Program Review and Assessment Committee Grant Proposal

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7. **Project Title:**   Assessing Civic Learning Outcomes of Co-Curricular Service Programs Through Digital Storytelling

8. **Project Dates:**   January 2014 – January 2015

9. **Project Checklist:**

   a. A letter of support will be sent by:
      i. Dr. Julie Hatcher, Executive Director of the Center for Service and Learning
      ii. Dr. Chad Ahren, Director of the Office of Student Involvement

   b. Budget:

Description	Expense Amount
Funding for 2 graduate students to assist the research team with scoring the digital stories, data analysis, and reporting the results	$2,000
Conference travel/registration	$500
TOTAL	$2,500

   c. IRB approval: IRB approval has already been obtained for this project. Copies of the approval letter and informed consent form are available upon request.

Assessing Civic Learning Outcomes of Co-Curricular Service Programs Through Digital Storytelling

Abstract

This project will evaluate the civic learning of IUPUI students that have engaged in co-curricular service events, specifically through a service-based scholarship program. The purpose of this project is to assess civic learning in digital stories that were created by undergraduate students following their participation in one or more co-curricular events. Student civic learning will be assessed using two rubrics: the Civic-Minded Graduate (CMG) Rubric and the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric. Each of these rubrics will be examined in relation to the IUPUI Division of Student Life's Co-Curricular Principles of Undergraduate Learning.

Purpose of Project

IUPUI is one of 70 universities and colleges recently selected to participate in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) LEAD Initiative on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. IUPUI was chosen for this initiative because of its joint partnership between the Division of Student Affairs, the Office of Student Involvement, and the Center for Service and Learning (Brown, 2013). All three units support co-curricular civic engagement through shared service programming, professional positions, and assessment activities. As a LEAD institution, there is an expectation to share best practices and ideas with other LEAD institutions. The findings from this project will be highlighted in our work as a LEAD institution.

This project will add to our understanding of civic learning outcomes among IUPUI students by focusing on civic learning that results from participation in co-curricular service programming sponsored by these three units, specifically through the Sam H. Jones Community Service Scholarship Program. As one of the nation's largest service-based scholarship programs, the Sam H. Jones Community Service Scholarship Program was created in 1994 and has awarded more than $1.7 million to more than 890 students. There are eight different scholarship programs within the Sam H. Jones program (See http://csl.iupui.edu/financial-support/scholarships/index.shtml). Each scholarship is awarded based on a student's exemplary service in the community, at their high school, or at IUPUI. And while each scholarship provides a financial award, it is

designed to include trainings and service experiences that foster an individual's growth as a student, community member, and leader.

Experiences situated in the curricular and co-curricular offer multiple opportunities for student reflection and the potential for student learning. Benjamin Barber, author of *An Aristocracy of Everyone: The Politics of Education and the Future of America,* states that "where students use experience in the community as a basis for critical reflection as a tool to examine the nature of democratic communities and the role of citizens in them, there is an opportunity to teach liberty and to uncover the intimate linkage between rights and responsibilities" (1992, p. 252). However, educators, co-educators, and student affairs professionals need to find more engaging ways to facilitate the reflection process so that it is more meaningful and applicable to today's students.

Digital storytelling is an innovative strategy that has the potential to create such engagement. Digital storytelling is a pedagogical strategy that uses technology and 'storyboarding' to facilitate the reflection process. The final product conveys the student's story in a 'YouTube' video that employs still images, music, and student narration. Storyboarding, a unique and important step in the process, requires the student to examine their written reflection to identify important words or phrases. The student then locates an image that visually represents the key words or phrase. For example, if "feeling helpless" was important, a student might envision a person stranded on the side of the road.

The process of creating a digital story challenges students to critically reflect, organize their ideas and experiences, and results in deeper learning (Microsoft, 2010; Schank, 1995). "Constructing a digital story inspires students to dig deeper into their subject, to think more complexly about it, and to communicate what they have learned in a more creative way" (Microsoft, 2010). When the process of creating a digital story is combined with critical reflection strategies (Boyd & Fales, 1983; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Mezirow, 1981; Schön, 1991), there is great potential to deepen student learning while also providing better evidence from which to assess student learning.

The purpose of this research project is to examine digital stories for evidence of civic learning, specifically student development of civic-mindedness. Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle (2011) defined civic-mindedness as "a person's inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community, and

to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community" (p.20). The CMG Rubric was designed to assess student narratives for civic-mindedness and includes five dimensions:

- Self-Identity; Civic identity
- Understanding how social issues are addressed in society
- Active participant in society to address social issues
- Collaboration with others across difference
- Benefit of education to address social issues.

In addition to the CMG Rubric, this study will use the AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Civic Engagement. This rubric was created from the AAC&U VALUE project. With participation from diverse teams of faculty and staff from a wide range of institutions, the project's goal was to develop measurement tools to assess the quality of student work (www.aacu.org). Civic engagement was defined as "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivations to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes". The rubric was designed to make the civic learning outcomes more explicit. Analysis of these learning outcomes will also include evaluating the CMG and AAC&U rubrics in relation to the IUPUI Division of Student Life's Co-Curricular Principles of Undergraduate Learning.

Intended Outcomes

The results of this project will provide a clearer understanding of how co-curricular service experiences contribute to student civic learning. In addition, the analysis of student civic learning through digital stories will enable us to evaluate digital stories as a meaningful reflection activity for civic learning.

Assessment Methods

Participants of this study are IUPUI students (N=39) who participated in a co-curricular service experience as recipients of the Sam H. Jones Community Service Scholarship. Participants volunteered to create a digital story. It was not for a grade or a required component of the scholarship.

To create their digital stories, students first participated in one or more co-curricular service experiences (e.g., a campus-wide day of service or an alternative break trip). Following their service experience(s), students received guidance and technical assistance with creating their digital story. They were each provided several reflection prompts designed to coincide with the CMG Rubric to foster responses that contained evidence of

civic-mindedness. The students' roles, responsibilities, and desire to be civically engaged vary across the eight scholarship programs, so allowing for variance was important.

Data Analysis

The PRAC grant will provide funding for two graduate assistants, who will rate student reflection narratives around the Civic-Minded Graduate model. An initial review of the digital stories will be conducted to categorize them as "Low," "Medium," or "High" in terms of demonstration of civic-mindedness. From there, five digital stories from each category will be randomly selected for further analysis, totaling 15 digital stories. Each digital story will be scored twice, once using the CMG Rubric and once using the AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Civic Engagement rendering a total score (CMG maximum score=35, AAC&U maximum score=42).

Then, each member of the research team will view the digital story within Atlas Software for further analysis. Using Atlas, the reviewers will use the tagging feature to make a note of a variety of themes and the frequency with which they are mentioned. The themes are related to domains (rows) of the rubrics previously mentioned and the Principles of Co-Curricular Learning. Upon completion, an analysis of the frequency of themes will be conducted. These results will be compared to the initial overall ratings to determine the ways in which the digital stories provide authentic evidence of specific types of civic learning.

Evaluation and Dissemination

A final written report will be submitted to PRAC at the end of the January 2015 detailing use of the funds and outcomes of the project. Reports will be used to inform Center for Service and Learning and Division of Student Life annual assessment reports for campus initiatives, and to provide information to deans and other administrators about the value of co-curricular service experiences.

The results of this research will be disseminated to Region IV-E and NASPA membership through presentation of the project at the 2014 NASPA Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement conference. Further dissemination will include the publication of a research brief detailing the research with the results made available to senior leadership at IUPUI, faculty, and community partners. IUPUI's participation in the LEAD initiative will further facilitate the sharing of this research at the national level.

Use of Findings for Program Improvement

Results of this project will inform the use of digital stories as an innovative assessment technique for co-curricular service experiences and improve campus co-curricular service programming. Results can be used to inform program development for the next year to support student civic learning. For example, staff can use the information to plan reflection activities and trainings designed around the civic learning outcomes being assessed. The findings from this project will be also used to improve the quality of information CSL and the Division of Student Life is able to provide for campus initiatives (e.g., Carnegie Foundation Classification for Community Engagement).

References

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