

FWI Funding Statement

Name: Todd Always and Greg Flynn
Faculty/Area: Social Sciences/Political Science
Project title: Active Teaching and Blended Learning in the Social Sciences

Please summarize how the FWI funds have been spent:

A summary by broad category is sufficient, line by line accounting of individual expenditures is not required unless specifically requested. Alternatively, please provide a copy of your FAS for the accounts that have been used for the FWI funds.

Salaries and benefits: 100%

Equipment:

Event Costs:

Travel:

Other (please specify):

Balance remaining:

Please indicate how the balance will be spent and when you anticipate that the funds will be exhausted.

The funds have been exhausted.

Please submit separately a maximum 2-page summary of the results of the project with particular attention to:

1. How the activity enhanced the competence and effectiveness of this individual (or others) with respect to teaching, research, service and/or leadership;
2. How the activity contributed to the goals of a course/program/department/Faculty;
3. The results of your evaluation of the quality of the expected development and its potential impact;
4. How you have (or plan to) communicate and disseminate the insights gained with peers and broader McMaster communities.
5. How the outcomes of the project will be sustained or expanded.
6. Please outline any barriers or challenges that may have prevented you from achieving some of your project goals.

The financial and project reports can be submitted to fw@mcmaster.ca.

FWI Funding Report – Summary of Results

1. The research has provided both of us, Dr. Alway and Dr. Flynn, with additional ideas and approaches about active learning and problem based learning to incorporate into our classroom environments.
2. The research project created the foundation for a larger exploration of alternate pedagogical approaches in the Faculty of Social Sciences at McMaster. It is hoped that a more intensive research agenda will flow from this foundation and demonstrate to the broader faculty members of the usefulness and ease of incorporating active learning strategies into their classrooms. It is also hoped that the completion of the active learning catalogue of courses will encourage peer collaboration on the revision of courses throughout the whole of the faculty. On an individual level, the research has provided interesting insights into different approaches that other faculty members employ in their classrooms and that these strategies might be amenable to inclusion in our own classes.
3. To some extent, we anticipated that we would find that there was some incorporation of active and blended learning techniques in the Social Sciences faculty at McMaster. We were a little surprised that there was greater incorporation of such strategies than we might have anticipated or that the academic literature would suggest. To some extent, we think this speaks highly of teaching within the Social Sciences faculty. We also believe that this will provide a good basis on which others can engage with their colleagues about the use of such approaches in their own classrooms.
4. It remains our intention to create a catalogue of courses that involve active learning as a key component of the learning environment and thereby provide our colleagues with resources that they can use should they wish to modify their existing courses or to create new ones.

It is also our intention to publish the results of study in leading pedagogical journals associated with the social sciences.

5. As the foundation of a larger research project that will involve more in-depth and qualitative based interviews, we anticipate that dataset we have created will generate publications about active learning as well as suggest additional research avenues for exploration. We have not investigated additional opportunities to fund the research at this point as we are still ingesting and analysing the results. At the same time, given that our future research subjects (Social Sciences faculty members) are all present within the university, we do not foresee a need for substantial resources to pursue the more intensive and qualitative aspects of our research project.
6. The scope of the project was much greater than originally anticipated. Canvassing all of the course outlines of the Faculty of Social Sciences over the last three years took longer than was

anticipated and required additional resources beyond the FWI grant in order to complete. As a result, the database generated was not completed until well after the beginning of classes in September 2015. As a result of fairly involved teaching loads and schedules, we were not able to fully analyze the data and incorporate it into publishable materials up to this point in time, although there are a couple of pieces currently in progress. Furthermore, efforts at creating an opportunity to present the information to our colleagues in the broader political science academy were unsuccessful when our paper proposal to the Canadian Political Science Association annual conference was unable to be accepted due to the fact that we were the sole proposal dealing with pedagogical issues. While this proposed somewhat of a setback, it has heightened our understanding of the need to pursue our research in more pedagogically focused forums.