

# Learner-Centered Education Grants

## 2 0 0 4 Final Report

### 1. Project Name and Project Director's Name. Include mailing address, phone and e-mail address.

Project Name: Developing scholar-teachers in doctoral education: A learner-centered approach

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### 2. Brief Description of Project:

The purpose of the project was to develop a one-credit professional development course whose goal was to incorporate structured apprenticeship into the role of scholar-teacher in the regular course of doctoral studies in the Applied Linguistics Ph.D. Program at NAU. In this effort, we heeded recent calls across academic disciplines for strategies to improve doctoral education and to expand doctoral education's traditional goal to exclusively forge researchers and in addition prepare doctoral students to meet the teaching and mentoring needs of the diverse student populations in higher education contexts in the US.

### 3. Goals, Outcomes, and Assessments

#### *Goal 1: One-credit professional development course*

The first major goal outlined in our grant proposal was the development and piloting of a needs-based, one-credit professional development course. For this course, we proposed four major objectives:

1. To deepen doctoral students' **knowledge surrounding learner-centered education in tertiary institutions in the US**; for example, students will learn about strategies in higher education instruction for planning opportunities for learner-centered feedback on the value of their teaching and opportunities for charting student learning outcomes formatively and summatively (e.g., the one-minute paper, mid-term evaluation formats such as on-line focus groups);
2. To increase their **awareness of resources for the successful design, implementation, and evaluation of learner-centered education** that can aid them in their early faculty careers to better serve diverse populations of college-level students; these resources include published literature, Internet resources (e.g., online tutorials and freely available software), the invisible college (e.g., alumni and advisors from the alma mater, and

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colleagues in the new institution), and university offices and programs (e.g., Offices for Faculty Development; Centers for Teaching and Learning Excellence);

3. To help them develop **familiarity with the varying expectations regarding teaching and scholarship across a range of institutions** with different missions, student populations, and faculty roles; and
4. To help them in the **creation of a personal vision** of the potential for a synergistic relationship between research, teaching, and service in the life **of academics who are scholar-teachers and engaged public intellectuals**.

### *Outcomes/Accomplishments for Goal 1*

One of the major outcomes of the piloted professional course was a revision of the original course objectives that were outlined in the grant proposal. In our proposal, we stated that we would develop a plan for the professional development course in the Summer of 2004, and pilot the course in the Fall of 2004. In the Summer of 2004, in order to generate ideas for the design of the professional development course, three graduate students and the Project Director reviewed the literature on preparing doctoral students for their future faculty positions. This group also reviewed the results of the Summer alumni phone interviews (see Goal 3). Based on these activities, a tentative syllabus for the course was developed.

In the Fall of 2004, the course was piloted as ENG 599, Professional Development Seminar, with all of the Applied Linguistics PhD students ( $n=17$ ) at Northern Arizona University. As proposed, the first class session presented the results of the Summer phone interviews to the students. Students also received a copy of the tentative syllabus, so that they could brainstorm course topics of interest to them. During the second class session, students generated a written list of course topics, which was then used to revise the syllabus, so that each remaining class session addressed the topics that the students had chosen. When students generated course topics of interest, it became apparent that the students already felt knowledgeable about learner-centered education, and were more concerned about the roles and responsibilities of faculty and the process involved in applying for faculty positions. To address these concerns, we created two new course objectives, in addition to the four originally proposed:

- To identify the range of jobs available to graduates of Applied Linguistics programs.
- To describe the procedures involved in applying for faculty positions.

In addition to the creation of a learner-centered (learner-generated) course syllabus, the pilot course also resulted in lesson plans and resources that could be used in future professional development courses. Resources collected and distributed throughout the course included job ads for faculty positions, example letters of application, on-line learner-centered education resource links, and descriptions of faculty duties in Teaching, Research, and Service. Class time

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was also devoted to developing survey questions for our alumni; this occurred in weeks 7, 11, 12, and 13.

The course succeeded in creating a forum for new faculty and current PhD students to exchange ideas about the roles and responsibilities of the professoriate. In week 10, as proposed, we held a panel discussion, *Experiences, Insights, and Advice on the Professoriate*, with 5 guest speakers: Three recent alumni of NAU, and two current instructors in NAU's Applied Linguistics program. Through the organization of the panel discussion, the students in the professional development course were given opportunities to interact with recently hired faculty on a number of different levels: over dinner, in the formal setting of a panel discussion, and at a reception for panel participants. In week 14, a final course evaluation was completed. Throughout the course, one PhD student fulfilled the role of participant-observer, taking detailed field notes each class session, and conducting informal interviews with students in the class.

In Spring semester, 2005, this course was approved by NAU's Graduate Council to be a regularly offered course (ENG 787 Professional Development Seminar) for students in our Applied Linguistics doctoral program.

### *Assessment of Goal 1*

In week 7, a mid-term course evaluation was completed by the students. The results of this survey indicated that students were generally satisfied with the course, but wished that we had more time to discuss each topic in more depth. When asked what changes they would like to see in the second half of the semester, students overwhelmingly agreed that they would like to receive more input and advice from the course instructor (Dr. Joan Jamieson). As one student put it: "I really appreciate the insights that only Joan—as a senior faculty member—can provide." To address this desire of the students, we incorporated more opportunities for students to ask questions of Dr. Jamieson, for example, after they had reviewed course materials (e.g., an example of an annual review and retention packet) or had discussed a particular topic with their classmates (e.g., legal rights of non-U.S. citizens applying for faculty positions).

At the end of the course, on the standard college evaluation form, 15 students rated the average quality of the course 4.5 (sd=.6) on a 5.0 scale, and rated the average amount that the course stimulated interest in the area at 4.6 (sd=.5) on a 5.0 scale. Student comments on open-ended questions showed that most liked the idea of the course very much, but that more time should be spent on fewer topics.

Also at the end of the course, students filled out an evaluation form designed to address the objectives for this course. Results are summarized in Appendix A.

### *Goal 2: Course resource web page on learner-centered education in tertiary institutions*

The second goal outlined in the grant proposal was the development of a course resource web page on learner-centered education in tertiary institutions, so that students could learn more

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about the principles of LCE and the resources available to them as teaching assistants and future faculty members.

### ***Outcome/Accomplishment of Goal 2***

The course resource web page was developed in Fall 2004. This web page can be found at [dana.ucc.nau.edu/~cmi3/profd.html](http://dana.ucc.nau.edu/~cmi3/profd.html).

The course resource page includes links to (a) the course syllabus, (b) 16 web sites related to learner-centered education, and (c) 4 web sites related to the development of a teaching philosophy. The LCE component of the course resource page is organized by the following topics: An introduction to LCE, learner-centered syllabi, learner-centered classroom practices, and learner-centered assessment. Students in the course were encouraged to print out pages accessed through these links, and class and group discussions addressed these resources.

### ***Assessment of Goal 2***

N/A

### ***Goal 3: A survey of alumni perceptions about preparedness for teaching in higher education***

Our project proposed the development of a survey that would serve two purposes. First, it would allow us describe the preparedness of doctoral training in Applied Linguistics for new assistant professors in the United States. Secondly, it would serve as an institutional instrument for recursive evaluation of our program outcomes in the long-term.

### ***Outcome/Accomplishments of Goal 3***

As stated in our work plan, we began our survey in Summer, 2004 by conducting telephone interviews with 6 alumni, which were then summarized. In Fall, 2004, we generated questions in order to develop our alumni survey; this was 27 pages long and contained 91 questions. We programmed it into the on-line survey tool, *Flashlight Online*. We administered the survey to all of our graduates in January, 2005. Twenty-four alumni who currently hold professorial positions were contacted; 18 responded. We analyzed the data and wrote a 27 page internal report (available upon request). We modified the survey in March, 2005. We administered the final form of the survey in April, 2005 to 98 assistant professors; 28 responded for a 29% response rate.

### ***Assessment of Goal 3***

Reporting on the telephone interviews completed in Summer, 2004, we created a 73 page document entitled "How prepared are Applied Linguistics PhD graduates for the professoriate? The experiences of six faculty members." Copies are available upon request.

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Overall, based on our on-line alumni survey, our NAU applied linguistics alumni reported that they were well-prepared to teach a range of classes and to use a variety of learner-centered techniques. However, most alumni reported that they were not as well prepared to use technology in the classroom. Alumni reported that they were somewhat or very prepared for many of the research abilities they felt were important for them such as conducting research projects, writing proposals, developing measures, and analyzing data. One area our alumni were not as prepared was in sharing results with people outside our field. Finally, our alumni reported that service within the university was very important for them, and that service for the public and the profession was somewhat important; however, they did not feel well-prepared for these service roles.

Faculty who responded to our national survey followed similar trends. About 60-75% of the respondents felt prepared for the classes that they taught. About 75% of the respondents reported that they were prepared to teach students from diverse language backgrounds; about 60% felt prepared to teach students of diverse ethnicities and different levels of academic preparedness, but only about half felt prepared to teach students of diverse ages and educational goals. Most respondents felt well prepared to conduct research, but over 60% had not published a refereed journal article. Over 60% of the respondents felt that they were not well-prepared for service such as serving on department committees, responding to public queries, or reviewing articles for journals.

### ***Goal 4: A Joint Conference Presentation by Students in the Doctoral Program and Faculty Reporting on the Outcomes of the Project***

We proposed to increase the impact of the project substantially by disseminating the project outcomes at the 14<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Applied Linguistics, the largest forum of our discipline, to be held for the first time in the United States (in Madison, WI) in July of 2005.

### ***Outcome/Accomplishments of Goal 4***

As stated in our work plan, Joan Jamieson, Professor, and Casey Keck, doctoral student in Applied Linguistics, wrote and submitted an abstract in Summer, 2004 entitled "Developing scholar-teachers in applied linguistics doctoral education." Our abstract was accepted. We will give our presentation with two other doctoral students, Camilla Vasquez (now an assistant professor at the University of South Florida) and Reiko Komiyama, on July 26, 2005 in Madison, WI. Based on the project, three publications are now in preparation:

"Focus on Applied Linguistics Ph.D. Graduates: How Well-Prepared are Future Faculty?" to be submitted to *Modern Language Journal*

"Using Technology in Class: Are Applied Linguistics Faculty Prepared?" to be submitted to *System*

"Doctoral Students and New Faculty Perceptions of Service within the Discipline of Applied Linguistics" to be submitted to *Review of Higher Education*

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### *Assessment of Goal 4*

Perhaps the conference will ask participants to fill out evaluation forms which will help us determine the effectiveness and relevance of our presentation. Also, we are planning on submitting the three articles listed above to academic journals this summer; their acceptance/rejection should also inform us as to the assessment of the survey.

#### **4. Problems or Issues Encountered:**

The project director devoted several weeks to learner-centered education in the original syllabus. When the students discussed the topics that were of interest to them, it turned out that they felt that they already knew about learner-centered techniques. It was ironic that by including learners in the design of the course syllabus, they decided to greatly reduce the amount of time that was to be devoted to learner-centered techniques! This lack of attention is reflected in the end-of-course evaluations in Appendix A.

Although the response rate of our national survey was lower than we expected, most web-based surveys typically have a response rate between 25-30%, according to Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliot, 2001, p. 22. (*Conducting research surveys via e-mail and the web*. Rand. Available online at <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1480/>)

#### **5. Conclusions, Recommendations and Future Directions:**

The professional development course is an excellent idea. Not only were students introduced to the roles and responsibilities of future faculty, but the class also provided all of the doctoral students with a structured time to get to know each other; often, students working on their dissertations become isolated and never meet the new students. This unanticipated benefit resulted in much greater cohesion among doctoral students than we had previously noticed.

It has become clear that this course should be offered each year. Students want to focus on future employment opportunities—at US universities and colleges, at international colleges and universities, and with businesses. Students need more practice explaining their research to the general public. They also need encouragement to become more involved in community service; at the same time, colleges and universities in the US need to determine whether or not to reward untenured professors for service roles. Finally, it is clear that our graduates need more opportunity to receive training with technology in the classroom.

We hope to continue this course, and to encourage students to take courses about using technology in the classroom. Every few years, we will administer our survey to our new alumni, in order to chart changes in response patterns, and to provide another source of information for our program's evaluation.

#### **6. Has this project led to sustainable change in your department/college? Describe:**

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Yes, insofar as we will now offer a professional development course every year for our doctoral students. We will rotate the topics of teaching, research, and service each year for three years in order to add more depth to the course. Also, each year, we will look for jobs in academia (in the US and abroad) and in business. Finally, we have decided to pilot a new course introducing technology to both our MA and PhD students.

### 7. Impact:

a. Have other faculty been affected by this project?  Yes  No. If so, describe: There are 9 members of the applied linguistics faculty; all reviewed the findings from the alumni survey. All are interested in maintaining students' preparation for teaching, research, and service.

b. Number of courses affected/involved. 2—our professional development seminar and a new technology course that we are piloting in Fall, 2005

c. Number of students affected. about 17

### 8. Significant Outcome:

What was the most significant outcome based on learner-centered principles that occurred through your project?

In comparing our results to the Preparing Future Faculty movement in US higher education, we found some similarities and differences to other disciplines. In terms of similarities, like other new assistant professors, many new Applied Linguistics professors feel prepared for traditional assessment such as quizzes and exams, but feel less prepared for self- or peer-assessment. They feel well-prepared to conduct research studies. They feel somewhat underprepared for service roles beyond the department and university, for explaining their research to the general public, for advising students and for teaching diverse students (although, not surprisingly, they did not feel underprepared to teach linguistically diverse students). In terms of differences, most new Applied Linguistics assistant professors teach at doctoral extensive and intensive universities, or at Mater's Colleges and Universities (according to the 2000 Carnegie Classification). Most teach graduate courses, with some undergraduate courses. Most feel well-prepared for the course that they teach, and also feel well-prepared to teach many other courses they have not yet had the opportunity to do so. Most have had several years of teaching experience before beginning their positions as assistant professors, and consider themselves well-prepared in a variety of learner-centered techniques such as group work, class discussions, modeling, and peer conferencing.

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## Appendix A

### ENG 599 Professional Development Seminar Fall, 2004 Final Evaluation of Course SUMMARY

<b>Part 1. To what degree has this class heightened your awareness in the following areas?</b>  <b>Check the box that best corresponds to your opinion.</b>  <b>Provide comments if you would like.</b>	not at all	a little	some what	a lot
The range of jobs available to you as Applied Linguistics graduates.  Comments:		1	<b>9</b>	4
The process of applying for faculty positions in U.S. universities.  Comments:			3	<b>11</b>
The principles and techniques associated with learner-centered education.  Comments:	1	<b>8</b>	4	1
The on-line resources available for learning more about learner-centered education.  Comments:	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	1
The expectations of faculty in different academic settings (i.e., in the domains of teaching, research, and service), as well as the procedures of annual review and retention.  Comments:			3	<b>11</b>
Developing a clearer vision of the roles you would like to fulfill as a future Applied Linguistics teacher-scholar.  Comments:		2	4	<b>8</b>

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Part 2. Personal vision of yourself as a teacher-scholar

**1. Imagine yourself as a newly hired assistant professor at a university in which you are teaching and conducting research in your area of expertise. Describe how you envision that these activities will enable you to participate in your community (local, regional, national, or international) on matters of public importance.**

**2. Did this class help you to think about this issue? Do you think of these areas (i.e., performing faculty duties and performing public service) separately? Do you see how they can inter-relate?**

Types of responses given:

### Question 1

- Six responses did not address participation in communities beyond the university or field of Applied Linguistics

These responses focused on the three domains of faculty responsibilities covered in the class: Teaching, Research, and Service. If “community” was mentioned, it was discussed in the context of helping students, providing service to the university, or contributing to one’s academic field.

- Eight responses did address participation in community beyond university/field

In all of these responses, students discussed how their research could inform (a) teaching practices, (b) educational policies, and/or (c) the development of materials, curricula, and assessments.

### Question 2

Did this class help you to think about these issues?

Yes	9
No	1
No response given	4

Do you think of these areas (faculty duties and public service) separately? Do you see how they can inter-relate?

They are inter-related	4
They are separate	1
Both separate and inter-related	1
“Inter-relatedness is still difficult to imagine”	1
No response given	7

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### Part 3. Open-ended questions about the course

#### 1. What have you found most useful in this class?

Discussion of job application process	11
Discussion of roles and expectations of faculty members	7
Alumni panel	5
Discussion of annual review process	3
Learning about the NAU SLA search	1
Being asked to describe research focus	1

#### 2. What has not been useful and/or frustrating for you in this class?

Did not spend much time on LCE	2
Brainstorming survey questions	2
Amount of information overwhelming	1
Class period was too short	1
Wanted to learn about jobs other than faculty positions	1
Some topics needed more time	1
Class more useful for students in last year of program	1
Needed a better classroom	1
Group work	1

#### 3. What changes would you suggest for future professional development courses?

Less breadth and more depth	3
If changes are made, job app. should still be covered	2
Extend the class period	2
Devote semester to one topic	1
Bring in other professors to get their perspectives	1
Spend more time on job application process	1
Do mock interviews/job talks	1
Limit survey work	1
Give more info on non-U.S. institutions	1

#### 4. What do you think about taking a class like this each year, in which different topics are rotated, and treated in more depth?

Good idea	12
Or, offer course just for those ready to apply for jobs	1
Have Ss take course upon entering and leaving program	1