

Learner-Centered Education Program
Arizona Board of Regents
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FORM

Proposal Title: Developing scholar-teachers in doctoral education: A learner-centered approach

Institution: Northern Arizona University DEPT/Unit: English

Multi-Campus/University Projects
(check other campuses or universities participating)

List other participating agencies:

ASU Main UA

ASU East UA South

ASU West NAU

Briefly describe the program and the development plan. The purpose of the project is to develop a one-credit professional development course whose goal is 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 Summer, 2004 three doctoral students and the project directors will conduct an alumni needs analysis. In Fall, 2004 the pilot version of the course will be offered; a formal alumni survey will be developed for future institutionalized use as a program evaluation tool. In Spring, 2005, the survey instrument will be expanded and administered to new assistant professors in Applied Linguistics nationwide.

Funding Category

Indicate a primary (P) and, if applicable, secondary (S) funding category:

Professional Development S Program or Course Development/Modification P

LCE Research Improved Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Authorizations

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Signature

Official Authorized to Enter into Contractual Obligations

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Proposal Narrative

1. Abstract

The purpose of the project is to develop a one-credit professional development course whose goal is 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. The objectives of our proposal are relevant to learner-centered education in two interlocked ways. First, the method for delivery of the new course will be learner-centered; second, the emphases in course content will be on better preparing our doctoral students to design, engage in, and evaluate learner-centered education practices in their own teaching during their early faculty careers. The project will result in four tangible products: (a) a needs-based curriculum for a one-credit course which will address our doctoral students' need for professional development as future teacher-scholars, (b) a course resource web page on learner-centered education in tertiary institutions; (c) a survey of alumni perceptions about preparedness for teaching in higher education, which will serve as an institutionalized instrument for recursive evaluation of our program outcomes in the long-term; and (d) a joint conference presentation by students in the doctoral program and the faculty reporting on the outcomes of the project. The project will benefit directly three or four doctoral students graduating each year from NAU's Applied Linguistics program, freshmen our doctoral students are responsible for teaching each semester in ENG 105 (Freshman Composition) at NAU, and the numerous undergraduate and graduate students our alumni will teach as junior faculty in their new positions across a range of institutions in the US.

2. Identification of Need

Background to the problem

The Applied Linguistics Ph.D. Program at NAU, which began graduating students in 1994, has a strong scholarly reputation. Our faculty are highly productive researchers and participate in leadership roles in their field. Our alumni, in turn, are extremely successful in securing tenure-track jobs. For almost a decade now, roughly three students per year have moved on to tenure-track faculty jobs. Of the some thirty graduates to date, one or two have become prominent scholars in applied linguistics, and most are leading successful faculty careers in undergraduate and graduate programs with a diverse range of disciplinary affiliations (e.g., in English, Linguistics, Education, and Applied Linguistics departments) across a variety of institutions spanning doctoral/research extensive and intensive universities, Master's colleges and universities I and II, and Associate's colleges. Some examples from the last two years' graduates include tenure-track positions at Iowa State University, Old Dominion University, San Diego State University, Troy State University, and Butte College.

Recently, however, we have become aware of anecdotal evidence regarding challenges many of our alumni face in their first faculty job. Specifically, several recent alumni have confided that they are overwhelmed during their first year as teachers in academia by tasks such as putting together a university course syllabus with clear learning goals, meaningful assessment means, and transparent grading systems; knowing how to use strategically new technologies to enhance the learner-centered experiences of their students under difficult circumstances, as with large classes and varied audiences within the same classroom; or knowing how to balance teaching and research expectations in

their institutions and how to prepare a teaching portfolio for retention and review purposes in their institutions. Because our doctoral program does not include any explicit curricular element to prepare them as future faculty, it seems these alumni did not know entirely what to expect and were not fully prepared for the teaching demands they encountered.

This need was identified and articulated last academic year in several faculty conversations held in the context of a wider effort to improve our learning outcomes assessment system for the program. However, these problems are not unique to our context. The same gaps in the education of doctoral students have been recognized across the nation for some time now and have fueled a number of large-scale efforts, such as the *Preparing Future Faculty Program* and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching *Initiative on the Doctorate*, among many. There is large agreement within academia that we can no longer afford to think of doctoral education's goal as the exclusive forging of researchers, and that doctoral programs ought to be preparing doctoral students to become effective teachers and supportive mentors of the diverse student populations who are increasingly gaining access to higher education (Applegate, 2002).

Proposed solution: A one-credit doctoral professional development course that embodies learner-center education principles

We think a one-credit doctoral professional development course is an effective means to introduce an explicit and systematic professional development component in our students' education. We currently have two one-credit professional development courses for Master's students (ENG 586 and 587) that receive very positive evaluations and large enrollment, and we would like to develop a similar component in our doctoral curriculum.

The new course will have four 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 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**.

The process of learning within the course will be learner-centered. The course will involve collaboration between students who have recently graduated and those students who will graduate in the near future. In order to gather ideas for relevant course topics, doctoral students will interview alumni during the summer. As part of the course in the fall, doctoral students will develop, administer, and analyze results of a survey administered to NAU alumni, and two alumni will be invited to campus to hold a department-wide colloquium. Our recent alumni, who by most perspectives would be seen as novices in their new career, will be treated as experts in this project—insiders who have knowledge of the workplace our students want to enter. By cooperatively sharing information these two groups will be personifying principles of learner-centered education. Other assignments and activities that will make the established one-credit course learner-centered include creating and maintaining a resource web page for classroom activities/assessment that our students and alumni can access.

Impact and scalability of the project

While we recognize the immediate impact of the project is small, we believe the additional benefits beyond the local context makes it an overall project whose impact is far-reaching and substantial.

Locally the project would benefit directly about three to five doctoral students graduating each year from the Applied Linguistics Program at NAU and to undergraduates enrolled in freshman composition, whom our doctoral students are responsible to teach during their tenure with us. Additionally, once our students graduate, they will be responsible for the educational experiences of many undergraduate and graduate students in institutions of different types across the country. These junior academics' impact on the lives of future students will be greatly enhanced through their improved ability to engage in innovative learner-centered pedagogy across the wide landscape of higher education institutions in the US.

Further, we propose to increase the impact of the project substantially by disseminating the project outcomes at the 14th 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. As Applegate (2002) notes, we need commitment and dialogue from within each discipline in order to “develop a new model for teaching scholarship [that is] appropriate to the values and focus of [that] discipline” (p. 7). We hope our dissemination of the project outcomes in such a unique forum opens space for wider conversations on the articulation of teaching scholarship in our discipline, something that is of interest to the some thirty doctoral programs in applied linguistics that exist across the US (Graduate Directory of the American Association of Applied Linguistics lists, available at www.aaal.org).

3. Technical Needs

We would like to purchase a temporary subscription to SurveyMonkey, an extremely flexible and easy to use online survey tool, which is commercially available at \$20.00 a month (www.surveymonkey.com). External consultants will be two alumni who will be asked to conduct department-wide discussions in a colloquium format.

4. Work Plan

Summer, 2004: Needs analysis, design of pilot course

1. Group of 3 doctoral students: Generate list of potential topics with Co-PIs—what challenges did the new assistant professor face?
2. Create interview protocol
3. Generate list of alumni and contact information
4. Contact 2 or 3 alumni each by email, follow up with phone if necessary
5. Summarize alumni responses
6. Co-PIs: collect alumni responses and plan suggestions for the course that will serve as basis for negotiating and fleshing out syllabus during the first three weeks of the semester
7. Co-PIs: Announce voluntary one-credit course pilot to graduate student email list

Fall, 2004: Implementation of course pilot, development of resource webpage on LCE, development of alumni survey as program evaluation tool

8. Course team taught by Co-PIs
9. Week 1: Class reviews alumni responses
10. Week 2: Class reviews course syllabus suggestions & decides on course topics and sequence, and on course assessment
11. Week 3-15: Meet weekly to discuss topics, locate resources, maintain contact with alumni through email, design and administer a survey to alumni
12. Early mid-semester: host department-wide colloquium with two alumni as guest speakers; invite alumni to class
13. Week 7: Mid-term evaluation
14. Week 14: Co-PIs write abstract for World Congress of Applied Linguistics
15. Week 16: End of course evaluation
16. Weeks 1-16: Doctoral Research Assistant is participant observer in course; creates course resource webpage on learner-centered education in US tertiary institutions; analyzes alumni survey data; analyzes mid-term and end-of-semester student evaluation data

Spring, 2005: Fine-tuning of course design, nation-wide survey

17. Co-PIs: Finalize survey revisions for purposes of institutionalized program evaluation;
18. Co-PIs: Redesign local survey into nation-wide survey
19. Doctoral Research Assistant: Locate institutions/departments which hired assistant professors in Applied Linguistics in the past 3 years
20. Doctoral Research Assistant: Administer surveys to new assistant professors, administer
21. Doctoral Research Assistant: follow-up survey/interview to pilot class participants
22. Co-PI Joan Jamieson: Analyze nation-wide survey results
23. Co-PI Lourdes Ortega: Write up findings for course pilot and nation-wide survey
24. Prepare presentation for World Congress of Applied Linguistics (Co-authored: Jamieson, Ortega, and Doctoral Research Assistant; and possibly some doctoral students in pilot course).

5. Key Personnel

The collaboration of doctoral students with an experienced senior faculty member and a junior faculty member who is experiencing the demands of the teacher-scholar should create a very positive learning environment.

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Joan Jamieson, Professor, English Department—design of project/instruments/course; oversight; analyze survey data
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Doctoral Research Assistant—develop course resource webpage, conduct surveys & interviews, assist in data analysis and report writing

6. Expected Results and Outcomes

The following learning outcomes are expected and will be measured:

1. Course participants' awareness of faculty roles/responsibilities in different academic settings (i.e., at institutions of higher education with different missions, populations of students, and hence roles for faculty) will increase. This outcome will be assessed by responses to questions on the end-of-semester course evaluation and the follow-up course survey.

2. Course participants will have increased knowledge regarding principles, tools, and strategies for maximizing learner-centered education in higher education institutions. This outcome will be assessed by responses in follow-up course survey to questions about their use of learner-centered techniques in classes taught at NAU in the semester following the professional development seminar.

3. Course participants will feel better prepared for future faculty roles/responsibilities. This outcome will be assessed by comparing the responses of alumni to the initial survey to responses of students who have participated in the Professional Development Seminar after a year on their first faculty job (collected through the institutionalized alumni survey).

4. We also expect two broader-impact outcomes for our program. One, the involvement of alumni in the design and pilot of the course will lead to improved alumni relations. This outcome will be assessed by alumni participation in the interviews and surveys, as well as by alumni contributions to a fund for student travel to conferences and alumni travel back to campus. And two, we expect positive washback effects on the quality of our doctoral education stemming from the addition of the professional development course and of an institutionalized tool for evaluating alumni satisfaction and preparedness for teaching scholarship.

7. Reference

Applegate, J. L. (2002). *Engaged graduate education: Seeing with new eyes. (Preparing Future Faculty Occasional Paper Series, Number 9.)*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities