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**Making the Grade:
Implementing uniform grading procedures in courses offered across two modalities
Creighton University RFP 2013 – AEA Development Grants for SoTL
Submitted: November 2012**

Abstract:

The Werner Institute provides an interdisciplinary program leading to a master's degree in negotiation and dispute resolution (MS-NDR) that is offered in two modalities: one, a campus-based mode and the other a hybrid mode consisting of online learning combined with two intensive residential courses on-campus. The purpose of this project is to explore and assess students' learning parity by collecting, analyzing, and comparing data across the two modalities regarding assessment activity in one of its courses that is offered both online and campus-based. This project will also design, evaluate, and compare a method to assess class participation in the campus-based course that is comparable with assessing online class participation in discussion forums. This project is needed to promote learning parity across our MS-NDR program and uncover insights for creating improved and uniform assessment plans. Outcomes of the project will include measurable evidence of students' learning outcomes across both modalities.

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Proposal

Project Background:

The Werner Institute provides an interdisciplinary program leading to a master's degree in negotiation and dispute resolution. This program is offered in two modalities: one a campus-based mode, and the other a hybrid mode consisting of online learning combined with two intensive residential courses on-campus. Currently, The Werner Institute is in the process of integrating and revising both programs' curricula, aiming to achieve as much parity in learning outcomes as possible between the two modalities. As part of this effort we have already revised and integrated the goals and objectives for student learning in one of the courses that is taught in both modalities (Culture, Gender, and Power Differences in Conflict) but this revised approach has not been implemented yet; it will be implemented in Spring 2013. This provides a timely opportunity for the proposed project.

Project Purpose:

As stated in its Mission Statement, Creighton University "exists for 'students and learning,' [...] and regularly and systematically assesses student learning as we wish to better understand, learn from, and adapt to our students' forms and levels of learning as we prepare them for professional lives post-graduation."¹ To achieve this aim, The Werner Institute is committed to achieve parity, as well as a suitable degree of uniformity, across its learning-modalities, assuring that all students in our program are oriented towards the same learning outcomes by applying the same pedagogical approach. With this overall goal in mind, the purpose of this project is to collect, analyze and compare assessment practices that are used in a course that is taught in both modalities: campus-based and online. This project will also achieve the following: a) allow the principal investigator to complete the assessment cycle required by the Assessment Workshop Certificate Series of providing evidence of student learning; b) serve as a starting point to later on develop and submit a comprehensive research proposal to the Creighton Institutional Review Board for a more comprehensive study to contrast student learning across different learning modalities; and c) raise the bar for ourselves, in anticipation of a program assessment we expect to undergo over the course of the coming year. Furthermore, most of the programs offered online at Creighton do not mirror a campus-based program. However, given Creighton University's deep commitment to online learning, it is quite likely that programs traditionally offered on campus will seek to fulfill their mission on a larger scope, and expand their audience to include online students studying a program that mirrors, or closely reflects, the original campus based modality. Gaining understanding of the issues of balancing assessment-uniformity and student parity across program or course modalities will provide Creighton with organizational knowledge necessary to support such developments.

Project Design: To complete the project the researchers will:

- a) Conduct a literature review regarding parity of student learning across two modalities (i.e., online and campus-based) within the same program.

¹ Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning: Statement of University-Level Outcomes, <http://www.creighton.edu/aea/assessmentofstudentlearning/universityleveloutcomes/index.php>

- b) Focus on one course that will be taught in Spring 2013 in both modalities (online and campus-based) that have identical assessment plans regarding course objectives and the measuring of students' learning outcomes.
- c) Collect, analyze, and compare students' learning outcomes across the two modalities.
- d) Design and evaluate a method to assess class participation in the campus-based course that is comparable with assessing online class participation in discussion forums.

Project Timeline:

Activity	Outcome	Date of Completion
Explore assessment tools	Conduct literature review	Early Spring 2013
Explore and assess students' parity in learning outcomes	Measurable data	End of Spring 2013
Disseminate findings	Written article & oral presentation	Ongoing

Expected Products: This project will produce the following final products:

- Publish our findings in a suitable academic or professional journal and share findings in presentation/poster sessions internally and externally.²
- Provide recommendations for conducting similar comparisons and revisions across other courses in the NDR program, should the outcomes and findings warrant this.
- Measurable evidence of students' learning outcomes across both modalities while using a uniform assessment plan

Project Sustainability: The Werner Institute conducts measurement of students' learning outcomes on an ongoing basis; it is part of our assessment process. Furthermore, we are looking to replicate this assessment throughout our curriculum.

Budget Information:

Line Item	Amount	Description and Justification
iPad 3 for each researcher	\$650 X2 = \$1300.00	A key part of the project involves developing a system to quickly assess and record information regarding student participation in live classroom settings. We anticipate teachers to grade students on their class participation in real time, during class, or in the classroom as students are engaged in exercises or on short breaks. This requires equipment and applications suitable for on-the spot data entry. http://www.amazon.com/Apple-iPad-MC707LL-Wi-Fi-Black/dp/B00746UR2E/ref=sr_1_5?s=electronics&ie=UTF8&qid=1352723915&sr=1-5&keywords=ipad+3
Research Assistant	\$700.00 \$10/hr	The RA will identify suitable data recording methods utilizing the tablets, assist in literature review, and filling other tasks as necessary.
Total	\$2,000.00	

² We have submitted to Creighton's IRB an Application for Determination of Exempt Status. If approved, we will publish findings, if findings merit publication, in a suitable academic or professional journal; if not approved, we will share findings internally within the Creighton University community.