-2020 academic year: I would like to disseminate the results at a CCTL conference, retreat, or brown-bag presentation on campus.
- July 2020: I plan to refine and replicate the project in the 2020 NUOP Summer Program.

6. How do you plan to disseminate the results of the project through channels emphasizing the scholarship of teaching and learning? Please specify conferences, journals or other venues that you have in mind.

- I would like to share the results at a CCTL conference, retreat, or brown-bag presentation in the 2019-2020 academic year.
- I would also like to do a conference presentation on this project at the national level (at either the National Organization for Student Success, formerly the National Association for Developmental Education; see https://thenade.org) conference in March 2020, or at the CRLA (College Reading and Learning Association; see http://2019conference.crla.net/) conference in November 2020, if my department has the funds to send me to a conference.
Appendix 1: Reference List


Appendix 2: Samples

Literal comprehension of the Dan T. Carter book: Sample questions, with difficult vocabulary highlighted

Directions: Write TRUE or FALSE in the space provided. Do not abbreviate.

1. Ronald Reagan’s charismatic personality helped him get elected President.
2. In his 1980 campaign, Reagan advocated for a decrease in the military.
3. Reagan, who had been governor of California for eight years, had a strong record of supporting civil rights.
4. Reagan borrowed a line from George Wallace to defend his actions on civil rights.
5. Conservative white evangelicals supported the Reagan administration.
6. When the Voting Rights Act was up for renewal in 1982, Reagan refused to support it.
7. Reagan’s Assistant Attorney General William Bradford Reynolds did not support affirmative action programs.
8. While he was President, Reagan named two Supreme Court justices.
9. Reagan also appointed over 300 appeals court and district court judges, and most were young white males who did not support affirmative action.
10. Reagan took a dim view of the welfare state.
11. Reagan did not believe in laissez-faire economics.
12. Reagan and his predecessor, President Jimmy Carter, had similar views on the economy.
14. “Reaganomics” had adverse effects on the poor, especially poor blacks.
15. The increase in the number of single-parent households exacerbated other negative economic forces in the US.
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Analytical comprehension of the Dan T. Carter book: Sample of double-entry journal

*From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich…* by Dan T. Carter, pp. ________ - ________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As you read, summarize main points here. Feel free to abbreviate, but be sure your notes are accurate and make sense to you.</th>
<th>In this column, jot reactions next to your summary notes. For example: Did this surprise you? Did it confuse you? Did it anger you? Was anything unfamiliar? Does this remind you of anything you’ve observed or experienced? How does it connect to the lecture? What do you think will come next?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be sure to include the page number.</td>
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