

## **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**

I participated in the faculty to faculty exchange with the APEX (American Pakistan Education Exchange) program. Along with colleagues from Sauk Valley Community College and Bristol Community College, we shared a 10 day visit to Lahore and environs in February, 2024 — faculty and students likewise visited us in October 2024.

The rich exchange of cultural knowledge from two diverse geographies (the South Coast of Massachusetts and urban Pakistan) created opportunities to dismantle assumptions, make educational and personal connections, and further our institutions' commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

In addition to our faculty exchange, we promoted the collaboration between students in Massachusetts and Lahore, as they committed to working together on a project over the course of several weeks (virtually, then in person) before presenting them to the general public.

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.

### **2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables**

My presentation illuminated the surprising way that students at Kinnaird College for Women connected with my workshop on Native American Literature (“The Power of Storytelling” which asked the questions: What stories are you proud to tell? Which ones do you keep hidden?), particularly where language is concerned. As a colonized country, Pakistani students empathize with the history of the treatment of Indigenous peoples in North America, particularly the “hidden” stories of abusive policies meant to destroy their cultures. Indigenous language revival and the adjoining cultural knowledge that the U.S. is at this moment experiencing resonated deeply with our friends at Kinnaird. A Pakistani colleague teaches the “Literature of Resistance” and at the workshop, she expressed how themes of shame and oppression centered around

language and class, similar to the U.S. As a group, we investigated how poetry/literature can serve as activist texts.

Months after the inaugural visit to Pakistan, I have ongoing dialogue with Mahwish Kahn, English Chair at Kinnaird; I am planning to incorporate Pakistani texts into my courses at Bristol Community College. Likewise, she has expressed an interest in Native American literature. This year, I was able to arrange a visit with a Wampanoag educator (Annawon Weeden) and our APEX friends, at the request of Professor Zubda Zia.