

Proposal to the Program Review and Assessment Committee

1. Name and rank/title of Project Director(s): Elizabeth Goering (Associate Professor) and Ronald Sandwina (Assistant Professor)
2. Department/Division and School: Department of Communication Studies, Liberal Arts
3. Campus Address: CA 309
4. Phone: Goering (507-1398 until 3/13; 278-3136 after 3/13)
Sandwina (514-9381 until 3/13; 278-3158 after 3/13)
5. Fax: 278-1025
6. E-mail: bgoering@iupui.edu, rsandwin@iupui.edu
7. Project Title: **Integrating Departmental Programmatic Assessment Needs with Pedagogical Objectives in Select Communication Studies Courses**
8. Project Dates (all projects must be completed within one year of award !)
 - Collaboration to revise COMM-C299 (Research Methods) and COMM-C228 (Group Communication) to aid in departmental assessment: Summer, 2005
 - Pilot revised COMM-C299 and COMM-C228: Fall, 2005
 - Assess pilot; Report: Spring, 2006
9. Project Checklist
 - X Statement of support from the department chair or school dean by e-mail to esener@iupui.edu
- e-mail from John Parrish-Sprowl will be sent directly

 - X Simple budget : A detailed budget is not necessary. Nevertheless, please include a brief paragraph/details indicating how you intend to spend the grant money.
- budget is included in the proposal

 - N/A IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval attachment by email or hard copy to esener@iupui.edu or (Erdogan Sener, ET –309 K , IUPUI) or project director statement that IRB representatives have been consulted and all requirements have been fulfilled sent to same. Disbursement of funds will be contingent on receipt of approval by the Institutional Review Board, if human subjects review is necessary.
- for the planning activities proposed in this grant, IRB approval will not be necessary; it will likely be needed and will be sought when students collect assessment data during the pilot phase of the project

Integrating Departmental Programmatic Assessment Needs with Pedagogical Objectives in Select Communication Studies Courses

Elizabeth Goering and Ronald Sandwina
Department of Communication Studies

Abstract:

In 2007, the Department of Communication Studies will be undergoing another self-study and program review. Recognizing the value of approaching assessment proactively, John Parrish-Sprowl, the department chair, assigned the assistant chair, Beth Goering, the task of overseeing data collection in preparation for that review. This proposal requests funding to pilot a plan that would integrate the department's programmatic assessment needs and the pedagogical objectives of select Communication Studies courses. Specifically, this plan would involve modifying assignments in two Communication Studies classes, COMM-C228 (Discussion and Group Methods) and COMM-C299 (Communication Research Methods), to provide students with the opportunity to learn course content by applying relevant concepts and theories in the collection/analysis of data that could then be used by the department for programmatic assessment purposes. This plan would consist of three stages: Stage 1, which would take place in Summer 2005, would involve collaboration between Elizabeth Goering, assistant chair responsible for self-study data collection and instructor of C228, and Ronald Sandwina, instructor of C299, to identify ways in which assignments in these two classes could be modified and coordinated to meet the goals of this project. In Stage 2, which would take place in Fall 2005, the revised syllabi and assignments would be pilot tested. Finally, in Stage 3, which would take place in Spring 2006, the success of the experiment would be evaluated.

Purpose of project:

The purpose of this project is to see if two important goals within the Department of Communication Studies can be synthesized so as to create a synergistic relationship between them. The first goal is programmatic, a commitment to assessment as part of the ongoing review of programs offered by the department; while the second goal is pedagogical, a commitment to engaging our students in applied learning with real-world impacts.

Indeed, the Department of Communication Studies understands the value of assessment as an integral part of the ongoing cycle of curriculum development and presentation. According to the department's 1997 self study, "This department has implemented the best qualities of the communication studies discipline, adapting to the needs of our academic and surrounding communities, according to the resources available to us." Foundational to the flexibility implied in the previous observation is a recognition that ongoing, systematic assessment is critical to strategic change. Further evidence of this commitment to vigilant assessment can be seen in the chair's decision to proactively designate someone to oversee data collection for the upcoming program review.

This proposal seeks to integrate this commitment to assessment with a second goal within the department, which is a commitment to applied learning. At its annual faculty retreat in August 2000, the Department of Communication Studies established a goal for itself of achieving "high student-faculty involvement in an applied global/community focused scholarly environment." As a faculty, we expressed our commitment to engaging our students in applied learning that would have real-world impacts. This proposal synthesizes these two objectives by providing students with applied learning opportunities that will produce usable data for program assessment.

The two classes selected for this project are COMM-C228 (Discussion and Group Methods) and COMM-C299 (Communication Research Methods). These courses were selected because of the natural linkages between their course content and assessment procedures. For example, in C228, students learn about focus groups and the communication skills involved in facilitating them. Focus groups also are a useful assessment tool. This grant would allow for piloting a project in which C228 students would be trained to facilitate focus groups in class, and then they would be given the opportunity to apply their skills by actually facilitating focus groups of students or alumni for assessment purposes. C299 has similar logical linkages to assessment. In C299, students learn to design survey instruments and conduct interviews. This pilot would redesign the specific assignments in C299, so the students would apply their research skills by surveying and interviewing students and alumni in Communication Studies in support of the department's assessment needs. By linking the teaching of these methods to the assessment needs of the department, students will be given real-world experience in utilizing the methods.

Outcome of this project:

Merging the programmatic and pedagogical goals, as outlined above, should produce beneficial outcomes on two levels: The first level of outcome is related to student learning. Students will be given the opportunity to learn about communication research methods and group communication in an applied setting. Research suggests applied learning is associated with a variety of positive outcomes, including improved academic performance (Newman & Wehlage, 1999) and improved problem solving skills (Scheepers & Nulden, 2000). On a second level, the plan is beneficial in terms of meeting the programmatic assessment needs of the department. The proposed plan offers an efficient way to collect assessment data for the

department's program review. In addition, evidence suggests that the data collected from students by students may actually be even more reliable than data collected by faculty (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Consequently, teaching students to facilitate focus groups, conduct interviews, and design surveys as part of the research methods and group communication classes serves the dual purpose of providing students with valuable learning opportunities and providing the department with useful assessment data.

Assessment method:

Assessment within this plan must be conceptualized at two levels. On one level, the researchers will be utilizing data collected by the students in C228 and C299 to assess the department's programs and practices. On a second level, the researchers will be assessing the appropriateness and value of linking departmental assessment to course content.

The particular methods employed for the first level of assessment will, in part, be determined through the summer curriculum revision, but most likely it will include focus groups with past and current Communication Studies students as well as surveys of and interviews with current students and/or alumni. These methods are already taught in C299 and C228; this pilot would modify assignments to provide an applied context for that instruction that simultaneously serves the department's assessment needs.

Two methods will be used to measure outcomes related to the second level of assessment, the appropriateness and usefulness of linking student learning to department assessment. First, focus group discussions, facilitated by the project directors, will be conducted with the students involved in the pilot study. Second, the quality of the data produced by the C228 and C299 students will be analyzed.

Data analysis:

Thematic content analysis will be used to analyze the focus group data and interviews. Surveys will be analyzed using traditional statistical methods.

Evaluation & dissemination:

During Spring 2006, the pilot project will be evaluated using the methods described above to determine if: 1) the data resulting from the assignments in C228 and C299 are reliable and useful, and 2) the process enhances student learning in the two classes.

Intended use of findings:

If the pilot project is successful, the revised assignments that synthesize student learning and programmatic assessment would be integrated into these classes on an ongoing basis. In addition, possible linkages between course content and assessment in other Communication Studies classes could be identified and developed.

Budget description

The budget will be used as follows: 1) \$2000 as a stipend for the grant participants: \$1000 each to Beth Goering and Ron Sandwina. This equates to approximately five days of effort in revising the C299 curriculum, overseeing the implementation of that curriculum, and follow-up assessment. 2) \$500 for data collection resources (copying and mailing surveys; food as incentives to encourage focus group participation; focus group tape transcription).

Works Cited:

Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2000). Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Newman, F.M & Wehlage, G. G. (1999). Successful School Restructuring: A Report to the Public and Educators. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Scheepers, H. & Nulden, U. (2000). Experience and interaction in teaching escalation. Interactive Learning Environments, 8(1), 1-22.