

## *Main Campus Assessment Grants Spring 2011*

### *Closing the Loop on Student Learning with Program-level Assessment*

The Office of the Provost is now offering funding through two new initiatives to support departments/academic programs in their efforts to conduct program-level assessment. The first initiative is a *General Call* to all departments/programs to support the gathering and analysis of evidence of student learning connected to program-level learning goals. The intent of these grants is to help departments/programs “close the loop” on their curriculum planning and teaching by looking at student work or other evidence of student achievement *across* courses or an entire major, in order to make use of that evidence in decisions about improvement.

The second initiative is a focused campus-wide study of student writing, through a *Student Writing Study* for Spring 2011. This initiative is prompted by a widely shared concern about the ability of students to write at a high level, irrespective of their major or field. For this initiative, we are looking for at least 8-10 faculty teams from across the four schools, representing their departments/program, who are interested in assessing the quality of student writing in their major programs.

Funds are available to support current and ongoing projects as well as for launching new efforts. Depending on the nature of the request, projects will be funded up to \$8,000. ***Funds are available now***; additional funding to achieve new project goals will be considered upon completion of the initial project.

Details for both initiatives are described below.

#### **1. General Call for Program-level Assessment Efforts**

These grants are intended to support individual programs in the gathering, analysis, and application of findings of *direct evidence of student learning* (see Appendix A). Here are some of examples of projects we expect to fund:

- **Designing and piloting an end of course survey** that connects each question to a specific program-level goal with the intention of distributing the survey to all students enrolled in introductory courses.
- **Tailoring benchmark exams** (GREs, etc.) to align better with department/program goals. Exams can be administered at multiple points during students’ academic life to assess learning gains.
- **Conducting a course sequencing process** to determine: (1) how courses build upon and connect with one other and (2) where and how program level goals are introduced, reinforced, and mastered throughout the curriculum.

- **Designing a capstone course assignment** for outgoing seniors around specific program-level goals generating data that enable faculty and students to reflect upon the accumulative knowledge acquired and goals achieved.
- **Creating a series of pre and post surveys** across a major in which the questions are specifically linked to program learning goals.
- **Examining collections of students' work using e-portfolios.** As a collective effort that includes work from multiple courses and other sources, the use of e-portfolios can help departments/programs to identify patterns of student learning – when it occurs, how it happens, and what goals are met.

Program-level assessment should first and foremost be *useful*—useful to faculty in planning, design, and improvement of courses, and potentially useful to students to understand better their own progress in relation to program learning goals. Assessment activities should also be cost-effective and wherever possible embedded in current practices.

Funds must be used to support the assessment work. That is, funds will cover additional resources, such as

- hiring graduate associates/assistants to help with data gathering (and in some cases preliminary analysis)
- stipends/course buy-outs for faculty who take a leadership role in coordinating efforts in behalf of the program (e.g. designing and piloting a course survey instrument)
- purchasing/licensing assessment tools, etc. that directly support assessment effort
- direct costs of workshops or retreats
- any other reasonable costs associated with carrying out projects and building local capacity in program-level assessment

The intent of the grants is to build local experience and models, to be shared across departments, programs, and schools. With that in mind we expect to bring grant recipients together a couple of times during the year to share their work with other departments/programs (especially in related disciplines and with departments/programs doing similar kinds of projects).

### **Proposal Submission Process for General Call**

To be considered for a grant, please submit the following:

- Name of faculty member(s) overseeing the effort along with members of the assessment team
- List of (or link to) the department's program-level learning goals that apply to proposed project (i.e., the department might have multiple programs with multiple learning goals and so all goals might not apply to the proposed project)

- Brief description of current program-level assessment efforts underway in the department
- Brief description of proposed project including:
  - goal(s) of project – *what questions about student learning will you be addressing in your project?*
  - budget explanation: *how will funds be used?*
  - timetable for implementation
- Signature of or email from department chair or program director and director of undergraduate studies indicating endorsement of the proposal

At the end of spring quarter of 2011, all departments/programs awarded a grant will be asked to submit a brief project report. Details on the report will be forthcoming.

## ***2. Student Writing Study***

The *Student Writing Study* builds off of our commitment to assess the quality of student writing campus-wide. Focusing on specific writing samples from students from multiple departments/programs will generate student learning data that will help us to identify efforts we might pursue to improve Georgetown's writing curriculum. The study is designed to look at writing in the first or second year (tied to Gen Ed courses) and senior year, tied to majors or programs.

The *Student Writing Study* will include:

- Teams of three faculty from a department or program (one of the team could be a graduate student). All participants will be paid a \$1000 stipend. (Additional funds are available to work with a few faculty and programs interested in helping us tailor sample rubrics for evaluating writing to particular disciplines.)
- With guidance from the Georgetown Writing Program and CNDLS, faculty teams will in spring 2011 meet for two three-hour working sessions to read samples of student work and calibrate responses using a rubric designed to assess writing ability within the context of the major's (or gen ed course's) goals. Then participating faculty should plan on a few hours of reading time in between the two working sessions. Altogether we anticipate about 1 ½ day commitment, flexibly scheduled.
- *Participation in the Student Writing Study will not preclude a department or program from also applying for an assessment grant for a viable program-level assessment project.*

### **Proposal Submission Process for the Senior Writing Assessment Project**

To inquire about your potential participation, contact Randy Bass or please submit the following:

- Name of faculty member(s) overseeing the effort along with members of the assessment team
  - Brief description of the type of writing to be assessed including list of courses and course assignments generating writing samples
- Signature of or email from all participating department chairs or program directors and directors of undergraduate studies indicating endorsement of the proposal

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Please submit all proposals to Randy Bass, Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning at **[cncls@georgetown.edu](mailto:cncls@georgetown.edu)**. Proposals will be reviewed by a faculty peer committee along with members of CNDLS staff.

For questions about this proposal process or program-level learning assessment in general, please contact Mindy McWilliams or Daryl Nardick at CNDLS ([cncls@georgetown.edu](mailto:cncls@georgetown.edu)).

## Appendix A

**Direct evidence of student learning** is based on student work products or performances. Indirect measures, such as surveys and focus groups, reveal characteristics associated with learning, but they only imply that learning has occurred. Program-level assessment (or institutional assessment) is a means to providing a more complete view of student learning across courses and as a means of determining what individual course experiences add up to with regard to overall program goals.

The Georgetown assessment grants will support department/academic program efforts that collect *direct evidence of student learning at the program-level*. The table below shows the distinctions between direct and indirect evidence collected at the course, program, and institutional levels.

### Examples of Direct & Indirect Evidence of Student Learning at All Levels

	<b>Direct Evidence</b>	<b>Indirect Evidence</b>
<b>Course Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course assignments</li> <li>• Exams and quizzes</li> <li>• Research projects</li> <li>• Class participation</li> <li>• Grades based on criteria related to learning goals</li> <li>• Internship performance or field experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course evaluations</li> <li>• Outlines of concepts and skills covered on tests</li> <li>• Percent of class time spent in active learning</li> <li>• Number of student hours spent on service class work and other course-related activities</li> <li>• Grades point average or course grade distribution</li> </ul>
<b>Program Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capstone projects, senior theses, exhibits, or performances</li> <li>• Faculty evaluation of collections of student work (e.g. e-portfolios)</li> <li>• Pass rates of scores on licensure, certification, or subject area tests</li> <li>• Student publications or conference presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group interviews</li> <li>• Program-focused cuts of institutional survey data</li> <li>• Department/program review data</li> <li>• Job/grad school placement rates</li> <li>• Employer/alumni/student perception surveys</li> <li>• Proportion of upper-level courses compared to programs elsewhere</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance on tests in writing, thinking, or general knowledge</li> <li>• Performance on achievement tests</li> <li>• Rubric (criterion-based rating scale) scores for class assignments in GenEd, interdisciplinary core courses, or other required courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally developed, commercial, or national surveys or self-report of activities</li> <li>• Transcript studies examining trends of course selection/grading</li> <li>• Institutional benchmarks (e.g. grad. and retentions rates, GPAs of grads, etc.)</li> </ul>

### Forms and Sites of Assessment at Georgetown

Georgetown has been building capacity around assessment for a number of years. The chart below expands on the previous table to represent the kinds of measures and evidence we are currently collecting and analyzing at the course, program and institutional level. The primary goal of the Georgetown assessment grants is to create new opportunities for departments/academic programs to collect direct evidence of student learning in order to make use of that evidence in decisions about improvement.

<b>GEORGETOWN Examples (actual and prospective)</b>	Direct Evidence: <b>Individual faculty judgment</b>	Direct Evidence: <b>Collective faculty judgment</b>	Direct Evidence: <b>Significant student reflection on learning</b> (meta-cognitive analysis)	Indirect Evidence: <b>Surveys, student success data</b>
Course level	<p><b>Feedback and grading</b> for course assignments, exam questions or papers aligned with course goals.</p>	<p><b>Groups of faculty examining collections of student work</b> from a multiple sections of a course.</p> <p><b>Collaborative faculty inquiry</b> into student learning (e.g. Math NSF grant to examine problem-solving in Calculus).</p> <p><b>Common exams or exam questions</b> or common assignment responses (e.g. Spanish and other languages).</p>	<p><b>End of semester survey/reflections</b> to questions tuned to course and program learning goals.</p> <p><b>Analytic journal writing</b> within coursework, related to experiential activities connected to course goals not in other assessments.</p> <p><b>Brief in-class writing</b> of “one-minute papers” or other reflections connecting day to day work to larger course goals.</p>	<p><b>Course evaluations</b></p> <p><b>Knowledge surveys</b> (e.g. Swift and Stoll in Chemistry)</p> <p><b>Surveys of student perceptions,</b> misperceptions, or attitudes (e.g. Skelton in Physics, Tong in Chemistry,)</p> <p><b>Enrollment patterns</b> (e.g. how gateways seed majors)</p>