

Title of Grant: National Park Research and Writing Project for Composition 112

S2008 – 188P –PF

Date of Funding: Summer 2008

Name: Margaret Buse

College: Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC)

Email: busem@brcc.edu

Abstract:

This grant funded a multi-platform learning project that included lecture, video, audio and primary and secondary sources regarding the development of Shenandoah National Park and the Resettlement of over 1000 families in the park's boundaries.

Actual Outcomes:

Students were able to evaluate source information and databases with and without built-in biases. For example, Miriam Sizer's research and book that classifies the mountain people as a particular demographic compared to actual oral history collections and first person interviews with people resettled off of the park. In regards to Appalachian studies and area history, currently, this is the only research organizing multiple sources of the SNP and resettlement project that has not been funded by the Park Service and therefore with inherent biases-for example, first person interviews with current SNP education coordinator reveals that SNP promotes that the mountain people had "no culture". Students reviewed a variety of sources to evaluate and determine if that is accurate providing ample opportunity for persuasive essay writing, research papers and group research projects and presentations. The community service area of BRCC was directly affected by the building of SNP and relocation and many students and their families come from descendants of those mountain families. For instance, one of our dean's families was moved off of the mountain land for the building of the park.

Other Colleges:

n/a

Discussion and Critique:

Students involved in the materials with this project have enjoyed the hands-on aspect of the research as well as the ability to choose from a variety of research topics. Student feedback has included requests to expand this topic to include debates and collaboration with the theater department in staging "Mountain Home" by Susan Hull that is a dramatization of the resettlement. In the Spring 2009, I will be also incorporating group reading and research circles which have been previously successful in 111 classes. Student research groups will look at a variety of print, electronic research media; decide on a research topic affiliated with this work (i.e., eminent domain or mountain school systems, etc.) and have

a semester- long online community for discussion and collaboration. The final project will be a short group informative paper that details the methodology of their research and findings with a presentation to the class and an interactive class activity. Complimentary activities will include a lecture and two- day workshop from Appalachian author Maxine McCall funded by a BRCC foundation grant that I received this fall. Recommendations for future projects would include possible workshops held during the BRCC Appalachian Music festival, theater production of Mountain Home and a VCCS grant to develop a website for the significant source material found and developed for this project. Also, I would like to continue to explore the feasibility of mapping an original home site with the family oral history tapes and database records as well as researching the CCC activities in development of the Park.

Evaluation:

Evaluated a variety of sources for disseminating to students so that they can formulate an unbiased research plan from a variety of sources and perspectives. Mid and end of the semester Spring 2009 Evaluations of the full project in 112 classrooms will be available on VCCS request.

Dissemination:

I plan to submit a proposal for this project for the VCCS New Horizons and the Appalachian Studies Conference as well as an appropriate article detailing the work and student activities for dissemination in the VCCS journal and appropriate Appalachian Studies journals.