Program Review and Assessment Committee Grant Proposal – Fall 2012

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Project Title: Preparing for Proficiency: Collaboration for NCATE Accreditation in World Language Education

Project Dates: January 2013-December 2013

Project Checklist
- Letters of support have been requested from the School of Education and School of Liberal Arts
- Budget:

Description	Expense Amount	Total
External Diagnostic Assessments: STAMP Text	50 students x 20.00 per test	1,000.00
One-Day Workshop: Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Familiarization	1,500.00	1,500.00
	Total	2,500.00

ABSTRACT

For the first time, the School of Education (SOE) is pursuing national accreditation for world language education. One accreditation requirement is that 80 percent of graduates demonstrate Advanced-Low proficiency in the language of study. The SOE and Department of World Languages and Cultures (WLAC) seek PRAC funding to administer an external proficiency assessment to 1) establish an external proficiency baseline of students entering the major, and 2) identify proficiency gaps that can be addressed by curricular revision. Additionally, to ensure shared understanding of proficiency assessments and levels, PRAC funding would support a one-day workshop on proficiency levels for all WLAC faculty by a certified tester from the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

Faculty from the School of Education (SOE) and Department of World Languages and Cultures (WLAC) seek funding for two purposes:

1. **Administer an external diagnostic proficiency exam to all students entering the Spanish major**. The purpose of administering this assessment is three-fold: 1) Establish a proficiency baseline for students entering the Spanish major so that faculty may chart how students develop language proficiency over time towards the requirement of Advanced-Low proficiency; 2) Predict the percentage of students who would be able to reach the required proficiency level of Advanced-Low by the end of the Spanish major, as well as the percentage of students who may require additional supports in pursuit of this proficiency goal; and 3) Use data from this external exam to inform world language faculty of students' strengths and needs so they may add and modify existing interventions to support students in reaching programmatic proficiency goals.

2. **Sponsor an Oral Proficiency Interview familiarization workshop for all WLAC faculty**.

   The WLAC faculty are committed maintaining the expectation for high proficiency gains among graduating language majors from all languages. In order for this goal to be realized, all faculty must have a profound, deep, and shared understanding of proficiency levels and subsequent student needs so they may plan appropriate instructional experiences.

   In 2012, the School of Education (SOE) initiated the process of pursuing national accreditation through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). For programs in secondary-level education, the School of Education must demonstrate that high standards are being met in two areas: pedagogy, the instructional realm of the School of Education; and content, the instructional realm of other schools and departments on campus. Consequently, strong collaboration must exist between the SOE and related content programs as the SOE pursues national accreditation.

   The first step towards NCATE accreditation is approval by Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs), who ensure that content standards have been met. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), which serves as the SPA for accreditation in world language teacher preparation, has outlined the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that world language teachers should have when they graduate. One of ACTFL's primary content knowledge requirements is that 80 percent of program graduates demonstrate an Advanced-Low level of language proficiency, as defined by the proficiency guidelines established by ACTFL and assessed by the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI).

   Given the high stakes nature of these assessments within the context of NCATE accreditation, faculty in SOE and WLAC are collaborating to ensure that both the pedagogical and content programs are structured in ways that will support students in achieving these ambitious proficiency outcomes. While sufficient student data exists to determine progress in

pedagogical knowledge, faculty in SOE and WLAC realize the need for additional student data in content knowledge, as well as the need for a robust and shared understanding among WLAC faculty about how this data can inform instruction. PRAC funding would provide support for the first phase in this ongoing collaboration: collection of initial student performance data via an externally validated diagnostic exam, and training of all faculty on proficiency levels and application of these levels to instruction within university language courses.

INTENDED OUTCOMES OF PROJECT

Funding from PRAC will allow faculty in SOE and WLAC to accomplish the following outcomes:

1) Externally determine the baseline proficiency of students entering the Spanish major

2) Use external assessment results to complement information from internal assessments on the strengths and gaps in knowledge that exist among beginning language majors;

3) Increase the level of shared understanding of proficiency and proficiency-oriented curricular and pedagogical approaches among WLAC faculty;

4) Make course-level changes that would move students towards Advanced-Low proficiency, and design program-level accommodations for students who may require additional support in pursuit of Advanced-Low proficiency.

ASSESSMENT METHOD(S)

While the Department of WLAC currently uses internal placement, diagnostic, and proficiency exams across the program, faculty realize the need for an external examination for program validation en route to NCATE accreditation. The STAMP test is an externally validated, nationally recognized proficiency assessment that assesses student proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking; thus, the STAMP test is an appropriate fit for this project's aims.

Since Spanish is currently the only undergraduate language certification, this test will be administered to all Spanish students in S313, the first major course, in spring 2013.

STAMP provides multiple reports of assessment data: whole group proficiency analyses, as well as proficiency reports for individual students. Individual reports provide both holistic and skill domain-specific (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening) proficiency scores, as well as descriptive information regarding individual students' strengths and challenges in language development. While the STAMP reporting is ideal for project purposes, faculty in SOE and WLAC also appreciate the fact that the STAMP test is scored by humans, and is affordable to administer.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of Group Scores: By viewing progress of Spanish majors as a whole, faculty in WLAC will be able to externally determine the baseline proficiency of students entering the Spanish major. This data will complement internal assessment data and may play a role in determining curricular change both in prerequisite 100 and 200 level courses as well as the subsequent program of study.

Analysis of Individual STAMP reports: Individual score reports will be analyzed to determine general and idiosyncratic strengths and gaps in proficiency. Once these trends are determined, the faculty in WLAC will use this information in reflection and curriculum work; comparing student proficiency needs to existing course frameworks will help faculty determine appropriate curricular and pedagogical shifts within individual courses. Additionally, by determining the types of idiosyncratic needs that exist across the student language majors, faculty can suggest appropriate accommodations (i.e. conversation groups, tutoring) for majors who may need additional support outside of the standard course of study.

EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

A final written report will be submitted to PRAC at the end of the fall 2013 semester. Additionally, since several universities across Indiana are pursuing initial NCATE world language education accreditation at roughly the same time, faculty in SOE and WLAC intend to facilitate a presentation and roundtable discussion at the annual Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association Conference in November 2013 and/or other appropriate academic venues. The co-project directors hope to implement a second phase of this program in spring 2014: working with in-service world language teachers across Indiana to develop their understanding of proficiency and build a K-16 proficiency pipeline in Indiana.

DETAILS ON INTENDED USE OF FINDINGS AND IMPROVEMENT

While much of this information has been provided elsewhere in the proposal, the faculty in SOE and WLAC aim to use the findings from these external assessments to strengthen the courses of study in world language majors. By doing so, all graduates from both the world language majors and the world language education program will have higher levels of proficiency as they move into their careers and future study. Additionally, by ensuring that world language courses appropriately build towards Advanced-Low proficiency, the likelihood of securing and maintaining NCATE accreditation for world language education is greater.