



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## SPIRIT BECOMES ACT: CREATING YOUR OWN INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

It was an unbelievable sight—325 students, faculty, and community members ready to reenact the Union army's 6th Corps march to Gettysburg. It wasn't money that enabled this moment. Neither was it a program, a pamphlet, a slogan, or even a free hamburger. What brought the marchers together was the organizational drive of faculty and students animated by the spirits that had originally experienced this moment. The 6th Corps reenactment illustrated the strength that came from creating a classroom support system.

In 2012, a campus commission to celebrate the Civil War's 150th Anniversary was established. Though "institutional" in nature, the commission was an extension of my U.S. History 1301 course. Independence from normative campus programming reduced friction and the results were stunning.

Commissioners had three goals. First, participants would be encouraged to "own" history for themselves. Everyone was free to celebrate heritage from both sides of the Civil War. However, the commission would also champion the belief that victory for the North was a positive milestone in national development and a human rights achievement of global magnitude. Finally, commissioners would reach out to students in remedial courses and those from other countries in order to support the campus "Best Start" program and teach international students American history.

Innovation reduced advertising costs to zero. Promotional videos were produced using Final Cut Pro X and iMovie. Students watched these short, hard-hitting clips and took mini-flyers before going to class. The campus tech department also screened short ads on closed-circuit campus TV. Most important, however, remained old-fashioned word-of-mouth. Students realized how lucky they were to be alive for the 150th anniversary, which made them apostles of history. When it comes to campus events, a good ground game beats all other forms of advertising.

The local press responded to email notifications. Ten months of Civil War celebrations events resulted in newspaper photographs and five articles. The

crowning publicity was the 6th Corps march airing on National Public Radio (<http://app1.kuhf.org/articles/1353267747>).

The commission staged nine lectures. Again, innovation enabled a superb slate of presenters at no cost to the college. Professors and administrators already at Lone Star College-Montgomery were recruited to participate. Homegrown talent did it all. A total of 665 students and community members attended the lectures. Topics included Civil War medicine, wartime literature, and the Southern perspective. An adjunct history professor presented the life of the 5th New Hampshire's commander in "Stand Firm and Fire Low: Colonel Edward E. Cross in the Civil War." To introduce this lecture, "Charge" was blown on a model 1845 bugle, and Cross's famous command to his men at the Battle of Antietam, "Give 'em the war cry!" was shouted. The crowd screamed back, "Huzzah!" Video footage from the "War Cry" scene was played to stimulate interest in the 150th anniversary events that would come later.

Organizational innovation was crucial. The student staff, dubbed "VI Corps GHQ," did a lot of heavy lifting. Identifiable by their blue and white 6th Corps shirts (35 shirts cost \$307), students greeted visitors, staffed the wooden information booth, hauled supplies, and took pictures. An honors student based her class project on the Sesquicentennial. She interviewed participants and kept records. The report she filed about what did and did not work will help plan World War One's 100th anniversary in 2014. Five students from the "VI Corps GHQ" rehearsed famous speeches by Abraham Lincoln. Eighty-three other students gathered to hear Lincoln's political logic and immortal words of inspiration.

Music teaches history, and nothing speaks American history better than the "Ancient Musik." Saturday morning fife lessons were given to 29 students. Four completed the curriculum and joined the campus's 6th Corps Fifes and Drums. Thousands cheered as the corps belted out "Battle Hymn of the Republic" dressed in wool blue uniforms on a boiling hot day and won "Most Patriotic Entry" in The Woodlands 4th of July Parade. The \$250 prize was deposited into the group's funding account.

Innovation also enabled the commission to host two dinner/movie nights. Instead of asking for money from the college, a \$7 fee was charged to student attendees.

Volunteers prepared and served Union Army stew to and baked Confederate biscuits for over 100 students. Students also sampled hardtack, and coffee and "Plantation Lemonade" helped wash it down. Some light sobbing could be heard after the viewing of Glory. In spring, all four hours of Gettysburg were screened. After, I stood in front of the movie goers and called out General Pickett's famous admonition, "Up men, and to your posts, and let no man forget today that he is from Old Virginia!" Everyone yelled back, "Virginia! Virginia! Virginia!" It was thrilling! Sometimes innovation is as simple as stepping on to the stage and putting one's self "out there."

The 325 participants in the 6th Corps march walked 3.5 miles, one-tenth the actual distance covered in 1863. The campus Student Government Association awarded the 6th Corps march event a trophy for the "Best Event of the Year." Marchers wore colored bandanas adorned with the corps' historic Greek cross symbol. (400 bandanas at \$1,253 was the commission's biggest expense.) Brooms were our muskets. The march culminated on the campus baseball field. Our technology department blasted battle noise. Musketry ripped and cannon thundered as the corps deployed in battle formation. At the command, "Charge Bayonets!" the troops busted back, "Huzzah!" The whole line, brooms leveled, surged forward. A huge blue silk Union army regimental flag (cost \$220) painted by students fluttered at the front. The motto inscribed on a ribbon held in the eagle's claws took its cue from George Frederick Root's wartime song, "Battle Cry of Freedom." Our motto read, "We will fill the vacant ranks of the students gone before." Now that's retention.

The academic portion of the 150th anniversary came in various forms. Along with the lecture series mentioned above, a Civil War course was team-taught. I chose an adjunct professor who was popular (to ensure high enrollment) and who had a record of teaching excellence. The adjunct received full pay for the course. I taught my third of the course for free. Out-of-class activities included a reenactment of the 1864 Battle of Winchester using hand-painted 15mm miniatures. The miniature battle was played on a ping pong-sized board, which offered students a laboratory where they could analyze the interplay of terrain, firepower, tactics, and morale. For this event, I personally paid a game master \$200 to run a battle lasting six hours. He oversaw the rules that governed 20 students commanding brigades from the armies of Phil Sheridan and Jubal Early. Students discovered the role that luck and surprise played, what one theoretician called the "Fog of War."

Seven students assisted in the writing of four issues of Bugle Call, the 16x11 campus Civil War newspaper featured an attractive masthead and double column format. Maps, photographs, artwork, and even a crossword puzzle accompanied Civil War stories and

event announcements. I ran the copier myself; my dean funded the 1,250 sheets used to print all issues. Copies were slid under the door of each full-time faculty member. When the "VI Corps GHQ" were deployed, Bugle Call reached faculty and administration offices in 20 minutes.

Funding innovation also facilitated the Civil War Essay Contest offered in partnership with the campus writing center. Five committee members read 30 submissions and awarded each of the three winners a \$50 cash prize. To fund the prizes, faculty and staff bought six balsa wood airplanes my dad and I crafted.

The innovation of self-support requires vision. You must go into the future and return and tell people what you have seen. Work and the giving of time without expectation of compensation morphed this vision into reality. I planned and executed these events without course release. I asked for very little money and found innovative ways to publicize and fund events. In the end, no other success on any college outshines the results of faculty working side-by-side with students to turn ideas into concrete existence.

A "soldier" in the 6th Corps reenactment march answered an honors project questionnaire. His observation best summarizes Civil War remembrances at Lone Star College-Montgomery: "I got to see the love of history in everyone's eyes." That's enough of a learning outcome for me.

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