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IUSB Curriculum Development Grant Closing Report

Description of grant-supported activity
In November 2014, I received a curriculum development grant to research a future study abroad program to Ireland. Subsequently, I traveled to Ireland in June 2015 to explore the program’s feasibility and logistics. The tentative title of the proposed program is Ireland Overseas Program (Dublin, Galway, and Derry): “Writers, Fighters, and Dividers: Literature, War, and Culture in Creating Modern Ireland”.

I travelled to Ireland with my colleague, Dr. Chu He, who also received a curriculum development grant to research this program. My primary responsibility was to research activities in the Dublin area as these more closely correlated with my time period of expertise and proposed course. This trip proved extremely helpful in assessing which sites and tours would be most advantageous to students and the challenges they would face.

Dublin: In Dublin, we researched accommodation and were able to find affordable rooms with amenities such as included wi-fi, breakfast, and meeting space in the centrally located Trinity College Dublin, which also houses the 6th Century Book of Kells and Long Room Library—a short planned stop for students that ties in with the long literary history of Ireland.

We also identified discounted ways to travel on public transport such as using the Leap card for the light rail, bus, and regional trains, and inexpensive places to eat around the city. One potential group dinner event we looked into as a special event for students could be at the Church restaurant and bar, a beautiful modern restaurant in a restored church that offers nightly music and entertainment such as Irish dancing.

In the course of four full days in Dublin, I was able to arrange the following tours and activities:

- **Personalized city tour with Dr. Frank Cullen**, Irish historian and author of *Dublin, 1847: City of Ordnance Survey* (Royal Irish Academy): Highlights of the tour included a fascinating history of the area surrounding and architecture of St. Patrick’s Cathedral and remaining 18th Century houses and the stories of the people who lived there.
- **Tour of the Jeanie Johnston Tall Ship**: Exact reproduction of an actual “Famine ship” used to transport Irish people to America and Canada during the Great Famine along with the history and selected stories of the ship’s crew and passengers.
- **National Library**: Spoke to the genealogists on how students could research their Irish heritage (on a free day).
- **Maynooth Chapel and Castletown House**: Tour of one of the oldest Catholic chapels in Ireland with Dr. Salvador Ryan, Chair of Ecclesiastical History at St. Patrick’s College Maynooth (40 minutes by train from Dublin). Castletown House, 18th century estate and house in Celbridge (between Maynooth and Dublin).
- **Abbey Theatre**: Play in one of the oldest theatres in Ireland.

Athlone: Due to time constraints, I explored Athlone (one hour from Galway and one hour from Dublin), while my colleague researched Galway. I initially thought of Athlone as a quick stop to
potentially visit **Athlone Castle**, but through meeting with Patrick Doyle, coordinator of student extracurricular trips at Shannon Academy of English, discovered many more possibilities in this small, friendly town, including:

- **Boat trip on the River Shannon ending with tour of Clonmacnoise:** The 6th Century remains of a monastery in pastoral landscape with succinct history of Irish religious and political conflict.
- **Visit to Sean’s Bar:** Guinness Book of Records verified oldest bar in Ireland, where Mr. Doyle could arrange a folklore/storytelling night with local storyteller.
- **Potential home stay:** Mr. Doyle’s many contacts through the Shannon Academy would allow students to stay in Irish families’ homes with meals at reasonable rates for the few days we could stay.

**Derry:** In Derry, I met with Dr. Eamonn O’Ciardha, professor at University of Ulster’s Derry campus, who has formed a relationship with IU South Bend in the past and conducts a summer school in Derry. I have since met with Dr. O’Ciardha on a subsequent recruiting visit to IU South Bend where we discussed more logistics. Dr. O’Ciardha also visited my T190 Irish literature and history class to discuss Irish study abroad opportunities.

In Derry, I engaged in the following activities:

- **Tour of the City Walls:** Guided tour of the still intact walled city from atop the city walls, providing a history of the “troubles” and views of the murals created during the fighting.
- **Tower Museum:** Provides history of the city from Viking through modern times.
- **The Guildhall:** Permanent interactive exhibit of the plantation system in Ireland and historic meeting hall and seat of local parliament.
- **Museum of Free Derry and Bloody Sunday tour:** Provides tour from those directly connected with the events of Bloody Sunday from the Catholic perspective; includes explanation of murals up close and small museum of artifacts and history of the day.
- **Giant’s Causeway trip:** Unique rock formation from volcanic explosions along the coast that looks like a path and has been a tourist attraction and subject of stories since the 18th century.

**Project Difficulties and Challenges**

Part of the curriculum grant application included funding of travel to London before visiting Ireland (June 13-16). The purpose of the London visit was to observe part of the IU South Bend London-Edinburgh study abroad trip and gain some experience with how to lead students. However, the leaders and students were unavoidably delayed by an accident that caused them to miss their initial flight so our time with the group was cut short.

Once in Ireland, some of the **Dublin area** sites were closed, under construction, or were difficult to reach with limited hours. **Issues encountered included:**

- **Kilmalnchairn Gaol:** Closed for construction; difficult to access.
- **The National Museum:** Recently relocated all of its modern history from the central city location to the barracks outside of the city in a less accessible area.
- **Castletown House:** Limited bus access and long walk to site.
- **Dublin storytelling night:** Less professional and more expensive than anticipated.
Visiting Galway with students would most likely have to be eliminated as well, although it could be left as an option for free days with bus tours from Dublin. **Issues encountered included:**

- **Most planned activities in the Galway area were too time consuming:** All involved full day tours outside the city (Cliffs of Moher, Aran Islands, Connemara tour).
- **Galway city is very touristy and expensive:** Few educational or cultural opportunities at reasonable prices and promotes rowdy pub atmosphere.

Derry posed some challenges due to its location and history. **Issues encountered included:**

- **Travel:** Because travelling to and from Derry necessitates crossing the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, it involves challenges such as changes in buses with no restroom facilities for 5 hours, or two trains with travel time closer to 6 hours. Other destinations, such as the Giant’s Causeway, could only be reached by public transport from Derry, and with the amount of walking and lack of explanation and general impressiveness of the rock formation, would probably not be suitable for students.
- **Accommodation:** University housing in Derry was a little far outside the city and the hostels were unsuitable, so we researched a negotiated rate a city center hotel.
- **New Tourist Destination:** Due to its tumultuous history and fairly recent peace, Derry is further still adjusting to being a tourist destination and does not offer as frequent tours and public transportation as other cities, and some of the local museums are a little provincial and biased.

The whirlwind pace in trying to research every potential site and tour also helped me understand the exhaustion students might feel and the need for more down time. While most of the places visited were worthwhile, several would have to be eliminated to make the program enjoyable and productive for students, and allow them the space to explore their own interests outside of planned activities.

**Project Outcomes**

After this research trip, I still believe a future successful Irish study abroad program is very possible, with some adjustments from the original proposal. Given the timeframe and budget that would work best for students, I would tentatively propose the following:

- **A two-city trip:** Dublin and Derry, with perhaps a quick trip to Athlone, would be more feasible.
- **Reduced activities in Dublin:** See difficulties above. Places less directly accessed, despite strong content, may have to be reviewed or reconsidered.
- **Alternate Transportation to Derry:** Both Dr. O’Ciardha and Mr. Doyle have offered the possibility of a private charter bus to transport students instead of public transport.
- **Participation in University of Ulster Summer School:** Dr. O’Ciardha has presented the option of our students taking part in some of the lectures and activities in the University of Ulster’s summer school, which takes place at the same time as our proposed program. This would allow our students to be guided by graduate students and university professors in the area. For example, two local graduate students conduct a lecture of the conflict from different perspectives (one Catholic, one Protestant). These alternatives would also allow students to be exposed to the Irish language and folklore that was the reasoning behind including Galway.
I will continue to work with the Office of International Programs to help develop a future program and discuss what would fit into their schedule. The next step would be to write a much more detailed proposal to submit for approval by Indiana University in the coming year.