Preparing Future Faculty to Assess Student Learning
….. An Initiative* of the Graduate School at Michigan State University

OUR APPROACH INVOLVES

✓ In-depth faculty support and participation
✓ Synergies with existing teaching develop programs for graduate students and postdocs
✓ Cultivation of graduate student and postdoc involvement through communities of practice and initiative-specific programming. Our goal is to make various “on-ramps” available to participation (thus our initiative is adaptable to the needs and interests of academic units and graduate students/postdocs themselves)
✓ A developing framework for evaluation of graduate student and postdoc understanding of student learning outcome assessment.
✓ A strong partnership with the Dean of Undergraduate Education and MSU’s efforts to solidify liberal learning goals (in anticipation of 2015-16 Higher Learning Commission of NCACS)
✓ Targeting graduate students who serve as TAs in “gateway” courses

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO-DATE

✓ In-depth faculty support and participation
  o 8 deans of academic colleges provided financial support for 22 individuals to attend Association of American Colleges and Universities February 2013 conference entitled, “General Education and Assessment: A Sea Change in Student Learning” (www.aacu.org/generaleducation/gened2013/materials.cfm)
  o 45 faculty agreed to be a formal part of this project (faculty associated with gateway courses). Some are community of practice leaders.
  o 15 additional faculty have provided input and encouraged participation of others
  o 13 faculty and administrators ran a three-day intensive ASL Spring Institute at MSU
  o We adapt to the needs of faculty and individual courses!

✓ Synergies with existing teaching develop programs for graduate students and postdocs
  o The funding for this project is supporting us in our efforts to leverage the resources of already existing teaching development programs on campus as they related to the assessment of undergraduate student learning. At the same time, this initiative is helping these programs cover student learning assessment in a more robust way.
    ▪ Certification of College Teaching (www.careersuccess.msu.edu/teaching/CCTP)
      • A key component of this program is a 1 ½ day institute each May which has committed approximately two hours to the topic of student learning assessment. The core project required for this certification is an intervention that asks a question about pedagogical effectiveness and quality of student learning.
    ▪ Teaching Assistant Program (www.tap.msu.edu)
      • TAP professional development support kicks off with a three half-day orientation program in August of each year. One of the three half-days will now focus on student learning outcome assessment.
      • Our Graduate Employees Union is in full support of this initiative.
    ▪ Intensive Residential College Teaching Fellowship Programs (www.careersuccess.msu.edu/teaching/fellowships)
      • Three residential colleges with disciplinary links to our Colleges of Natural Science, Social Science and the Arts and Humanities admit cohorts of teaching fellows each year. The fellows conduct research projects that assess a range of student learning and programmatic learning outcomes. Approximately 15-20 fellows are supported in each of the three residential colleges each year. These graduate students will be expected to participate in the MSU PFF-ASL initiative.
    ▪ Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (www.cirtl.net)
      • We will highlight the courses, programming and resources associated with this nationwide program that relate to helping graduate students and postdocs learn to assess undergraduate student learning.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO-DATE (CONTINUED)

√ Synergies with existing teaching develop programs for graduate students and postdocs (continued)

  - Teaching Essentials for Careers in Higher Education
    - MSU has licensed this set of on-line courses developed by Epigeum (www.epigeum.com) to help graduate students and postdocs get ‘just in time’ support for their teaching. A number of the modules contain best practices in student learning assessment.

√ Communities of practice & various “on-ramps” for participation

  o Communities of Practice
    - Three communities of practice currently exist that developed directly as a result of our receipt of this grant. The learning communities involve graduate students and postdocs as members of a humanities, STEM, or Social Science learning community.
      - The current graduate students and postdocs in these communities were recruited through:
        o The first “call” for individuals interested in becoming a PFF-ASL Fellow in Spring 2013 (http://www.grad.msu.edu/pff/pff_asl_fellows.aspx) – 52 fellows
        o Promotion of the first inaugural PFF-ASL 2013 Spring Institute which was developed in partnership with our Faculty & Organizational Development Office (http://www.fod.msu.edu/opportunities/registration/program-d-preparing-future-faculty-assessment-student-learning) – Approximately 60 participants. Find the 2013 in the Appendix of this document.

    - Three communities of practice exist that are a part of the Intensive Residential College Teaching Fellowship Programs mentioned above. In 2013-2014, 10-15 fellows will participate in each of the three programs and have a chance to reflect upon student learning assessment in the context of their teaching in the residential colleges and conversation in regular learning community meetings.

  o Other “on-ramps” for Participation
    - 2012-2013
      - “How People Learn” (67 people half-day cognitive science panel, 4/2013)
      - Certification in College Teaching May Institute
        - 98 students attended a three-day workshop in May 2013 which involved two hours of discussion on student learning assessment.
    - 2013-2014
      - TA Seminar (August 19, 20, 21 for ½ days)
        - 300 participants are expected in August 2014
        - One day of this seminar will now focus on student learning outcome assessment
      - Workshop: Using Social Media to Promote Student Learning (9/25/13)
      - All-day Symposium: Assessment of Student Learning Symposium (10/5/13)
      - Two-half day Workshops: Assessment of Student Learning 101 (late 2013)
      - PFF-ASL Spring Institute (5/7/14)
      - Certification of College Teaching (5/8/14-5/9/14)
ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO-DATE (CONTINUED)

√ A developing framework for evaluation of graduate student and postdoc understanding of student learning assessment.
   - Artifacts from participating gateway courses and/or individual syllabi revisions
   - Survey of knowledge of ASL to all participants
   - Plans to survey undergrads in classes to understand their experiences
   - Establishing an advisory group of graduate students and postdocs
   - Participant tracking

√ A strong partnership with the Dean of Undergraduate Education and MSU’s efforts to solidify liberal learning goals (in anticipation of 2015-16 Higher Learning Commission of NCACS)
   - A key component of the three-day intensive PFF-ASL Spring institute was the importance of aligning student learning outcome goals at the class or course level with program-level and university-level liberal learning outcomes.
   - Deans of Colleges and Dean of Undergraduate Education see MSU’s ability to demonstrate our ability to assess for student learning as critical to a successful accreditation visit.

√ Targeting graduate students who serve as TAs in “gateway” courses.
   - Many of the graduate students who attended the 2013 PFF-ASL Spring Institute had been TAs for “gateway courses”.
   - Recruiting TAs that will be in specific gateway courses has been a challenge (addressed in the next section).

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

√ Balancing breadth (involving more and more students in the project by supporting introductory programming) and depth (supporting learning communities to pursue more in depth work on student learning assessment).
√ Logistical challenge of engaging TAs currently teaching or about to teach gateway courses
   - TAs are assigned by semester, to different classes each semester (thus less of an opportunity to alter syllabi and goals over time); TAs are often not assigned to a course until days before the semester – this makes it challenging to communicate with them ahead of time and get them interested in the initiative; faculty may or may not be supportive.
√ Many graduate students who are NOT TAs (in gateway courses) are interested (paid for by MSU match) – this is a good thing because they help to generate excitement and improve diversity within communities of practice.
√ Challenge of gaining participation from certain disciplines (e.g., Economics)

PLAN FOR MSU ON-LINE RESOURCES

√ MSU Knowledge Network – This socially mediated space will house all of the video clips and session recordings of MSU PFF-ASL events.
√ Web Presence – Will have links to internal as well as external resources, institute artifacts, videos, syllabi
√ Spartans Teach – Will be both a hashtag (“#SpartansTeach”) and a nomiker that graduate students will see on monthly newsletters and advice columns – many of which will be on the topic of student learning assessment.

* With generous support from:
APPENDIX

Preparing Future Faculty for the Assessment of Student Learning
PFF-ASL Spring Institute Program (May 6-8, 2013)

AGENDA – DAY 1

8:30 – 8:35 a.m.  Provost Welcome (PLENARY)
8:35 – 8:40 a.m.  Welcome and Overview of Institute (PLENARY)
8:40 – 9:20 a.m.  Why is Assessment of Student Learning so Important? (PLENARY)
                   Dr. Terrel Rhodes, Vice President, American Association of Colleges and Universities
9:20 – 10:15 a.m. Moving Forward Using Backward Course Design: Alignment of Learning Outcomes, Instructional Activities and Assessments (PLENARY)
                   MSU Faculty
10:15 – 11:30 a.m. Assessing Course Alignment of Learning Outcomes, Instructional Activities and Assessments (BREAKOUTS)
                   MSU Faculty
11:30 – 12:30 p.m. LUNCH
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.  Beginning at the End: Writing Effective Learning Outcomes and Objectives (PLENARY)
                   MSU Faculty
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.  Writing Learning Outcomes and Objectives (BREAKOUTS)
                   MSU Faculty

AGENDA – DAY 2

8:30 - 10:00 a.m.  Student Learning Assessments: Purposes, Methods, and Decisions (PLENARY)
                   Dr. Larry Gruppen, Chair & Professor, Medical Education, University of Michigan
10:00- 11:45 a.m.  Developing Student Learning Assessments (BREAKOUT)
                   MSU Faculty
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.  LUNCH
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.  Aligning Assessments with Institutional and Programmatic Learning Goals (PLENARY)
                   MSU Faculty
2:15 – 3:30 p.m.  Aligning Assessments with Institutional and Programmatic Learning Goals (Breakouts)
                   MSU Faculty

AGENDA – DAY 3

9:00– 12:00 p.m.  Aligning Teaching and Learning Activities with Assessments and Learning Goals
                   (PLENARY and BREAKOUTS)
                   MSU Faculty
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.  LUNCH
1:30 – 2:45 p.m.  Putting it all Together (PLENARY and BREAKOUTS)
2:45 – 3:00 p.m.  Wrap-up & Next Steps (PLENARY)
3:00 p.m.  ADJOURN