

## **Faculty Grant for International Connections Summary Report**

### **Introduction**

I am writing this report to summarize my work in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from June 15-June 30, 2010. First, I will summarize my goals for the trip. I will then summarize the results of the trip. Finally I will conclude with some thoughts for future grant opportunities.

### **Project Goals**

I requested support to meet with researchers at the Laboratory for Ethnography and Studies on Communication, Culture and Cognition (LEECCC) at the Universidade Federal Fluminense, RJ, Brazil, June 15, 2010-June 30, 2010. The purpose of the two week trip was to develop a collaborative research project based on my work in Cuba, Brazil and the United States. Another goal of the meetings was to create future research and scholarly exchanges between students and faculty at Lehigh University and the Universidade Federal Fluminense. Finally, it was my expectation that obtaining funding for this trip would also increase my chances of obtaining future research grants from Fulbright and the National Science Foundation. Additionally, I needed extensive language training before leaving for Brazil, per the request of Dr. Julio Taveres, Director of the LEECCC, in order to be able to give the lecture in Portuguese and to answer questions in Portuguese.

### **Results**

I am happy to say that I have accomplished all of my goals. The funding to complete language training was very important. I met with several faculty members in the Department of Anthropology at the Universidade Federal Fluminense. These meetings were conducted in Portuguese. Many of the researchers and graduate students that attended my lecture, given in Portuguese, were able to understand the presentation and to ask questions. Additionally, they commented that American faculty often come to Brazil, and do not attempt to learn any Portuguese. Therefore, they were very pleased by my decision to conduct my presentations in their language. Additionally, the faculty members of the Department of Anthropology at the Universidade Federal Fluminense eagerly supported a departmental letter of invitation for my Fulbright application. The Universidade Federal Fluminense is also interested in formalizing faculty and student exchanges in the near future.

### **Some Reflections**

This trip to Brazil was a very difficult trip. Some of the things that made this trip difficult were the following:

- My level of cultural integration: although this was my third trip to Brazil, I had not spent a significant period of time in the country. Therefore, there were numerous cultural issues that I grappled with, that made the trip difficult. For example, the lecture was scheduled for June 18<sup>th</sup>, but was canceled on the day of the presentation, because the university closed at the last minute for the World Cup Games. Also, my contact seemed to have disappeared for a few days during

the World Cup. Then it seemed that folks had left for their winter vacation etc. So it was difficult to finally settle on a date for the lecture (June 28<sup>th</sup>). In the end people did attend, even though they were preparing to leave for the winter. In short, this is common in Brazil. The notion of time is very different. If something is canceled at the last minute, or a contact is not there when one arrives at their office... this is quite common.

- Time: In a new country, sometimes we just need time to meet people. I realized that after being in Brazil for a week and a half, people began to get used to me being there. I was on their radar. Even though they knew I was arriving several months before the trip, people cancel trips and plans often. So, it took awhile for people to realize that I was actually *there*. As a result, if I had more time in Brazil, even a week more, that would have made a difference in terms of finalizing some details concerning other goals, such as finalizing some key details for organizing faculty-student exchanges.

### Suggestions

I do not know what I would suggest in terms of the generalized institutional expectations implicitly embedded in the Faculty Grant for International Connections. However I can offer suggestions only for things that may have helped me on my trip. Some of these comments are also a reflection of the issues that arose during the debriefing with Mohamed earlier this semester. Here are my suggestions:

- If a faculty member is going to initiate an institutional connection in a country where the primary language is a new or second language for the faculty member, maybe consider extending the length of stay from two weeks to three weeks or one month. Or even state that the *initial* trip must be completed within three weeks-one month. Even though I had been to Brazil several times for conferences, and I had significant contacts there, this is a different type of trip. Because I went alone to meet with researchers at a Brazilian University, and to make contacts for future study abroad or faculty exchange opportunities, I had to work according to Brazilian time and cultural norms.
- A pre-briefing before the trip would have helped to frame Lehigh University's expectations concerning my trip abroad. It also would have helped prepare me to answer some of the questions I ended up receiving while I was in Brazil concerning institutional resources, and exactly what the university is prepared to offer for an exchange program. It would have also helped me to have more realistic expectations surrounding what I could accomplish on the trip.
- Perhaps a follow-up grant should be available if the faculty member successfully establishes contact with another university. Perhaps that grant can be based on a letter of invitation and an agenda from the host university or research institution, outlining the plan for the formalization of an institutional exchange. For example, I made great contacts after a lot of hard work, and established an important foundation. Will there be institutional support for me to go for another two weeks next summer to talk concrete details and plans?

I hope that the Office of International Affairs will find this document useful for future projects and grants.