ACS Grants Program: Final Report Form

Instructions:

- Respond to items 1-7 in no more than five pages.
- Along with your final budget report, submit this document to dmorton@colleges.org (see www.colleges.org/grants/forms)
- Note that portions or the entirety of your final report may be reprinted on the ACS grants webpage, so please indicate any portions that should not be made public at this time

Name of Project Lead:	Kenneth Scott Morrell
Host Institution:	Rhodes College
Project Title:	Studying Cultures of the Ancient Mediterranean through a Comprehensive, Inter-Institutional Program
Today's Date:	January 9, 2020

1. Project summary

This phase of the project initiated the process of integrating the infrastructure for the study of ancient Mediterranean cultures at the five participating institutions (Birmingham Southern College, Millsaps College, Rhodes College, Spelman College, and Southwestern University) in a way that would expand the options for students and balance the demand for instruction in the field with faculty resources. Combined, these five institutions have approximately fourteen FTEs in the field, representing most of the major subfields of language and literature, art and archaeology, and history. Beyond the scope of the work outlined in this phase, the ultimate goal is to create a virtual department that would allow students at any of the collaborating institutions to major in the study of one or more ancient Mediterranean cultures. The immediate goals of this phase were to create a system of shared courses and to develop a common, more inclusive curriculum in Latin that would serve as the foundation for inter-institutional advanced courses. Below are the specific goals under each category.

Shared courses

1. Advanced Latin. One advanced Latin course offered by Millsaps or Rhodes would be available each semester to students at the other participating campuses.
2. Ancient Greek. Rhodes would open its elementary sequence, Greek 101 in the fall and Greek 102 in the spring, to students at the other participating institutions.
3. Ancient history and culture courses. The project would make one course in the history, culture, or reception of the ancient Mediterranean world available to students at the other institutions each semester.

Latin Curriculum

The project sought to develop an elementary and intermediate curriculum in Latin to address three objectives:

1. Facilitating the students' transition from study at the intermediate level to courses at the advanced level through a common curriculum that could eventually replace the different curricula in use at the participating institutions.
2. Aligning the curriculum with the trends toward institutional emphases in the STEM fields by integrating language and texts related to medicine to make the study of Latin more germane for students interested in professions in the health sciences.
3. Creating extensible, easily adaptable materials for students, which would be available online at little or no cost, incorporate multimedia, and reflect an inclusive approach to the study of Latin in terms of gender, ethnicity, and social status, for example, by featuring texts written by women, in recognition of the increasing diversity among the students at our institutions.

Community

The project also sought to explore ways of creating a sense of community among the students and faculty members at the five institutions, for example, by arranging for travel between the campuses and organizing options for study abroad.

2.   Attainment of goals

Shared Courses

The project coordinator worked with participating faculty members and registrars to share the courses with the following outcomes:

Fall 2018:   One student from Birmingham Southern enrolled in Greek 101
Spring 2019:   One student from Southwestern enrolled in the advanced Latin course offered by Millsaps
Fall 2019:   Two students from Birmingham Southern enrolled in Greek 101
                One student from Southwestern enrolled in the advanced Latin course offered by Rhodes

Currently the two students who took Greek 101 in the fall are planning to continue this spring in Greek 102. At present we have no information about enrollments in the advanced Latin course offered by Rhodes College. In the award letter dated December 6, 2018, the ACS set the target measure of success at an enrollment of six students for the spring semester of 2019 (one in Greek and five in advanced Latin) and ten students for the fall semester of 2019 (across the three proposed courses), which the project has failed to meet, although the current trends are favorable. (See further comments below in section five.)

Latin Curriculum

Planning began in October 2017, and work on the curriculum began the following spring. In addition to monthly conference calls and online meetings, the contributors met in Birmingham on September 14-16, 2018, in Jackson on November 30 - December 2, 2018, in Atlanta on February

22-24, 2019, and again in Birmingham on May 15-17, 2019. Faculty members at Millsaps, Southwestern, and Spelman successfully launched the curriculum in first-semester Latin courses this fall, which is available: https://www.sunoikisis.org/acs-latin-text/.

On May 3, 2019, Morrell, Samson, and Sypniewski presented "A Latin Curriculum Set in Africa Proconsularis" at *Teaching Rome at Home: The Classics in America*, a conference organized by the Department of Classics at the University of Maryland, College Park. We provided an overview of the rationale behind the project and progress to date as well as demonstrated the features of the website. Gilbert, Haskell, Samson, and Sypniewski will hold a workshop on "Creating a Latin Curriculum Through Collaboration" during the annual meetings of the Classical Association of the Middle, West, and South on March 28, 2020.

Community

The technical infrastructure using Google Meets has successfully integrated remote participants into the class setting at the sending institutions. Morrell also consulted with the student at Birmingham Southern in conjunction with the meeting on the Latin curriculum in September 2018 and met with the two students during the fall semester of 2019 on September 24, December 5, and December 6 in Birmingham.

3. Impact of project

Constituencies

The project has successfully enriched the academic experiences of the students who participated in the shared courses and who are now using a new elementary Latin curriculum. This curriculum represents a significant improvement over the printed textbooks that are widely in use because it is open source, achieves a better balance in terms of representations of gender, ethnicity, and social status, and corrects long-standing cultural biases.

Structures

The project has not yet altered the structure of the program at the participating institutions, however, the team has gained a better understanding of the unique characteristics of the institutions, and, consequently, we are in a better position to address the specific issues that limited the project's progress toward the type of integration and collaboration envisioned in the initial proposal.

Processes

The project has achieved significant visibility beyond the participating institutions and the ACS consortium. The system of sharing courses and the Latin curriculum have been topics of conversations and presentations in a number of professional venues, including the annual meetings of the Society for Classical Studies in Washington, D.C., on January 3-5, 2020.

4. Consortial (ACS-wide) value of the project

The team believes that its experiences in attempting to operate within the parameters of the Memorandum of Understanding, which nine of the institutions entered in February 2018, can be of

value to the consortium as it considers and implements future inter-institutional initiatives. Among the project's findings are:

1. The agreement did not go far enough in outlining the necessary policies and procedures for sharing courses.
2. The way individual institutions understood the nature of the agreement varied as did the levels of commitment and interest.
3. Information about the agreement and the system of shared courses did not reach key constituents including administrators and students.

As noted in section six below, the team believes that further work toward a virtual department will require an agreement that is (1) more detailed and suited specifically to the administrative systems of the individual institutions, (2) limited to the discipline of ancient studies, (3) reflects a shared commitment to the project among both the administrators and faculty members.

5. Lessons Learned

Time and Space

The idea that the staff of a consortium or any third party can efficiently orchestrate a system of shared courses among a set of colleges and universities may have theoretical appeal but little chance of actual success because such a system ultimately depends on a set of personal transactions at the local level at least for the institutions of the ACS. The greater the number of people involved in each transaction, the less efficient the transactions become. To establish the types of relationships among the members of the faculty and administrators who actually make the system work takes time. Senior administrators come and go, but registrars and faculty members tend to persist longer, so inter-institutional projects need to provide for these constituencies to collaborate efficiently and productively across institutional boundaries.

Advising and Allied Fields

We heard anecdotally that some advisors were discouraging students from enrolling in shared courses, which suggests that the project needs to engage more actively and widely with the faculties of the participating institutions. For example, Amy Cottrill, a professor in religious studies at Birmingham Southern has been one of the more active and successful promoters for our ancient Greek courses. Efforts to work more closely with faculty members in allied fields could not only increase interest among students in their programs and their advisees but might also lead to expanding the system of shared courses to address curricular needs in other areas, for example, access to instruction in other less commonly taught languages such as Hebrew and Arabic.

Reaching the Students

As noted above, the project and the ACS in general need to disseminate information about the initiative more effectively, and contributing faculty members need to recruit students more actively. At the same time, the project needs to be more thoughtful about the ways students obtain information directly from each other and indirectly from conventional administrative channels. It will take more than one cohort of satisfied students to establish a positive perception

of the system of shared courses, and the project will need to ensure that information about the initiative appears in a variety of sources, such as departmental web pages, course schedules, and advising handbooks.

Scope and Reciprocity

Creating and sustaining a system of shared courses requires more advanced planning than developing a schedule of courses at a single institution. It also requires a greater level of commitment to follow through with plans because changes on a local level are likely to affect students, faculty members, and administrators on other campuses. Although the smaller programs appear to benefit disproportionately from the system, participants in the program need to bear in mind that institutions with more resources benefit as well through increased numbers in classes with traditionally low enrollments and additional curricular options. A system of shared courses would probably benefit every academic discipline, but developing policies and procedures of sufficient generality to apply in a variety of fields runs the risk of raising debilitating questions about institutional identity and failing to address specific disciplinary needs. In other words, the narrower the scope and the more specific the details of an inter-institutional agreement, the better.

6.   Next Steps

As outlined in the most recent proposal for continued support from the ACS, we called for creating "an MOU specifically for courses offered through this grant between all five participating institutions." Conversations with the ACS have led to plans for a meeting in January that will involve the chief academic officers, registrars, IT directors, and faculty members to work collectively on the details of an agreement. During these conversations the following points emerged as topics of deliberation and discussion:

1. Resolving the complications that the different academic calendars and schedules pose
2. Addressing the issues of credit awarded and accepted by participating institutions
3. Coming up with a schedule of courses among the institutions that minimizes duplication (especially of courses with small enrollments)
4. While recognizing that some institutions have more resources than others, minimizing asymmetries as far as possible
5. Focusing on ways to enhance the experience of students who participate remotely
6. Developing a sustainable formula for financing the system

An additional point of consideration might be a policy for including institutions, which are not part of the memorandum both within and outside of the ACS.

The project hopes that this meeting and eventual agreement will provide the foundation and framework for further developing the system of shared courses. With regard to the Latin curriculum, Samson, Sypniewski, and Haskell will continue using the new Latin curriculum in their elementary Latin courses and refining the materials based on the outcomes and feedback of the students. The project will have sufficient resources to meet the commitments and follow through with the plans for the spring semester and intends to submit a proposal for continuing the initiative later this spring.