

COUNCIL ON TEACHING
Follow-Up Report for
Teaching in Higher Education Conference Award

Name: Alex P. Smith

Department/Unit: Political Science Department

Conference Attended: American Political Science Association Teaching & Learning Conference

Date of Conference: February 7-9, 2025

Award Amount: \$1,000

Briefly summarize how your attendance at the conference enhanced your professional development and allowed you to gain a better understanding of teaching in your discipline or trends in higher education in general.

I participated in the Simulations, Games, and Active Learning track of the conference and led a roundtable about the 2024 Mock Constitutional Convention at which I was a faculty mentor. Leading the roundtable discussion helped gain a better understanding of teaching as we were able to get suggestions from faculty on how to improve the students'/delegates' experience at future Conventions, including ideas for how to better utilize the faculty mentors. At the Simulations, Games, and Active Learning track, I learned about activities that other faculty are using in the classroom, which inspired some ways to improve classroom activities that I'm already using, as well as inspired some new activities I can use to increase student engagement and reflection. For example, I've already incorporated one of the activities that was presented (using 'March Madness' style brackets) into my Introduction to American Politics class to increase student interest in topics that can often seem dull and are difficult to get them interested in (e.g. bureaucratic agencies, American presidents, civil liberties, etc.).

How have you been able to share what you learned about teaching with your department, the University of Iowa, and/or beyond?

I've incorporated some of the activities from the Simulations, Games, and Active Learning track into my courses already. I've also discussed the possibility of leading some workshops for our department's faculty and graduate students about some of the content from this Conference with our incoming DEO, who expressed strong interest in doing so. I also shared some of these ideas with the Spring 2025 Scholarly Teaching Program cohort that I was part of through the University's Center for Teaching so that faculty in other departments can consider how these active learning strategies might be incorporated into their own classes.