

CSC GRANTS APPLICATION: Encouraging the Development of Pre-Service French Teachers

Need to be Addressed

The need to be addressed by this proposal is twofold. First (and under the Special Projects umbrella) is the problem of stagnating enrollments in French, as well as the decreasing number of post-secondary students in Nebraska who are going into language education. One of the aims of this project is to provide student membership to the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) to approximately 17 advanced post-secondary students of French (none of whom are presently planning to become French teachers).

The second need to be addressed by this proposal is a long-range study of the effect, if any, that student membership in a language teaching professional organization has on subsequent involvement with that organization (via applications for grants and scholarships, conference attendance) and on the decision to become a language teacher.

Goals of the Project

There are several goals of this project. First, this project seeks to promote the advanced study of French by encouraging participants to become involved in an extracurricular community of language teachers and learners through student membership in the AATF. It is hoped that through the membership and email correspondence with the author on topics and issues raised in the AATF National Bulletin, these students will become more passionate about French language and culture, language advocacy, that they will apply for AATF scholarships and grants, attend national conferences, and ultimately consider entering the language teaching profession. Membership in the organization and email discussion group participation is intended to give students a sense of belonging to a group that shares their interest in French, as well as demonstrate the vibrancy of the French language teaching profession.

A second, yet equally important, goal of this project is to examine the effects, if any, that the student membership and discussion groups have on students' extracurricular involvement with French (via applications for grants and scholarships, conference attendance), and its effect on students' decision to become (or not become) language teachers. Details of the study are explained in the Evaluation Plan below.

Target Audience

There is both a direct and an indirect target audience for this project. The direct target audience is the group of students who will be involved in this project by receiving student membership in the AATF, as well as participating in the discussion groups. The potential indirect target audience will be the future students that may be taught by the target audience, should they decide to enter into the language teaching profession, as hoped. An additional secondary audience for this project will be current language educators with whom the results of this investigation will be shared.

Benefits to Participants

Participants will benefit from information about the utility of the French language and opportunities to use French in future employment, particularly language teaching in Nebraska. They will also benefit from a sense of belonging to a larger community that shares their interest in French. Finally, the results of the study of the effects of membership on student involvement in the language teaching profession will be shared with other language educators and institutions in Nebraska and also at a future Central States Conference, so that others may determine whether or not they would like to fund-raise through student organizations to automatically provide advanced students with membership in various local, regional, or national language teaching organizations.

Evaluation Plan

In addition to email discussion asking participants to comment on topics raised in the National Bulletin, provided as part of AATF membership, participants will be asked to share information concerning any AATF awards, scholarships, conferences, or other activities in which they have become involved. Participants will also be tracked for two years following the membership period to determine: 1) if they have maintained contact with the AATF; 2) if they have benefited from membership by receiving a scholarship, grant, or through other resources; and 3) if they have considered or in fact become a language teacher.

Dissemination Plan

The findings of this investigation will be shared through several media. First, results will be shared with French teachers in Nebraska at the NAATF fall meeting. Also, it is the author's hope that at least one of the participants will be interested in co-presenting the findings of this study by discussing the impact (or lack thereof) of student membership and of the email follow-up discussions from the student's perspective. The results will be shared at a future Central States Conference.

Plan for Continuation

All participants will be tracked for a period of two years following the grant period. Should the investigation find a strong positive effect for: 1) encouraging language study; 2) encouraging participation in French-themed organizations and activities; 3) encouraging students to enter into the language teaching profession, the author will attempt to continue to fund student membership for advanced students--or at least subsidize membership--with the help of the French Club through campus fund-raising efforts.

Budget

1. 17 student memberships @ \$22 = \$374
2. Postage/telecommunications to administer surveys after graduation = \$50
3. Books and AATF promotional materials = \$50

TOTAL \$474

N.B. The author appreciates the fact that the CSC cannot be expected to simply pay for membership in other organizations. However, it is the author's hope that the reviewers will recognize this one-time expense as a part of the larger research agenda.