

Faculty Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Application. Electronic submission is preferred. Please include a signature page signed by each team member.

Project Title (up to 25 words)

Attendance and Participation in the International Association for Communication and Sport (IACS) 2017 Summit

List the members of the team and indicate their roles on the project. One member should be identified as Team Leader.

Primary Applicant: Dr. Sandra Alspach

Members of team: Instructor of Communication Paul Zube, and six student members: Alex Freeman, Scott Vander Sloot, Sean Williams, Megan Jean, Nick Owens, and Dylan Helms

Department or unit: College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Humanities

Contact Information for Team Leader:

Dr. Sandra Alspach
Department of Humanities / Sports Communication Champion
College of Arts and Sciences
Phone: (231) 591-2779
Email: SandraAlspach@ferris.edu
Office: JOH 127

Project Summary (150-200 words). If the application is approved the project summary will be posted on the Diversity and Inclusion Office website.

Sport is one of the common languages that “transcends boundaries” such as nation, gender, race, and class. Traveling to the International Association for Communication and Sport 2017 Summit in Phoenix affords students the “opportunity to create new partnerships enhancing the university’s commitment to and work with diverse populations.” This opportunity also allows the team to present the paper titled, “The Digital Stadium: Social Media and the Influence of Fandom on Athlete Performance.” Ferris faculty and students collaborated on this project with the hopes of presenting their work at the summit, achieving excellence in their literary canon.

Students have the opportunity to be exposed to “research and critical analysis from diverse disciplinary and theoretical perspectives,” as researchers from around the world attend and

present at this conference. Our plan is to share our knowledge gained from this International Summit with the Ferris community to further the diversity goals of the university. Experiences gained and shared can assist with Ferris State University's recruitment and retention efforts.

Project Narrative

Studies in communication and sport expose students to media from broad disciplinary views that address sociology, politics, philosophy, history, management, marketing, economics, sport studies along with cultural, urban, gender, race, sexuality and ability studies, making it theoretically diverse. Students need to be exposed to research and critical analysis from diverse disciplinary and theoretical perspectives to advance understanding of communication phenomena in the varied contexts through which sport touches individuals, society, and culture. “In a world in which we are increasingly communities of different tastes and niches, sport remains one of the few common languages that transcend boundaries of nation, gender, race, and class.” Lawrence Wenner, Loyola Marymount University, Editor, *Communication and Sport*.

One of the Diversity Plan Strategic Goals is to “build upon existing partnerships and create new partnerships that enhance the University’s commitment to and work with diverse populations.” In spring 2016, Ferris State University hosted the Ninth Summit of Communication and Sport. Many from around the world attended. Members from Germany, The United Kingdom, Spain, Canada, and Belgium traveled to Grand Rapids, Michigan. At this summit, four students of the College of Arts and Sciences acted as ambassadors for the university and worked as moderators for every session. This year, students have the opportunity to learn from, and present to, scholars from several countries at this same conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

Examples of topics that were presented last year include: Internationalization of Communication and Sport, Examination of Basketball without borders in South Africa, Empirical Insights from German Media, and Analysis of the Coaches Communication Model and their Public Images from the BBVA Spanish Soccer League. Information shared by the diverse list of scholars in attendance for the 10th Summit in Arizona can be shared with students and faculty within the college and university to further the diversity goals of the university.

Eventually the goal for the paper is publication in a refereed journal. The short term target audience is the international audience at the 2017 summit for communication and sport. Over one hundred scholars, graduate students, graduate school hopefuls, university faculty, and members of the corporate arena including a minor league sport president and vice president were in attendance last year and a similar number should be expected again. The project will be promoted within the department as well as at sports communication meetings. After the event students will hold an open forum during a regular April, 2017 meeting to discuss their unique experience. They will share what they learned on the diversity of research being presented in the communication and sport discipline by researchers from around the world. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will be invited as well as faculty who wish to learn of this experience and implement a similar practice to achieve excellence, and foster more distinctive learning experiences for students. Students were selected for travel with this project based on the merit of their work. For that reason the student authors as well as the coding team, an instrumental part of the project, were selected.

Another Diversity Plan Strategic Goal is to “Improve inclusivity by incorporating diversity and inclusion in significant ways in teaching, learning, and research.” For summer 2016, fall 2016 and spring 2017, two students will be working with Dr. Alsapach and Instructor Zube to co-author

a paper titled, “The Digital Stadium: Social Media and the Influence of Fandom on Athlete Performance.” Working as “equals” increases student inclusion in the project, and their area of study. Increased inclusion results in increased retention and graduation at Ferris State University. This project allows students to be the driving force behind it with the faculty as a resource to help facilitate it to completion.

Ferris State University’s Strategic Initiative “C,” “Innovation for Programming and Pedagogy,” is concurrent with this project. The “creative experimentation” of Ferris faculty in this situation is providing “enhanced” delivery and learning. Real experience on abstract and literature review writing, as well as coding, has been taught and learned over the past six months as the paper has taken shape. “Collaboration within” the college of Arts and Sciences has been supported with this project.

Ferris State University’s core values include collaboration, diversity, ethical community, excellence, learning, and opportunity. In the creation of this paper, students from the sports communication program *collaborated* with each other, as well as Ferris faculty. Attending the 10th summit of Communication and Sport gives students the chance to experience great *diversity* of individuals as well as research orientations and techniques. In past years, leading scholars in communication and sport from around the country and world presented diverse topics. They tackled issues on gendered commentary during women’s soccer, gendered social media content, the internationalization of research, and women’s coverage in media as compared to men’s coverage. Another core value of Ferris State is excellence: “committed to innovation and creativity, Ferris strives to produce the highest quality outcomes in all its endeavors.” Given the opportunity, students of the sports communication program can pursue this value by presenting their research at a professional conference furthering their *excellence* in learning. Original research by students has been conducted on a unique topic. The end goal of the project is to present in Phoenix in front of the titans of communication and sport research. Ferris State is committed to learning: “values education that is career-oriented, balances theory and practice, develops critical thinking, emphasizes active learning, and fosters responsibility and the desire for the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.” Completing research within sports is the most career oriented activity an undergraduate studying sports communication can get, since every career in the Sports industry depends on data gleaned from research for decision making. In addition, the paper is student driven shifting the responsibility onto the student.

The paper, “The Digital Stadium: Social Media and the Influence of Fandom on Athlete Performance,” is authored by Dr. Sandra Alspach, Instructor of Communication Paul Zube, Scott Vander Sloot, and Alex Freeman. Scott Vander Sloot began preliminary research of current literature as a part of his Communication 397 independent study in summer 2016. This work entailed locating and writing research summaries, writing the final literature review, and assisting Paul Zube and Alex Freeman with abstract writing. Dr. Alspach oversaw this process, offering guidance for sources of information to examine and editing the paper. Instructor Paul Zube and Alex Freeman took a random sample of baseball players and “screenshot” all posts and comments from their social media in the sample. Then, they developed a code book to operationally define all possible comments. The codebook was presented to the coders: Nick Owens, Dylan Helms, Megan Jean, and Sean Williams. After a three-hour training session and a reliability test to determine the coders were performing their task at the level of rigor expected in

social sciences research, they were given five days to complete their coding and return the data. Instructor Paul Zube and Alex Freeman then interpreted the findings to determine significance.

An abstract for a paper titled “The Digital Stadium: Social Media and the Influence of Fandom on Athlete Performance” was submitted on October 14th for review to the International Association for Communication and Sport selection committee. Selection will be made in December. The IACS 10th summit will be held in Phoenix, Arizona. The Summit begins March 30th, 2017 and ends April 2nd, 2017. Research furthering the Communication and Sport discipline will be presented. Ideally, all six students included on the application would fly from Michigan to Phoenix on March 30th, 2017, the opening day of the summit. They would stay three nights in the Embassy Suites where the conference is being held, returning home on April 2nd, 2017. This grant would cover the costs of their flights and lodging.

Goals and assessment for the project:

The goals and intended outcomes for the Sports Communication students attending the International Association for Communication and Sport 2017 Summit are:

1. Attendees will listen to individual international presenters as well as panel discussions.
 - Students will be expected to listen to at least three papers authored by international scholars to further the “University’s commitment to diverse populations” so long as they do not interfere with their own presentation should our paper be accepted.
2. Attendees will report on their learnings from the sessions they attend at the Summit.
 - Students will experience “enhanced” delivery by listening to a diverse range of topics covered in their area of study. Learning about the research process can “foster responsibility and desire for the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.” Concurrent with the College of Arts and Sciences diversity goals reporting on their learnings demonstrates the infusion of diversity into the curriculum. Students will have the opportunity to report on their learning during an open forum following their return from the event as well as in the Sports Communication classes, COMM 389 and COMM 489 offered in Spring semester.
3. The paper entitled “The Digital Stadium: Social Media and the Influence of Fandom on Athlete Performance” will be presented at the Summit.
 - Students and faculty together will present the study cementing their “partnership” and “commitment to innovation.” Presentation at the Summit would be the “highest quality outcome” for this endeavor.
4. Attendees will meet and network with scholars and higher education professionals at the Summit.
 - An international conference gives students access to a diverse population they normally would not have opportunity to interact with. This experience allows the attendees the opportunity to “create new partnerships” with “diverse

populations.” These connections would forward the University’s commitment to diversity.

The assessment required in the reporting process will ensure students are thoughtful and purposeful with their learning over the course of the Summit. This learning will allow Ferris State to graduate students with a “diversity of ideas, beliefs, and cultures.” Having the opportunity to interact with such a diverse assembly will open the students’ eyes to the possibilities of research and breadth of ideas that sport has. The attendance of international discussants on panels and individual paper presenters will give the students exposure to diverse teaching and research practices. If successful in being selected to present “The Digital Stadium: Social Media and the Influence of Fandom on Athlete Performance,” students will work in collaboration with faculty in this “active learning” environment facilitated by “creative experimentation” by Dr. Alspach, and Instructor Zube. Travel to the 10th Summit of Communication and Sport will further the University’s commitment to excellence and do so in a fashion that provides attendees with a diverse and unique opportunity.

Budget

Anticipated expenses:

Flights:	6 round trip tickets approx. \$600 each	\$3,600
Food:	4 days \$40 per day per person, 6 people	\$ 960
Lodging:	3 nights at \$199 per night, 2 rooms	\$1,194
Registration:	6 student members* at \$140	\$ 840
Fuel:	Gas to drive one vehicle to and from airport	\$ 60
Fees:	Parking \$13x4 days, shuttle \$25 each way	\$ 102

Total \$6,756

Anticipated contribution from other sources: \$2,955

** Student Government Finance Division Travel Grant \$2,000

** Department of Humanities Student Travel grant \$ 955

Request from Faculty/Staff Mini Diversity Grant **\$3,801**

*Memberships: Students will pay for IACS annual membership @ \$40 \$ 240

Final Report.

A final report is required. Failure to submit the final report will exempt all team members from future mini-grant funding.

Expected completion date: _5/5/16_____

The final report is due 90 days after the expected completion date. Final reports should be submitted to the Diversity and Inclusion Office.

Budget Overview			
	Requested Grant Funds	Funding from other sources	TOTAL BUDGET
STIPEND			
HONORARIA			
	\$3,600		\$3,600
	\$ 60		\$ 60
TRAVEL & Lodging	\$ 102	\$1,194	\$ 102
FOOD		\$ 960	
RENTALS			

PRINTING & DUPLICATING			
PROMOTION			
SUPPLIES & POSTAGE			
RESOURCE MATERIALS			
ASSESSMENT TOOLS			
OTHER: Student registration		\$ 840	
TOTAL	\$3,801	*\$2,955	\$3,801

*requested grants from outside sources: \$39 deficit included in this grant request