

Western Michigan University Faculty Assessment Grants Program 2009-2010 Academic and Co-Curricular Departments

Purpose of Program: Grants for research on assessment will be awarded by the University Assessment Steering Committee (UASC), and with the approval of the vice provost for Institutional Effectiveness, to advance the formal assessment of student learning outcomes and program quality—including those programs located at extended sites or branch campus locations—of Western Michigan University (WMU). This includes full-time faculty and staff in academic departments, academic support units, and interdisciplinary units in academic affairs, as well as departments and programs within the Division of Student Affairs. The maximum level of award is \$5,000 each, with up to \$30,000 awarded annually. Funding preference will be for projects involving departments that have not been funded previously by the Faculty Assessment Grants program.

Priority is given to activities related to the direct measure of student learning or achievement where direct measures are feasible. Direct measures of learning require students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities in response to a task (e.g., essay, presentation, portfolio, commercial instrument). Direct measures determine whether students have mastered the content of their academic programs; on the other hand, indirect measures ask students to reflect on their learning (Banta 1999).

Assessment should be focused on determining the extent to which students in a program are progressing toward the goals or standards for the program. Goals or standards for the program typically address the student's development of knowledge, skills, disposition, and thinking processes. Effective assessment occurs in multiple instances, using multiple measures. The measures of student progress should be "authentic" in that they represent the tasks and expectations of professionals in the given discipline. Assessment includes self-assessment as students consider their own progress and make specific plans for their continued growth and learning.

Application Process: Individuals must send a brief proposal application (proposal cover sheet plus 4 pages maximum) to the UASC through the vice provost for Institutional Effectiveness, room B125, Henry Hall at WMU. No more than one proposal per department will be reviewed for possible funding each year. Single-year proposals are preferred although multi-year proposals will be considered if a strong rationale is provided in the application. Each application must contain three identified sections as noted below.

- 1) **Objectives:** Purpose (title) and objectives for the project are key elements and should be stated clearly. Examples of Faculty Assessment Grant purposes are:
 - a. Examining and testing the use of published measurement instruments with a specific student group or for a specific service.
 - b. Designing and pre-testing the means for assessing the knowledge base of seniors within a content area.
 - c. Designing and pre-testing the means for assessing the information literacy skills of entering students.
 - d. Conducting focus groups or targeted interviews for the determination of assessment research design parameters.
 - e. Assessing racial acceptance climate on campus.

Objectives flow from purpose and are the specific aims for the project. What is the purpose of the project, what do you intend to do, what assessment methods will be used, what data analysis will be employed, and why is the project important?

- 2) **Dissemination:** Uses and diffusion of information acquired throughout the course of the grant should be stated. For example, how could results be used for program improvement? Is it expected that the results will be used for advising, curricular changes, or changes in service delivery characteristics? Further, the application should note how many faculty and/or students will be impacted by the accomplishments of the grant. How, when, and by whom will the information will be disseminated?
- 3) **Budget:** Refer to the attached Proposal Budget Template. Please note that Faculty Assessment Grants can be used to support student assistants, research time, materials, software support, or conference registrations. However, Faculty Assessment Grants may not be used to support release time from assigned teaching or administrative responsibilities, costs of academic credit, computer equipment, conference travel, or external consultants. Additionally, all proposals will be reviewed to determine the suitability of budgeted items in terms of stated departmental assessment planning activities and fidelity with University policies and regulations. What materials do you need to purchase, what student assistance do you need, what analytical assistance is required, or what payment is required for the applicant to do what and when?

Timetable: Faculty Assessment Grant applications are welcome until April 15 each academic year. Funds will be made available for awarded projects the following academic year. The vice provost for Institutional Effectiveness will announce awards by June 1 each year. Grants should be completed by the end of the spring semester of the subsequent academic year. All funds in Faculty Assessment Grant accounts will be swept 40 days after the allotted time period and may not be reclaimed.

Grant Reviewing Criteria: A subcommittee of the UASC will review proposals and recommend projects for funding to the UASC at its May meeting. Applicants will receive reviewer comments in summary form upon request. The subcommittee will use the following criteria to recommend proposals for funding:

- ✓ The resourcefulness of the project in its alignment with the unit, college, or division assessment programs. The project's intent to facilitate change with regard to improvement of student learning, program quality and ongoing departmental program planning initiatives. (40%)
- ✓ Demonstration of student learning outcomes, including a plan for disseminating information and conceptualization of impact on faculty and students. (30%)
- ✓ Budget of expenses congruent with the project goals. (15%)
- ✓ Timeline of activity congruent with project goals. (15%)

Assessment Fellows Cohort: The fellows cohort will meet monthly during the academic year to receive progress reports on projects, study questions related to assessment, and facilitate access to campus resources related to assessment research. Fellows meet September through November and January through April.

Assessment Exemplar: Assessment fellows are expected to report the outcomes of their work during a public session in Spring semester, usually in mid- or late March. Fellows may expect their final reports and public presentation documents to be viewed publicly on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website and WMU assessment portfolio.

Required Final Report: A brief report, two to four pages only, should be sent to the vice provost for Institutional Effectiveness no later than the termination date of the project. The required sections for the final report are as follows:

- 1) Description of accomplishments (as related to the original proposal): success in accomplishing the purpose of the grant, or what happened that was different and why. This description must address the degree of attainment of objectives; results of or achievement of stated purpose; and the effectiveness of design or plan.
- 2) Specific outcomes: uses for grant information outcomes, or how the processes involved with the grant affected your department or unit, such as development of departmental assessment activities or programs.
- 3) Summary: Your judgment about the assessment impact from the grant.

Appended to the report should be one copy of any resultant publication (bearing acknowledgment of support*) or each announcement/program/catalogue, or performances/exhibitions/presentations resulting from this project. Similar materials not available at the time of submission of the final report should be forwarded for subsequent attachment.

The reports will be used to demonstrate what accomplishments are possible from these grants, and will be circulated to the University Assessment Steering Committee as well as the academic deans and the provost.

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Human Subjects Institutional Review Board: Assessment proposals are generally exempt from review by the HSIRB. However, if you plan to publish the results in a professional journal, you should seek advance HSIRB approval. If you have any questions about your proposed project, please contact Dr. Amy Naugle, HSIRB chair, at 387-8293.

Application Submission: Contact information for the application process, ideas, or questions:

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