

## Faculty and Staff Diversity Mini-Grant Final Report

Project title: The Face of Immigration

Grant Recipients:

Grant funds were transferred to the Humanities Department. I wrote the grant request. The program was sponsored by ISAR, Humanities and the Diversity Office. The ultimate recipient of the grant was author Leonard Zeskind.

Date Project Started: March 3-4, 2010.

Amount of Money Funded by the Mini-Grant: \$3500.

1. How was the grant used to address a diversity or inclusion related goal?

The program brought together a wide range of students and community people in a program designed to examine the current debate over immigration and it's relationship to the growth of the white nationalist movement. Actually, the focus became the white nationalist movement. Mr. Zeskind began his career on a factory assembly line and saw first hand how racism divided workers and the community. Unlike others engaged in union activity, Zeskind eventually left the factory floor to dedicate his life to fighting racism as a necessary prerequisite to any movement for social justice. He is totally unpretentious and connects with people easily. He was able to begin a debate during his discussion in Williams Auditorium that was carried back to many classrooms and throughout the community.

2. Describe the audience that was impacted by the grant's implementation.

Provide quantitative data, if available.

**Williams Auditorium was nicely filled, I would estimate at least five hundred students and community folks were in attendance. A number of people came up from Grand Rapids and his talk was reported on by the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy. Many professor assigned their students to the lecture and by my count at least a dozen professors from Humanities and Lang and Lit came to the event. Every copy of Zeskind's book, *Blood and Politics* was sold by the end of his talk in Williams.**

3. What is your overall assessment of the project's impact on the Ferris community? How did this impact compare to what you expected?

**This is a difficult question to answer, even subjectively. I have known Mr. Zeskind for many decades now but being able to spend time with him was important for me personally. Zeskind knows more about the Tea Party than most of the pundits one hears from. I find his judgments always worthwhile and there is a very large difference between reading his blog and having a forty-eight hour conversation with him that begins at the airport and ends at the airport. At breakfast, Lenny met Max Kantar. There was no immediate impact from Mr. Zeskind's interaction with Max, but I am hoping that over time, his incisive comments might sink in. I know I keep reminding Max of one thing or another that Zeskind said to him at that breakfast.**

**Looking beyond my own experience, I can only speculate. I originally conceived of the program as part of a larger endeavor to confront the immigration issue on campus. At the time I organized this event, immigration reform was at the top of the Obama administrations agenda. We had been promised an immigration bill in Congress by September, certainly before the end of the year. Since then the federal initiative has lost some of it's steam and I have acquired a seven week old chocolate lab which has turned my attention inward. So, in the sense that the program was part of a personal initiative to build a coalition across campus to debate immigration reform, the program did not meet my original expectations.**

**On the other hand, I think the program more than met my expectations in terms of attendance and the enthusiasm with which he was greeted here. Every event was well attended and there was excellent interactions between the speaker and members of our community. Classes had virtually ended for Spring break and many students had already left campus and others were preparing to leave. Despite that, we managed to bring a very respectable audience to Williams Auditorium. I was impressed by the turnout. I had expected it to be smaller. I also was impressed with the feedback from colleagues, students and townspeople.**

4. Present a final budget including all funds received and spent related to the project, with special focus on the funds received via the Diversity Mini-grant.

**The budget will follow under separate cover. I will include it with the signed copy of this report as soon as Ella can get me the numbers.**

**Primary Grant Recipient's Signature**

**Barry Mehler** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dat: 9/3/10** \_\_\_\_\_