

AIPS Travel Grant Final Report

Project Title: Panelist, Best Practices for Integrating Cultural Exchanges into the Curriculum: Challenges for General Education Faculty

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Conference: South Asian Studies Conference

Location: Madison, WI

Dates: October 31-November 2

1. Significance to Pakistan Studies

My presentation at the South Asia conference, as part of a panel, was inspired by my trip to Lahore, Pakistan with colleagues from Bristol Community College and faculty from Sauk Valley Community in February 2024. Our hosts, Kinnaird College for Women, graciously welcomed us and proudly introduced us to their country and its rich and warm culture. During the 10-day visit [as part of the ongoing exchange with the APEX (American Pakistan Education Exchange) program], I presented at the Arts and Humanities conference on Fake News in the U.S. and its impact on a free press and democracy. The presentation was well received as the audience could recognize elements of disinformation and misinformation in their own society.

We also visited the Governor's mansion, a village, the Walled City, the Pakistani-Indian sunset border ceremony and other cultural sites. Every where we went, we were greeted so graciously and welcomed. There were no barriers and any misconceptions were rapidly broken down as we were just humans enjoying tea, learning about each other and our areas of expertise, and simply enjoying each others' company. This exchange, which brought Kinnaird faculty and students to Bristol and Sauk Valley community colleges in October 2023 and again in October 2024, is breaking down these misconceptions and overcoming cultural barriers with every interaction.

Beyond the faculty professional and personal connections, the exchange fosters learning and collaboration between the students from the United States and from Lahore as they work on a project virtually and during the week-long visit to Bristol in Fall River, Massachusetts.

In February 2025, we hope to send students and faculty from both community college to Kinnaird to continue this collaboration and cultural exchange.

As my colleague and fellow panel presenter, Stacie Hess noted:

“The APEX program furthers Pakistan Studies because it highlights humanity rather than the headlines. It promotes on the ground connections, deep, engaged conversation, and prolonged collaboration throughout the year.

In an era of political upheaval and instability worldwide, programs like this tether educators in countries such as Pakistan to colleagues across the world.”

This exchange impacted this professor profoundly and illustrated that we are all humans on this Earth, more alike than different. I will discuss the impact more in the next question.

2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

At the conference, I shared how the experiences from Lahore and environs made a lasting impression on me (personally and professionally) and have enriched my teaching, especially in my journalism and public relations courses.

For instance, I modified a lesson illustrating sourcing in news stories by sharing stories about governments regulating X and its owner Elon Musk from three outlets. The content of the story wasn't the point. It was a matter of sourcing – whether it was from one perspective (as in the official spokesperson only used in the Pakistani newspaper, The Dawn, and in the Voice of America article) or multiple perspectives as in an Associated Press article about Musk agreeing to comply with a Brazilian Supreme Court orders of conditions for X to be reinstated in Brazil.

Students found the examples intriguing and vivid, illustrating the difference in sourcing as well as the difference in press coverage in a free press versus a more controlled medium. We also talked about the different impact of the free and more controlled press as well as access to higher education on citizens and society.

In my public relations class, we talk about misconceptions of Pakistan and the roles the media and ethnocentrism play in our understanding of other cultures. Having specific examples to share from my time in Pakistan and the relationships I've made with faculty at Kinnaird and my fellow presenters at the South Asia conference has made this lesson that much more impactful.

APEX and our presentation at the conference helped solidify my thoughts on how to teach these global lessons and turned the lens on a part of the world I previously knew nothing about.

As a result of our trip and the ongoing relationships created, my understanding of the world and Pakistan, in particular, has grown significantly. At the South Asia conference, I was able to further this understanding and learn from others who have studied the area extensively.

I'd like to thank AIPS for making APEX and our participation at the South Asia conference possible.