

Designing for Meaningful Inquiry – Strategic Initiative Proposal Form

What is the title of the proposed project/initiative?

Designing for Meaningful Inquiry grant program

Which Strategic Directions/focus areas would the project support?

Equip Students for Lifelong Success/Teaching and learning effectiveness

Equip Students for Lifelong Success/21st century literacies

Why do we need to do this?

In the recent proposal released by the General Education (GE) Review Coordinating Committee, both information literacy and writing are highlighted as essential transdisciplinary skills that students should be developing through their GE experience. In the proposal, both information literacy and writing are represented in a single course at the Foundations level (i.e. ENG 1110: First-Year Writing); however, only advanced writing is explicitly highlighted in the Themes level. Since the modes of critical, analytical, and reflective thinking related to information literacy cannot be developed in a single 1000-level course, the expected learning outcomes related to goal 1 (p. 5) imply that information literacy should be integrated across a student's GE experience.

What are the goals for the project/initiative?

The purpose of the "Designing for Meaningful Inquiry" grant program is to both incentivize and support instructors of general education courses to design or revise research assignments with the explicit purpose of: (1) developing students' information literacy (including critical reading skills) through writing to learn activities, (2) engaging students' identities, interests/passions, and/or prior knowledge through research assignments OR providing students with authentic and engaging research assignments; (3) facilitating learning for transfer.

Who would benefit from the project/initiative? Identify the external stakeholders and internal stakeholders (from University Libraries).

First and foremost, this is envisioned as a student success project that strives to create equitable learning experiences related to the development of students' research skills, including their information literacy, reading, and writing skills. Existing research indicates gaps not only in students' overall academic outcomes based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, but also their critical thinking skills. This grant program intends to address those gaps by encouraging general education instructors to develop students' research skills using an asset-based and transparent teaching approach.

This grant would be a collaboration between Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and University Libraries, one that would extend current collaborations. WAC views this collaboration as a benefit, since they are also facing some of the same challenges as University Libraries – embedding critical, transdisciplinary skills across the curriculum (including the general education curriculum) with limited staffing.

The primary internal stakeholder is the Teaching & Learning Department, though other colleagues (i.e. subject librarians, areas studies librarians, curators, etc.) may be approached depending on the nature of the grant recipients' projects. As the Coordinator of Assessment, Sarah Murphy's institutional expertise may be needed for the evaluation component, which may include the administration of a validated instrument.

How would stakeholders benefit?

As mentioned previously, this is an opportunity to incentivize general education instructors to integrate explicitly information literacy, reading, and writing skills into their courses using an asset-based approach. We believe that this will help us to meet our goals of embedding information literacy into the curriculum without overextended limited resources. This provides both University Libraries and WAC the opportunity to transform courses in such a way that will help students thrive in their upper-level courses, as well as helping to engage students, particularly those from marginalized populations.

We also intend for this program to serve as an endorsement through the University Institute for Teaching & Learning (UITL), which will help both University Libraries and WAC to remain visible as campus teaching and learning partners. In addition, the intent for transformation is aligned with the goals of the UITL's recently released Teaching Support Program, specifically the program component that focuses on course redesign/revision.

Necessary resources: What are the estimated recurring and one-time costs?

We anticipate that we could accommodate a cohort of 7 instructors at one time. We believe that \$2500 will be an attractive financial incentive to participate in this program, which would be \$17500 per year if we have a full cohort.

We would also like to conduct a multi-year evaluation project of this program, similar to the Affordable Learning Exchange (ALX) Impact Research Study. This would include post-implementation interviews with instructors who participated to learn about their experience in redesigning their course and/or inquiry-based assignments and any perceived changes to the student experience. If we were to conduct 60-minute post-implementation interviews with the first 3 cohorts of instructors, we anticipate that we would need up to \$2,000 for interview transcription costs.

We would also like to administer the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) to students who are enrolled in courses transformed by this grant (probably first cohort only), as well as a random sample of students who are not enrolled in this grant. Students enrolled in courses transformed by this grant would be tested at the beginning of the course and then again roughly a year later. Students who are not enrolled would be tested at the beginning of the academic year and again at the beginning of the following academic year. The CLA is designed to test students' performance in critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving, and writing mechanics and effectiveness (<https://cae.org/flagship-assessments-cla-cwra/cla/>). The book *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Arum & Roksa, 2011) used the performance task on the CLA to measure increases in students' critical thinking skills from their first to their second years of college. The performance task requires students to demonstrate critical thinking skills that are aligned with information literacy. (NOTE: If it's helpful, I can provide the brief description of the performance tasks from Arum & Roksa for the Management Committee discussion of this proposal.) It's difficult to estimate the cost of this assessment, as we don't know which courses will be affected by this grant and how many students will choose to participate. The current administration price is \$38 per student, though there are discounts for administrations that exceed 500. I think we'd want to cap this cost at \$10,000 unless we are able to find another partner on campus, such as the Office of Enrollment Services and Undergraduate Education (ESUE), who may also be interested in the results and willing to contribute, or an external donor who is interested in the spirit of this grant program. We would also

need a few incentives for students who are not enrolled in transformed courses to encourage participation (up to \$1000).

The rough estimate of one-time expenses for the program evaluation/assessment would be approximately \$13,000.

Necessary resources: Will any effort from other University Libraries units be required? Has this need been discussed with those units?

At this time we do not anticipate effort from other University Libraries units that is outside the normal scope of the teaching and learning support that they provide to instructors. The one exception is that we may need guidance from our Coordinator of Assessment if we were to implement the CLA.

Necessary resources: Will any effort from other university units be required? Has this need been discussed with those units?

We have been in conversation with WAC. We may need to refer grant recipients to support from other university teaching and learning partners, such as UCAT and ODEE, depending on the nature of the work that grant recipients undertake. If this strategic initiative proceeds, then I will begin conversations about how to best direct grant recipients to resources in those units.

We may also need to be in consultation with ESUE if we were to administer the CLA. The administration of such an assessment does seem aligned with the student academic success agenda they are pursuing. If this strategic initiative moves forward, Amanda Folk will reach out to relevant partners in that office immediately.

Who would sponsor the project?

Alison Armstrong

Identify the project lead(s)

Primary lead – Amanda Folk (Head of Teaching & Learning)

Other leads in University Libraries – Hanna Primeau (Instructional Designer), Jane Hammons (Teaching & Learning Engagement Librarian), Craig Gibson (Chair, Teaching & Learning Committee)

External leads – Chris Manion (Coordinator, Writing Across the Curriculum)

Identify the project sponsor(s)

Alison Armstrong