

Assessment Project Proposal

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Project Title: Gateway Scholars Program Assessment

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Abstract

This project will evaluate the impact of the IUPUI Gateway Scholars Program on participants' pedagogical and professional development. The IUPUI Gateway Scholars Program began the summer of 2004 as an effort to find new ways for improving teaching and learning in large-enrolling introductory courses. The program consists of an intensive seven-day summer institute and a year-long faculty Community of Practice. Interviews for the first two program cohorts have been conducted and transcribed and interviews for the third cohort will take place during the spring of 2007. This project will analyze the interviews from all three cohorts to evaluate the Gateway Scholars Program and provide initial insights into the program's impact on student learning and retention.

Purpose of project

This project seeks to understand the impact of the Gateway Scholars Program, a time and resource intensive faculty development program coordinated by the IUPUI Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). With the support of a PRAC grant, the project directors will be able to conduct the necessary interview analysis, in addition to their other CTL responsibilities, and hire a transcriptionist to transcribe the final set of interviews.

The Gateway Scholars Program was created specifically to support course coordinators and gateway instructors in their efforts to find new ways to improve teaching and learning. The program, in its third year, has served fifteen faculty with another seven currently participating. Gateway Scholars have represented a number of departments on campus, including Accounting, Biology, Business Communication,

Chemistry, Communication Studies, Computer and Information Technology, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish, and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

During a seven day Gateway Scholars Summer Institute, scholars explore the ways in which they would like to enhance their teaching and students' learning and thus improve student success in their courses. Teaching and learning topics are explored through individual course planning, group work, and interactive sessions on topics of interest to the scholars. Additionally, scholars prepare individual work plans that include strategies to improve retention in their courses and are regularly asked to provide oral and written updates on their project progress.

For their participation in the year-long program, each scholar receives a stipend of \$5,000 and \$500 in professional development funds. Total annual cost of the Gateway Scholars Program is around \$45,000 plus an unquantified, but significant, amount of Center for Teaching and Learning staff time. The Gateway Scholars Program represents one of the most time and resource intensive programs offered through the Office for Professional Development. As such, thorough assessment is critical to ensure the program achieves its anticipated level of impact, given the resources allocated.

In addition to traditional evaluation surveys and the work plans cited above, data on the impact of the program is being gathered through individual interviews. Interviews with the first two cohorts are nearly complete and the third cohort interviews will be completed during the spring of 2007. The analysis of these interviews will contribute tremendously to the CTL's evaluation of the Gateway Scholars Program while also

providing important understanding related to the coordination of resource-intensive professional development activities.

Intended outcomes

Through this project, we hope to gain a clearer understanding regarding the effectiveness of the Gateway Scholars Program. Specifically, we are interested in how faculty perceive their experience in the program and what elements of the program are considered most beneficial. Not only will a thorough assessment of the Gateway Scholars' interviews provide insights into the effectiveness of the Gateway Scholars Program, but it will shed light on faculty development efforts in general. Additionally, findings from this analysis will offer preliminary insights into the possible impact of the Gateway Scholars program on student learning and retention at IUPUI. Ultimately, we intend to contribute to the national scholarship on undergraduate education and faculty development by publishing the findings in a peer-reviewed journal.

Assessment methods

Individual interviews with each participating Gateway Scholar are conducted near the end of their year-long experience. The tape-recorded semi-structured interview takes place in the faculty member's office and typically lasts around 45 minutes. Interview questions inquire as to the potential impact of the program on pedagogical approaches, general professional development, and overall perceptions of the efficacy of the Gateway Scholars Program in achieving the program's stated goals.

Data analysis

The PRAC grant will support the two project directors in analyzing the transcribed Gateway Scholar interviews. Twenty-two interviews will be coded and analyzed to explore emerging themes related to the impact of the program. We will employ a triangulated approach to analysis by comparing interview findings with participant feedback obtained through program evaluation surveys and participant work plans.

Dissemination of results

In addition to the final report required of PRAC grant recipients, our intent is to communicate the findings of this assessment to a national audience. The findings of this assessment program will be of interest to those in the field of faculty development as well as those interested in issues surrounding undergraduate education and the first-year academic experience. We intend to disseminate the results nationally through a national conference presentation and publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Use of findings for program improvement

For many reasons, spring 2007, marks the optimal time to do a thorough Gateway Scholars Program review. With three years of program experience, we have an appropriate amount of data by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, nearly all the courses initially identified as gateway courses have now been represented in the program. After the current cohort completes its year-long participation, we need to evaluate how the program should be structured for subsequent years. For

example, should the program continue to draw faculty from the original set of gateway courses, should we broaden the pool of potential courses, or should we revise the structure of the program based on the key strengths and needs identified in the interviews? The conclusions drawn from the assessment proposed here will be invaluable as we determine the future structure of the IUPUI Gateway Scholars Program.

Budget

Stipend for project directors	\$1,500
Transcription work for remaining cohort interviews	\$500
Total	\$2,000