

# Examples of Funded Assessment Mini-Grant Proposals

These sample proposals are provided with the express permission of the grant recipients. They are intended to serve as examples of previously funded proposals and provide information about the types of projects that have been funded in the past as well as different approaches to writing a successful proposal. Proposals are scored using a standardized rubric by a team of independent reviewers. All proposals that meet the funding criteria are considered, with funding based on a composite score, moving from the highest to lowest scores, until all funds have been allocated.

## Contents

1. Arts Assessment for First-Year Foundation Students – Kris Heintz Nelson, Associate Professor and Interim Foundations Coordinator, School of Art and Design
2. The Beating Heart of CHE: An in depth study of first year programming on belonging, college expectations, and first-year academic outcomes – Shawanna Kimbrough-Hayward, Director, Center for Human Enrichment
3. The Critical Role of Cultural Centers at UNC: Understanding How Students Perceive and Utilize Cultural Center Resources – Talia Carroll, Director, Marcus Garvey Cultural Center
4. Refining Assessment of Community Engaged Learning: Documenting student knowledge and attitudes in courses coded with the Community Engaged Learning Designation – Deborah Romero, Professor, College of Education, and Director, Office of Engagement
5. Assessing the Impact of Interactive Course Activities on Students' Perceived Learning and Persistence in Online Courses – Chia-Lin Tsai, Assistant Professor, Applied Statistics and Research Methods

**Assessment Mini Grant Proposal**

Fiscal Year 2017-2018

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**Project Title:** Arts Assessment for First-Year Foundation Students

Applicant Signature: Kris Heintz Nelson Date: 2/13/17

Director Signature: Andrew Jons Liccardo Date: 2/13/17

**Assessment Mini Grant Narrative:  
Arts Assessment for First-Year Foundation Students**

Director, Andrew Liccardo, School of Art & Design  
Applicant, Kris Heintz Nelson, Associate Professor, Interim Foundations Coordinator

**Rationale:**

The current foundations program at UNC consists of five required courses, three studio courses and two art history courses (ART 183-2D Design, ART 184-3D Design, ART 234-Drawing One, ART 181 Ancient Art, and ART 182 Medieval to Rococo Art). The three studio courses are currently taught across nine sections by both full-time faculty and adjunct instructors. Foundation students seeking to major in Art and Design are required to successfully pass the foundations exit portfolio which is based on their studio performance in order to progress in the program and register for advanced courses.

The curriculum across the three foundation studio courses has been evolving to better implement student learning outcomes and preparation for upper division courses, addressing the needs for comprehension in newly addressed categories of formal, technical, and conceptual proficiency. This proposed assessment grant seeks to create a program level assessment to better understand how to address student needs across the curriculum, integrate the role of art history courses into the assessment process, and assess why and where failures are occurring.

The grant will be utilized to further improve and develop the foundations curriculum, provide education and assessment training to faculty, and improve upon the criteria employed to evaluate portfolios for first-year students

**Current Foundation Learning Outcomes:**

**Basic skills:** Develop a foundation for art knowledge, theories, skills, materials, process, craftsmanship and technology to communicate ideas.  
**Art Knowledge:** Increase understanding and awareness of visual art within theoretical, cultural and historic contexts  
**Critical/Conceptual Thinking:** Analyzing, interpreting, evaluating and questioning notions of art and art making through the process of critique and generating problem solving solutions.

**Goal for the Assessment Mini-Grant:**

1. Evaluate, reflect, and adjust scope and sequence of the foundations curriculum to ensure efficacy of learning outcomes.
2. Strengthen the assessment process, and rubric criterion used for the summative foundations exit portfolio.

**Primary Objectives for the Assessment Mini-Grant:**

1. Evaluate current summative assessment process, and generate an effective and sustainable foundations portfolio submission and review process which identifies success markers of learning objectives (studio and art history) within foundations program
2. Generate a curricular map, and identify where student outcomes are introduced, reinforced and assessed within the program.
3. Measure curricular efficacy and relevancy of studio assignments as an indicator of program success (recruitment/retention)
4. Development of assessment rubric criterion to measure student mastery and preparation
5. Provide evidence and collection of data (use of Qualtrics) to document student success and failure rates
6. With the assistance of Director, invite independent reviewer from mature program to provide suggestions/feedback
7. Determine strategies for the implementation of student self-assessment embedded within the review process

8. Provide education for faculty/adjunct instructors to generate consistency across program

**Newly Identified Student Learning Outcomes for Foundation Courses:**

Students will:

1. **Formal:** Learn, identify, and employ the elements of art (line, shape, space, color, value, value, texture, and form) and gestalt principles of design (unity, balance, repetition, contrast, emphasis, etc.), to describe and generate original 2D/3D artwork.

**Success criteria:**

Knowledge and successful demonstration applying the elements of art and principles of design to effectively create 2D/3D artwork  
Demonstrate solid visual literacy through aesthetic choices and oral/written description of artwork

2. **Technical:** Students artwork will demonstrate a diverse skill set utilizing appropriate studio methods materials, technologies, and processes.

**Success criteria:**

Utilize multiple medias and technologies to effectively to generate artwork  
Artwork reflects knowledge of appropriate tools, materials, methods and processes  
Skill and craftsmanship evidenced in handling diverse 2D/3D media and techniques.

3. **Conceptual:** Explore diverse visual methods for problem solving, demonstrate conceptual knowledge of 2D/3D forms, purposes, media and functions as students generate, respond to, interpret, and critique their own and others work

**Success criteria:**

Utilize a wide range of ideation to solve conceptual problems in conventional and innovative ways  
Effectively integrate conceptual and abstract thinking to communicate visual ideas  
Visually demonstrate invention and creativity  
Produce works which effectively communicate visual ideas in multiple forms  
Defend aesthetic and conceptual choices in written and/or verbal formats  
Describe, analyze and evaluate visual art

4. **Connections:** Students will synthesize and make connections between art history, aesthetics and diverse studio practices

**Success criteria:**

Acquire and transfer conceptual knowledge of 2D/3D art forms in cultural context in contemporary societies and the past.  
Interpret the intent and meaning which grounds artwork created by self and others  
Reflect and build upon the intellectual and creative development within the arts

5. **Presentation:** Students will possess and demonstrate understanding and expertise involved in the creating, documenting, and presenting personal, professional level artwork.

**Success criteria:**

Successful photo documentation of artwork submitted for portfolio review  
Professional presentation of material artwork

**Projected Timeline:**

March 2017	Order books and begin research on authentic arts assessment
April/May 2017	Begin to generate a curricular map of first-year foundation program identifying where student learning outcomes are introduced and reinforced  Evaluation of portfolio process and assessment rubric – correct for adjustment
Fall 2017	Develop and implement new criterion into process and construct rubric
Spring 2018	Invite independent reviewer from a mature program to provide feedback and recommendations  Provide training to faculty/staff
Spring/Fall 2018	Disseminate findings: submit proposals to present at Regional, State, and possibly National venues

**Dissemination:**

Dissemination of the grant findings will be submitted in a brief report which describes the scope of the project, its outcomes, and how the results were or will be used. Submitted to the Office of Assessment by July 1, 2018.

Delivery of a presentation at the 2018 UNC Annual Assessment Fair, addressing problem, process, and implementation

Provide training workshops for foundations and full-time faculty

Submit proposals to disseminate findings at state and national art education conferences

**Assessment Mini Grant**  
**Budget Narrative**

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**Proposed Budget:**

Honoraria and travel expenses to invite a foundations coordinator from a mature program to provide in-depth and sophisticated feedback defined within the rubric.	\$1000-1200
Book: <i>Assessment in Creative Disciplines, Quantifying and Qualifying the Aesthetic</i> , Author David Chase	\$40.00
Book: <i>Quality Assurance in Creative Disciplines: Evidence from Practice</i> , Authors, Joseph Hoey & Jill Ferguson	\$40.00
Book: <i>Assessment in Arts Education</i> , Author, Philip Taylor	\$35.00
Faculty workshop- light refreshments, resources	\$185.00
Estimated total	\$1,500



UNIVERSITY OF  
**NORTHERN**  
**COLORADO**

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The Beating Heart of CHE:

An in depth study of first-year programming on belonging, college expectations, and first-year academic outcomes

*Shawanna Kimbrough-Hayward*  
Shawanna Kimbrough-Hayward

*BK*  
Stephanie Torrez, Assistant Dean



**The Beating Heart of CHE: An in depth study of first year programming on belonging, college expectations, and first-year academic outcomes**

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**Overview and Purpose**

The purpose of this assessment project will be to explore more systematically and deeply the relationship and connections between activities designed to promote social and academic engagement in CHE program participants and shorter and longer term academic outcomes. The CHE program has been serving low-income/first-generation students for 40+ years. The program operates with federal funds and is designed to promote degree completion in high-risk population. Summative evaluation of outcomes have consistently shown that participants are more likely to be in good academic standing, more likely to be retained into their second year, and equally or more likely to graduate in 6 years in comparison to the overall university population, and/or in comparison with CHE eligible but not served students. Program outcomes such as these are remarkable, given the high-risk backgrounds and experiences of the CHE student population.

The problem with CHE's current assessment plan is that, when asked, the program is not clear which of the many program activities contribute most to the short term and longer term academic outcomes. In the event that the program were defunded, or, taking a more positive perspective, in the event that the university wanted to scale-up key strategies to serve a growing number of low income and first generation students, the program can't point to key strategies that contribute the most to the success of participants. Even without threat of funding loss, not knowing how key strategies are linked to outcomes limits staff ability to learn how to improve services. This study seeks to ameliorate this problem of awareness by establishing and standardizing two key assessment processes geared at understanding what is happening to students in the first year of the program. It is our belief that being intentional about how we assess and learn about students in the first-year of the program will help us strategize for promoting appropriate advising support for upper-class CHE participants (second year and beyond).

**Key Research Questions**

1. How do key first year CHE strategies contribute to the success of CHE participants?
2. Specifically, how does participation in first year intensive bridge and advising activities contribute to self-reported sense of belonging, connection and support as well as academic and social engagement as measured by multiple behavioral and performance indicators?

3. How do CHE staff integrate findings from various assessments into key decision-making discussions?

### Type of Data Collected

Consistent with the evaluation plan outlined in the grant, this study will include both quantitative and qualitative measures. The two key assessment activities that will be the focus of this study will be:

- (a) development and preliminary validation of an inventory of belonging, support and college expectations using exemplars from existing research, and
- (b) establishing a process for interviewing a small, strategically selected sample of participants from FA16 and FA17 cohorts about the program and its impact on skills for success

It is important to note that both of these assessment processes were written into the evaluation section of the current grant, but to date, a standard and systematic protocol for administering and using the data for program improvement have not been set up. The Office of Assessment Mini-grant provides the program the extra support in providing materials, participant incentives, transcription services, and most importantly, clerical and human resource support to carry out the study.

### Timeline for Key Study Activities and Desired Results

Key activities broken down by term and month, and with designated team member responsibilities, are outlined in Table A. In addition, the expectation as to how the assessment activity is likely to impact learning about program improvement is also identified. There is a clear understanding on behalf of the CHE program staff that merely running reports is not sufficient to promote learning, nor increases the programs understanding of how students experience planned program activities and develop the necessary skills for postsecondary success.

### Plans for Sharing Results and Using Outcomes for Improvement Purposes

The Center for Human Enrichment (CHE) project has consistently exceeded the objectives set forth in the federal grant proposal. The approved objective rates and the actual attained rates exceed the approved rate by at least seven percentage points for each standard objective:

#### 2015-2016 Summary Results for the Standard Objectives

Criteria	Approved Rate	Actual Attained Rate
Persistence	80%	92%
Good Academic Standing	85%	92%
Bachelor's Degree Obtained in 6 years (2010 cohort)	49%	59%

Because of these successes, the CHE program wants to assess components of the first-year experience program participants encounter with the goal of sharing the results with campus leadership in an effort to educate colleagues on best practices in supporting first-generation students at the University of Northern Colorado. The CHE program understands that grant

funding could be eliminated at any time. As a result of this project the program desires to scale the services offered to CHE participants in an affordable manner should federal funding be eliminated. At the conclusion of this assessment project, CHE will share findings with campus partners to educate staff and faculty on best practices for supporting first-generation students at UNC. The CHE team will also work with CETL to host staff and faculty forums, and will share results with their partners within the TRiO pipeline. In an effort to improve services to CHE participants, the program will use the results to implement new programming offerings.

### Budget Narrative

The detailed budget will help cover the costs for the assessment project that are not allowable under federal regulations. Two focus group sessions with meals will occur with the 2016 and 2017 cohorts. The focus groups will occur over the lunch or dinner hours to obtain more student participation in the student. The CHE program will also need assistance from one to two graduate students, for the fall and spring semesters, to transcribe notes from focus group discussions and to assist CHE staff with collecting data from advising case notes and other artifacts needed for review and consideration in this project. If the need arises for additional funding the CHE project director will utilize funds from the program's research incentive account to ensure completion of this important assessment project.

Descriptions	Amount
Official functions: Focus groups with 2016 and 2017 cohorts with light meal provided	\$200
Stipend for graduate student (fall 2017) transcriptionist/data collection	\$650
Stipend for graduate student (spring 2018) transcriptionist/data collection	\$650
Total	\$1500

Table A: Timeline of Key Activities and Desirable Assessment Outcomes

<b>When will the assessment activity or task occur?</b>	<b>What is the assessment activity or task?</b>	<b>Who will complete the task?</b>	<b>What is the end product?</b>	<b>How will it inform improvement?</b>
June – July 2017	Review the literature on non-cognitive assessment and participatory action research.	CHE core assessment team/IRAS consultant	Short bibliography of 10-15 studies	Builds internal capacity/research knowledge base of staff
July – August 2017	Identify an appropriate pre-survey addressing key baseline constructs (e.g. belonging, college expectations)	CHE core/IRAS consultant	Short pre-test for baseline	Provides first assessment of baseline needed for future study
July – August 2017	Administer pre-survey to entering first year cohort (2017 cohort)	CHE Director or delegate	Online survey (100% response rate) and easily aggregated summary	Identifies individual and collective needs of the entering cohort
August – September 2017	Administer post-survey after Connections ends (first three weeks); analysis by IRAS	CHE Director or delegate to administer/IRAS consultant to analyze	Online (100% response rate) and summary	Identifies key bridge components linked to key non-cognitive skills; discussed in team planning meeting
September – October 2017	Conduct Focus group of 6-8 students from the Fall 2016 cohort	CHE core team	Transcribed interviews	Adds student perspective so program staff can facilitate changes.
November – December 2017	Conduct advising topics audit; review advisor notes using structured record audit process	Director of Educational Technology/IRAS consultant	‘Advising Topics’ report	Informs staff of emerging advising topics/identifies possible strategy changes/training
February – March 2018	Review results of Fall2016 focus group	CHE core team	‘First year of CHE’ emergent themes report	Creates a systematic process for involving students in evaluation
March – April 2018	Revise focus group questions based on results; identify new questions based on program changes for FA17	CHE core team	New protocol	Staff learn what types of questions to include in qualitative protocols

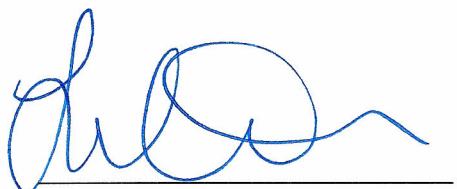
May-June 2018	Conduct focus group of 6-8 students from the Fall 2017 cohort	CHE core team	Transcribed interviews	Adds second round of student perspective so program staff can make further improvements for academic year 2018-2019 AY
June – July 2018	Review results of Fall2017 focus group	CHE core team	‘First year of CHE’ second annual emergent themes report	Establishes a process for building and revising qualitative assessment protocols

Talia K. Carroll

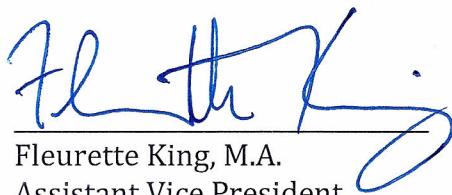
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The Critical Role of Cultural Centers at UNC:  
Understanding How Students Perceive and Utilize Cultural Center Resources



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## *Narrative*

### Purpose of the project

The role and purpose of the four race and ethnic based cultural centers at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) is well-known to some, while shrouded in mystery to others. The Marcus Garvey Cultural Center, César Chávez Cultural Center, Native American Student Services, and Asian/Pacific American Student Services collectively have existed for over 30 years. The first race/ethnic based cultural center was the Marcus Garvey Cultural Center, having been founded on February 1, 1983. It was founded as a result of student activism, with the students identifying a need for greater support and resources for students who identified as Black or African American.

The purpose of the project is to learn from students what they know about the cultural centers, how they experience the cultural centers and their leadership, gain a better understanding of what students know about the specific mission, vision, and values of the Centers, and how, if at all, the Centers meet their needs. Research on cultural centers is growing, as one author shared, "in addition to providing countless programs and services, culture centers are instrumental in providing a sense of belonging and aiding in skill development for some students," (Sanders, 2016).

By assessing how students perceive and utilize the Centers, the cultural center directors have the opportunity to refine outreach practices on campus, define programming that is well-suited for the student population, and potentially advocate for the necessary resources to better support the students (Patton, 2010).

### Goals of the Project

The primary goals of this project are to:

1. Provide an opportunity to students about the mission, vision, and values of the cultural centers – to ensure alignment between what their perspectives are and the work that cultural center leadership engages in on their behalf
2. Provide insight and perspective into how students perceive and utilize cultural centers as a means to inform data-driven guidance for future work for cultural centers
3. Provide directors with perspectives from students who may not regularly utilize the Centers
4. Learn what students perceive as their needs or wants in regard to cultural center activities and support

### Timeline of Major Tasks

May, 2018	Institutional Review Board Application
June – July, 2018	Paper survey for incoming, first-year students
August – September 2018	Recruiting focus group participants
October – November, 2018	Focus Groups and Individual Interviews
December, 2018	Send recordings to external transcription company
January – February, 2019	Data analysis
March – April, 2019	Write report, present findings at NASPA
May, 2019	Submit final report to Dr. Kim Black

This timeline is an ideal one, though there may be shifts depending on availability of students to engage in the focus groups. In addition, given the director's schedule, this timeline allows some flexibility for unanticipated shifts in availability.

### Plans for Disseminating Results

The plans for disseminating results will unfold in three parts. The plans for disseminating results are as follows with the understanding that any on-campus opportunities to share results will also be considered:

First: a half-day professional development workshop will be planned for the cultural center directors to review the data and discuss how to best move forward with understanding and implementing data

Third: results will be presented at a national student affairs conference or the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity

Third: results will be written up and submitted as a paper to the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education or Student Affairs Research and Practice* by the end of summer, 2019. The article will either be single-authored or co-authored with another cultural center director.

### *Budget narrative*

#### How funds will be spent

A significant portion of the funds will be used to secure one undergraduate or graduate student to assist with the focus groups and analysis of the data. The student support will be prioritized throughout the academic year.

To ensure adequate knowledge heading into the project, the funds will also be used to purchase three books that focus on student development, focus group interviews, and assessment in student affairs.

Finally, the remaining funds will be used for official functions to pay for food for the focus groups and director interviews.

### Other funding sources

At the time of submission, the other funding source will be the Marcus Garvey Cultural Center. The funds, a maximum of \$150.00, will be used to offset any expenses that cannot be covered by the mini-grant maximum allocation. It is anticipated that the cost for transcription will be high given the use of focus groups as the primary form of data collection. So, funds will likely be directed to that particular need.

Budget Detailed Description	Amount
Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice	\$52.00
Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research	\$62.00
Undergraduate or graduate student hourly for assistance with project (75 hours @ \$10.20/hour) over two semesters	\$765.00
Assessment in Student Affairs Book	\$51.00
Official Function – Refreshments for Focus Groups for fall and spring semesters	\$200.00
Transcription Services from The Lai	\$220.00
Official Functions – Individual interview and lunch with the three race/ethnic based cultural center directors	\$100.00
Raffle for focus group participants (2, \$25 gift bundles)	\$50.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1500.00</b>

### References

- Patton, L. D. (2010). On solid ground: An examination of the successful strategies and positive student outcomes of two Black culture centers. In L. D. Patton (Ed.), *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice* (63-82). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Sanders, K. N. (2016). Black culture centers: A review of pertinent literature. *Urban Education Research & Policy Annuals*, 4(1).



## Assessment Grant 2018

### Cover Page

**Project Title:**

Refining Assessment of Community Engaged Learning: Documenting student knowledge and attitudes in courses coded with the Community Engaged Learning Designation

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**Signed Project Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Project Narrative**

### **Overview**

This mini grant is designed to replicate and extend the Office of Engagement's ongoing work to document and understand the impact of students' community engaged learning (CEL) experiences in the academic curriculum. Specifically, the grant will support community-engaged pedagogies and instructional activities for faculty who are teaching courses that have received the CEL attribute course designation during 2017. In addition, the grant will provide resources for faculty professional development and instructional material development, and assist in the facilitation of continued assessment, including focus group forums with students and faculty.

### **Purpose and Goals of the Project**

The Office of Engagement (OE) at UNC has in its mission to support and develop community engaged learning (CEL) for faculty and students. Work undertaken through a mini grant last year (2017-2018) allowed the office to dedicate resources to begin to assess student learning in community engaged projects, and to further support and understand faculty investment in this work. This research focused on determining areas of strength and opportunities for growth, including faculty perspectives on student learning, areas for additional support in engaged pedagogies, and gathering more direct indicators on the meaning and impact of community engaged learning for students.

One of the successes and preliminary findings from this work advanced a formalized assessment tool in the form of student prompts that could be used by faculty to elicit written feedback related to learning and reflections from the community engaged experiences. We also developed a Qualtrics survey to gauge student learning based on the Social Justice Scale (Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012). However, we discovered that the deployment of the survey in the courses was a challenge when not required as part of course activities. This is an area that we plan to revisit, and to explore other survey options, including the Community Based Learning Student Survey (Gelman, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001). We also successfully conducted focus groups with students and provided refreshments through the grant. We also learned from faculty that two of the challenges with community engaged pedagogies relate to time and costs, especially those associated with student projects and engaged learning activities.

At the same time that we have been strengthening our approaches to student assessment, we have also launched the elective Community Engaged Learning (CEL) course attribute designation. The CEL designation recognizes faculty and those courses in which teaching and learning integrate academic content into students' engagement with the community, both in and out of the classroom. Community refers broadly to include public, private, non-profit, educational entities, governmental agencies, businesses, and other organizations external to UNC. Effective community engaged learning is grounded in the following criteria:

- *Participatory and Structured Pedagogies:* CEL provides a structured opportunity for students to participate in community-engaged activities in order to extend course content and/or gain further understanding of course content and concepts.
- *Mutually Beneficial Exchange:* Student learning outcomes and community needs/goals through collaborative development of course content and experiential learning opportunity.

- *Reflection and Assessment:* CEL engages students in structured preparation for, participation in, and reflection on the community-engaged experience.
- *Community Impact:* Demonstrates effort to identify or address a community need/issue, public or private.

Since launching this designation, faculty-teaching courses in the Colleges of Natural Health Sciences, Education and Behavioral Sciences, and Performing and Visual Arts, have applied and received the designation. This proposal and mini grant would be specifically dedicated to allow the Office of Engagement to work collaboratively with faculty to revise existing CEL assessment measures and approaches, and to deploy these in meaningful ways in courses designated with CEL. The assessment grant would provide support for faculty and their students who are in CEL designated courses and allow refinement and revision of additional in-class assessments of student responses to community engaged learning, and its impact on their learning and development.

Faculty delivering CEL undergraduate and graduate courses from each of the aforementioned colleges have explicitly expressed, in writing to the Director of Engagement, an interest in forming part of this inter college study of community engaged teaching and learning. To support participation in the study, faculty would be allocated resources that could be dedicated toward instructional activities with students, facilitation and completion of community engaged projects, transportation for class field trips to undertake community engagement in K-12 schools, installation or delivery of visual or artist performances, and/or support for additional data analysis with faculty.

As the Office of Engagement continues to examine UNC institutional data (UNC Senior Survey, 2015; UNC Faculty Survey, 2017) and external educational research on high impact practices and student success (Kuh, 2008; NSSE, 2013), we can further enhance our understanding of how community-based learning experiences integrated in the curriculum contribute to student learning and growth. For example, we know that findings from the HERI 2015 senior survey indicate almost 75% of graduating students participated in some form of community based learning during their degree. Furthermore, community engaged learning is significantly and positively correlated with students' desire to complete a degree, motivation for pursuing graduate studies, and student feelings of being prepared for their future careers. Students who report at least some community based learning experiences significantly outperform their peers on constructs of civic engagement, positive cross-racial interaction, social agency, civic awareness, sense of belonging at UNC, and leadership skills.

OE has received IRB exempt approval for the first iteration of this assessment project to examine students' learning and experiences through surveys, student journals and informal focus groups. We anticipate that we can readily extend, or reapply for IRB, to include this additional work.

By continuing to refine our assessment methods, and work toward multipurpose assessments, we can begin to construct a toolkit for community-engaged courses. UNC faculty and OE will be able to assess, quantitatively and qualitatively, how community engagement impacts students. This opportunity to work with faculty from different colleges will also allow consideration of how different disciplines, course types, and pedagogies impact student learning. Ultimately, this will enhance UNC's role as a leader in understanding and promoting effective and reciprocally beneficial community engaged learning opportunities.

## **Plans for Sharing Project Results and Using Outcomes for Improvements**

The Office of Engagement intends to disseminate these assessment findings at national conferences focused primarily on academic and institutional engagement. This will further increase UNC's reputation not only as an engagement leader, but also as an assessment leader and partner as well. One such forum is the Engaged Scholarship Consortium Conference, which in 2019 will be held in Denver, Colorado.

The Office of Engagement plans to present progress and results from this assessment project at the UNC Teaching and Learning Fair and the UNC Assessment Fair, ideally in collaboration with faculty from the CEL courses. In addition, and time permitting, we envision facilitating on campus panels and workshops to engage with more UNC faculty and administrators interested in learning about the impact and opportunities afforded in community engaged learning experiences. This is a unique way to further promote the CEL designation and the availability of these assessment tools, and it will also be relevant as we move forward with our institutional self-assessment and establish the foundations for the next round of the Carnegie Foundation for Teaching and Learning classification as a Community Engaged Campus, 2025.

### **Timeline of Major Tasks and Activities**

Start Date: July 1<sup>st</sup> 2018      End Date: June 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

This study will expand upon ongoing assessment efforts, and therefore we anticipate that we will have some baseline data by the end of the spring 2018 semester. This mini grant will enable the next phase of assessment, including refinement and revisions of methods used this past year.

- Summer 2018: Contact faculty with CEL courses for participation.
- August 2018: Work with faculty to identify engaged learning components, including assessment of student learning outcomes
- September 2018: Students complete Pre-assessment Survey and Journal#1
- October 2018: Student focus group; host or visit with students from at least two CEL courses
- November 2018: Community engaged learning at UNC Community Engaged Scholars Forum, open to public & UNC
- December 2018: Students complete Post-assessment Survey. Debrief with faculty on community engaged learning components, including assessment of student learning and faculty perspectives.
- January 2019: Begin analysis of fall 2018 data.
- February 2019: Invite Faculty to collaborate with OE to present advances of CEL Assessment Study at UNC Assessment Fair
- March 2019: Write up initial findings and submit collaborative proposal to the Engaged Scholarship Consortium (ESC) Conference (Denver, 2019)
- April-May 2019: Data analysis and final presentation development for ESC conference
- June 2019: Final Report to Office of Assessment

## Budget Narrative 2018-2019

The mini assessment grant will support the assessment of community engaged learning in UNC Courses with the CEL designation in the following ways:

Description	Amount
Community Engaged Learning: supplies for course and project development and/or implementation. (i.e. materials, printing, start-up needs)	
4 CEL Courses (4 x \$250)	\$1000
Official functions: light refreshments for focus groups with students and faculty (4 X \$25)	\$100
Community engaged learning products or deliverables resulting from study (printing posters, fliers, infographics)	\$200
Professional Development Support for Engaged Faculty at the Engaged Scholarship Consortium Conference 2019	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1500</b>

## Assessment Mini-Grant Proposal

Applicant: Chia-Lin Tsai

Title: Assistant Professor

Contact Information: [chialin.tsai@unco.edu](mailto:chialin.tsai@unco.edu)

Department: Applied Statistics & Research Methods

Team Member: Heng-Yu Ku

Title: Professor

Department: School of Teacher Education

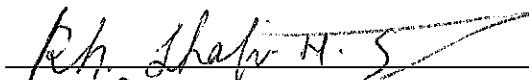
Project Title: Assessing the Impact of Interactive Course Activities on Students' Perceived Learning and Persistence in Online Courses

Applicant Signature:



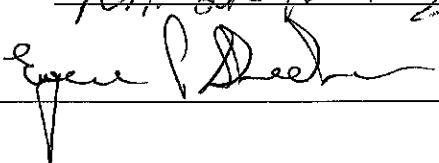
Date: 2/15/18

Chair/Director Signature:



Date: 2/15/18

Dean Signature:



Date: 2/15/18

## Project Narrative

### Purpose of the Project

The **purpose** of the project is to improve online teaching and students' learning experience. Specifically, this project focuses on assessing the impact of interactive course activities on students' perceived learning and persistence in online courses.

### Background

Online learning has become a popular modality for learners to gain knowledge in the past decade. According to a recent enrollment report from WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)<sup>1</sup>, in the U.S. the number of students taking at least one distance/online education course had grown from 1.6 million in 2002 to 5.8 million in 2014. Although an online environment allows learning to take place anytime and anywhere, it presents several unique barriers to student success, including lack of instructor feedback, missing student-student interaction, and technical problems with online learning tools<sup>2</sup>. Other studies have found that a high dropout rate among online learning students<sup>3</sup> and that many students finish an online course with low satisfaction<sup>4</sup>.

One way to explain such phenomenon was through Tinto's student retention model<sup>5</sup>, which highlights the importance of academic integration (e.g., grade, enjoy learning) and social integration (e.g., working together with peers). Online learners' interaction with the instructor and classmates are critical to their academic and social integration. Findings from empirical studies suggested that instructor feedback and accessibility are positively associated with students' learning satisfaction and persistence<sup>6</sup>. Consistently, interaction between students was recognized as a key component to a positive learning environment and deeper understanding of the subject for online students<sup>7</sup>.

Three types of interaction are commonly discussed in the online learning literature: student-instructor (S-I) interaction, student-student (S-S) interaction, and student-content (S-C) interaction. In this study, **interactive course activities** are defined as activities that provide a structure to promote the communication between students and the instructor and among students (e.g., online discussion board, instructor feedback, group projects, peer feedback, and collaborative information sharing). These interactive course activities could foster a learning environment with increased

**Interactive course activities** refer to the course activities that promote:

S-I interaction: e.g., instructor feedback via comments on the assignments, Emails, or discussion board.

S-S interaction: e.g., group projects, collective information sharing, peer feedback, and group discussion.

**Non-interactive course activities** refer to the course activities that focus on:

S-C interaction: e.g., lecture notes, online resources, reading assignments, and exams.

<sup>1</sup> Poulin, R. and Straut, T. (2016). WCET Distance Education Enrollment Report 2016. Retrieved from WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies website: <http://wcet.wiche.edu/initiatives/research/WCET-Distance-Education-Enrollment-Report-2016>

<sup>2</sup> Berge, Z. L., Muilenburg, L. Y., & Haneghan, J. V. (2002). Barriers to distance education and training: Survey results. The Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 3(4), 409-418.

<sup>3</sup> Meister, J. (2002). Pillars of e-learning success. New York, NY: Corporate University Xchange.

<sup>4</sup> Yukselturk, E., Ozkes, S., Türel, Y.: Predicting dropout student: an application of data mining methods in an online education program. Eur. J. Open Distance E-Learn. 17(1), 118–133 (2014)

<sup>5</sup> Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. (2nd ed.).Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>6</sup> Rhode, J. (2009). Interaction equivalency in self-paced online learning environments: An exploration of learner preferences. The international review of research in open and distributed learning, 10(1).

<sup>7</sup> Beldarrain, Y. (2006). Distance education trends: Integrating new technologies to foster student interaction and collaboration. Distance education, 27(2), 139-153.

peer support and guidance from the instructor, which are essential factors to students' persistence in online courses<sup>8</sup>. More importantly, students become active learners when participating in interactive course activities.

At the UNC, during fall 2017, 18% of the undergraduate and 46% of the graduate students enrolled in at least one distance/online course<sup>9</sup>. This study aims to assess the usage of different online course activities at UNC, and explore how interactive course activities impact online students' perceived learning and persistence. By *perceived learning*, we refer to students' expected grade, knowledge gain, and learning satisfaction. By *persistence*, we refer to students' course completion.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) RQ1: What is the current usage of different course activities, including interactive and non-interactive activities, in online courses at UNC?
- 2) RQ2: What are the distinct types of online learning environment based on instructors' usage of different course activities?
- 3) RQ3: Do students in a more interactive online learning environment have higher perceived learning (i.e., expected grade, knowledge, and learning satisfaction) and persistence (i.e. course completion rate)?

### **Participants**

We plan to survey graduate and undergraduate students taking at least one online course during fall 2018. We will request email address of the students who meet the above criteria from the Office of Assessment. We will use these email addresses to recruit participants. Participants will be asked to complete an online survey in November 2018. Upon completion of the survey, participants will have a chance to win a monetary gift in a drawing (six \$50 gift cards).

### **Data Sources**

**Course Activities.** This information will be collected using an online survey. Participants will be given a list of course activities that involve student-instructor, student-student, or student-content interaction. Participants will be asked to identify how frequently each course activity is used by the instructor in the online course they enroll. Participants who take more than one online courses will be asked to provide their responses based on only one online course.

**Perceived Learning.** This information will be collected using an online survey. Participants will be asked to respond to questions related to their expected grade, perception of knowledge gain, and learning satisfaction. We will use these three variables as a proxy for students' learning outcome.

**Students' Persistence.** We plan to request students' course completion data from the Office of Institutional Reporting and Analysis Services (IRAS). We plan to provide participants' email address to the IRAS for matching their record. We will use de-identified data from IRAS in this part of the analysis.

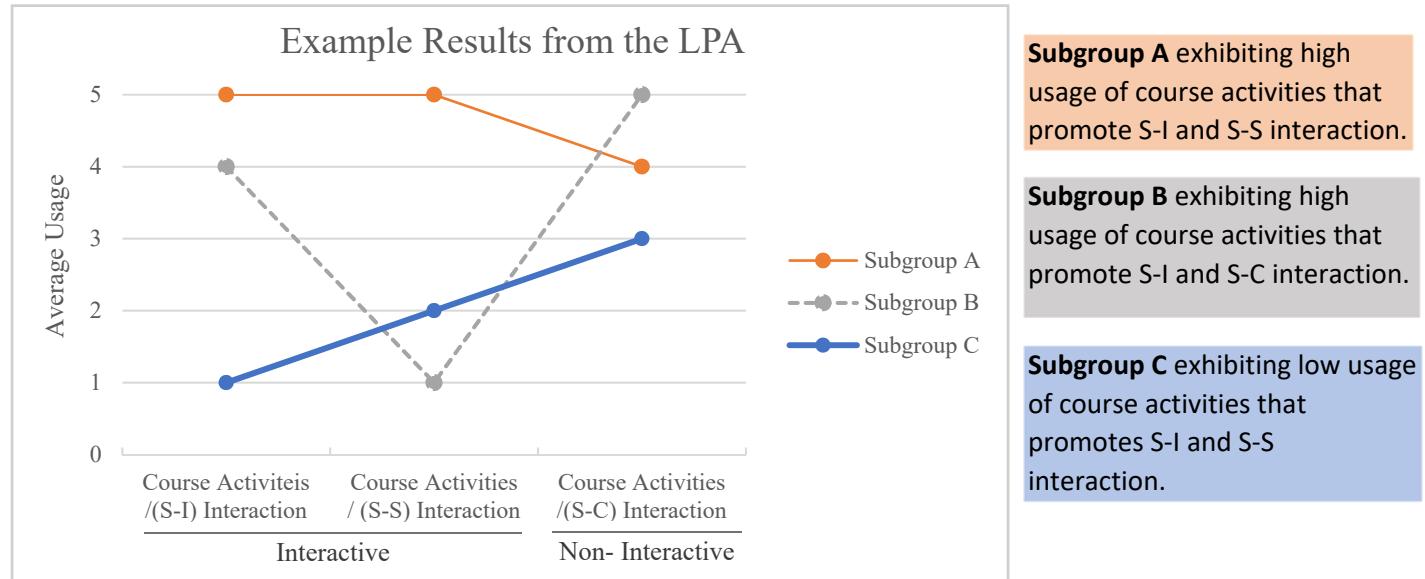
In addition, we will collect students' demographic variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, first-generation status, and graduate/undergraduate) and online course information (e.g., required/ elective and number of credit hours). We will also include questions related to students' course engagement and online learning self-efficacy in the survey. Although not the primary focus of the study, these social-cognitive variables will be analyzed to provide a potential explanation of the impact of interactive course activities on students.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, C. (2012). Factors associated with student persistence in an online program of study: A review of the literature. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, 11 (1), 19-42.

<sup>9</sup> UNC 2017 Fall Enrollment Profile: <http://www.unco.edu/institutional-reporting-analysis-services/pdf/enrollment-stats/Fall2017Final.pdf>

## Data Analysis

We will report descriptive statistics and correlations for all the variables. We will use a Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) to classify participants into different subgroups of online learning environment based on instructors' usage of different course activities (see Figure below). After different subgroups are identified, we will exam the differences in outcome variables among the subgroups. We hypothesize that participants in a more interactive online learning environment would have higher levels of perceived learning and persistence.



## Timeline of Major Tasks and Activities

Project Activities	Timeline
1 <sup>st</sup> Assessment planning meeting	May 2018
Identify instruments and finalize survey	June 2018
Prepare questionnaire and consent form	July 2018
Obtain IRB approval	August 2018
Obtain students' email address from the Office of Assessment	September 2018
Data collection through an online survey (4 weeks)	November 2018
Incentive drawing for the participants	December 2018
Download data for cleaning and preliminary analysis	January 2019
Request course completion data from the IRAS	February 2019
Prepare presentation for the 2019 UNC Annual Assessment Fair	March 2019
Data analysis and conference proposal writing	April – July 2019
Submit a brief report to the Office of Assessment	July 2019

## Plans for Sharing Project Results and Using Outcomes for Improvement Purposes

Results of the project will be shared with two key audiences – instructors who teach online courses and researchers who wish to conduct studies related to online learning. We will submit a research proposal to a national conference, such as American Educational Research Association (AERA) or Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT). We will also write a manuscript for journal publication.

### Budget Narrative

Description	Amount
Assessment planning meetings (i.e., lunch for two researchers) (4 meetings * \$30)	\$120
Hourly student employment to assist with data collection (1 student x 30 hrs x \$15/hr)	\$450
Incentive drawing for survey participants (6 x \$50 gift card)	\$300
Professional development – For one researcher to attend the learning analytics summer training (June 2019) in Ann Arbor, MI (training registration: \$300; travel: \$250)	\$550
Resources (e.g., books)	\$80
Total	\$1500