VISION 2020 – AY1 GRANT PROPOSAL

Project Title:
The COEUS Award to Recognize High Impact Practices

Project Team:
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Abstract (138 words):
The objective of the COEUS Award (named for the Titan of Intellect) is to engage undergraduates more deeply in their learning by challenging them to participate in at least two high-impact practices from Creative Activity, Overseas Study, Experiential Learning (e.g., internships, practica), Undergraduate Research, or Service Learning. Each COEUS Award experience promotes application of learning and integration of knowledge through guided reflection and mentoring, and these types of experiences are closely related to skills sought by employers. In addition, studies consistently show that those students who participate in high-impact practices are more likely result in retention and timely graduation. The COEUS Award will provide an incentive for students to engage in university activities, create a method through which participation in high-impact practices can be tracked and assessed, and help brand IU South Bend as providing a distinctive education.
Narrative (1986 words):

“Each one of [the Titans] was the discoverer of things of benefit to humankind, and because of the benefaction they conferred upon all humans they were accorded honors and everlasting fame.”
-Diodorus Siculus (Greek historian from the first century B.C.)

Goals
This proposal is to create the COEUS Award (named for the Titan of Intellect and an acronym for Creative Activity, Overseas Study, Experiential Learning, Undergraduate Research, and Service Learning). A number of faculty from different Colleges and Schools around the campus were selected by administrators to work for a year with FACET members from Indiana University and develop ways to increase the use of high-impact practices (HIP). Now that our campus has hired key personnel in Academic Affairs, we believe it is time to turn our idea into reality.

While many students at IU South Bend are exposed to HIPs through service learning, internships, study abroad, research, and creative activities, these experiences are not currently recognized or codified in a systematic way. The goal of this project is to codify HIP courses and reward students who take them so that 1) students can recognize and be proud of the unique educational opportunities they experience at IU South Bend, 2) students will be rewarded for their participation in COEUS by special recognition at graduation, 3) students will be incentivized to seek out further HIP opportunities throughout their undergraduate and graduate careers, 4) more HIP courses will become credit-bearing (i.e. tuition drawing), and so that 5) IU South Bend can assess the program and use the data in recruitment and fund-raising activities. Since it has been documented that students who are involved on campus, socially as well as academically, are more to remain enrolled and graduate (Kuh, et al. 2005), we expect this initiative will increase retention, graduation rates, and new student enrollments at IU South Bend.

The purpose behind creating the COEUS Award is to provide support for the HIPs already conducted by the IU South Bend faculty, produce an incentive for current students to enroll in such classes, and to publicize to the broader community the skills learned through participation in these activities. The ultimate principle is for there to be increased focus on existing strategies to engage students that might be highlight, enhanced, and eventually grown to be even more successful. We are looking to build on what is already done on campus, to publicize these activities and make them relevant to students in every College and School, and to provide an incentive for even more engagement between faculty and students as well as between student peers. Additionally, research shows “there is a measurable, significant, and positive relationship between students’ cumulative participation in multiple HIPs, on the one hand, and their perceived engagement in deep learning and the perceived gains in learning, on the other” (Finley and McNair 2013). Thus,
we are looking for an incentive to increase the creation of more HIP courses and have those courses enroll more students.

In 2010, AAC&U published “Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality” that expanded on the findings of Kuh (2008). The report provided an overview of many research studies and concluded that each of the five practices studied (service learning, undergraduate research, study abroad, senior capstones, learning communities) led to a set of positive outcomes for participants. Across the five practices, the most common outcomes include higher grades, higher persistence rates, intellectual gains, greater civic engagement, increased tolerance for and engagement with diversity, and increased interaction with faculty and peers (Brownell and Swaner 2008).

The above five practices (with the exception of learning communities) are already common elements in some departmental curricula on our campus. Student internships and experiential learning are happening more frequently as well. The reporting of these practices, on the other hand, is often neglected. Those in administration are not aware of how many students engage in service learning. Students may be doing research but not for credit. The definition of what counts as an internship is ambiguous. The engagement is indeed happening in pockets across the university, but there exists little measurement of the engagement and relatively no marketing.

Students and the community in which they will work need to be more aware of the HIPs that are done at IU South Bend. It is to the benefit of everybody that participation rates are recorded and, if possible, increased. For example, more than 80 percent of employers surveyed in 2009 believe that senior projects, internships and community-based research, and research projects developing students’ evidence-based reasoning skills all would help prepare college students for success in today’s workplace (AAC&U 2011). An award earned by students through engaging in these activities would better denote the talents they have developed.

**Actions**

IUPUI has created a model for recognizing High-Impact Practice courses in 2008, and this proposal will tailor their program for our campus. The COEUS Award will challenge undergraduates in every College and School to complete at least two of these five HIPs as part of their degree. Upon successfully passing courses in two categories, the students will be given a letter from the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs that details the COEUS Award and offers congratulations on their accomplishment. This letter can then be shared with employers and graduate schools and the honor can be listed on résumés and applications. We even plan to honor students with a wall plaque displayed in the University Center (a plaque that can carry the name of area industries or philanthropists who sponsor the award).
In order to collect the information about HIP courses, we intend to comb through the Campus Bulletin and make a preliminary identification of applicable classes. This will be supplemented with data from previous years’ NSSE reports. Then we will approach, over the next year, the Chairs and Directors across campus to discuss the selected classes and note others that may offer HIPs and experiences. These courses will be coded by the Registrar’s Office, using requirement designations that already exist in the transcript software package. The Office of Academic Affairs can then run a report at the end of each semester to identify the students who have completed any of the specified courses. In this way, we can collect data on the number and type of HIPs supervised by our faculty and link that information with student retention, persistence, graduation rates, and other relevant measures.

The faculty and administration will need to work together to define what counts as a HIP course. We will facilitate these discussions in the first year of this project. But again, we can use the IUPUI model as a place to start.

- Creative Activity: to qualify under this area of COEUS, courses must involve students producing original works of art or artistic performances under the mentorship of a faculty member. The requirement will not be met by courses that solely teach about creative activity.
- Overseas (International) Study: to qualify under this area of COEUS, courses must involve travel and learning outside the U.S. as well as guided reflection on the cross-cultural elements of the experience. Courses may occur as part of IU South Bend international study programs, approved study abroad programs by other U.S. institutions, or approved programs at overseas institutions. Independent study courses abroad are also eligible.
- Experiential Learning: to qualify under this area of COEUS, courses must involve students in community-based, pre-practice experiences, such as internships, practica, co-ops, field experiences, or other clinical experiences under the mentorship of a faculty member. The requirement will not be met by courses that teach about career skills; rather, it will be met by credit-bearing professional practice-based educational experiences.
- Undergraduate Research: to qualify under this area of COEUS, courses must involve students in conducting research under the mentorship of a faculty member. Undergraduate research experience courses may include any scholarly activities that lead to the production of new knowledge; to increased problem solving capabilities, including design and analysis; or to original critical or historical theory and interpretation. It will not be met by courses that solely teach about research.
- Service Learning: to qualify under this area of COEUS, courses must involve a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in activities that benefit the community, and they reflect on the service in such a way as to gain a further understanding of academic content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Service Learning goes
beyond volunteering, but the experience is important to an evolving sense of self (Jones and Abes 2004).

**Strategic Plan**

We designed this proposal to directly link to the current strategic plan put forward by IU South Bend because an intentional and proactive initiative like this aids in maintaining an effective institution, particularly in matters of student success (Tinto 2012). The strategic plan calls for a campus-wide system to track and report the number of students engaged in internships, service learning, and international study, and other experiences. The COEUS Award will begin by establishing a baseline through the classification and coding of credit-bearing courses.

Next, the strategic plan identifies a goal of increasing the number of HIP courses by 50% and the number of students in those courses by 25% by 2020. This proposal will assist in both efforts. In our experience, students often complete internships without seeking credit hours for the work done. Likewise, they participate with faculty in research but not for credit. Because the COEUS Award adds a formal recognition of coursework done in HIP courses, students and faculty will both be more likely to complete the paperwork needed to turn applicable experiences into credit hours. This is an important secondary point to the overall project: those credit hours become tuition revenue that was previously lost.

Finally, the strategic plan seeks to increase the use and visibility of resources the campus provides to the community and develop associated marketing. We feel that the COEUS Award will increase the recognition of student internships and service learning experiences conducted in and around South Bend. Not only will students be pursuing the award to include on their résumés, but it is our intent to help the Office of Development promote the award as a tangible and visible product that could be sponsored by an external source.

**Assessment**

Year One goals: (1) develop a list of criteria to share with chairs and heads; (2) discuss existing courses with faculty at meetings and in workshops; (3) review course descriptions and begin the assignment of requirement designation codes; (4) purchase a plaque to recognize supporters and successes and to increase the visibility of Award; (5) review what practices students are engaging in during the last few years to establish a baseline.

The assessment of the goals for the first year are very straightforward. We will compile and share the list of course criteria and record the dates of the events in which we discuss and disseminate the criteria. The codes will be assigned, approved, and discussed with the Office of the Registrar. A plaque will be bought and installed. The NSSE data collected by our Institutional Research Office will be examined to see how students have been engaged in certain HIPs.
Year Two goals: (1) add requirement designation codes to course schedules; (2) measure baseline of credits offered and taken in COEUS Award-eligible classes; and (3) educate students and faculty about the Award.

Again, assessment appears feasible for the second year. The presence of the codes in the course schedules will signify success, and reports can be run once the codes are added to collect and analyze data. The awareness factor will be measured by the amount of coverage received through various forms of campus media, surveys sent to students (like NSSE and in-house questionnaires), and further counts of faculty meetings and workshops.

Year Three goals: (1) advertise, hype, and brand the Award. We intend to assess through continued collection of student participation in the coded COEUS Award courses.

Budget:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer salary for VanderVeen ($2000 plus fringe benefits)</td>
<td>2540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation for Graduate Student ($10/hr x 80 hours)</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award plaque and installation</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3840</td>
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</tbody>
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Sustainability:

Ultimately, we would like to use this Award as a way to market the university as distinctive in the area. After its creation and the data are collected in the first year, we will work with the Development Office to seek donors (either individuals or area companies/organizations) that will provide money to the university. In our departmental fund-raising efforts, we are often met with a hurdle of providing specific items for donors to support. This Award puts a brand on the activities we are currently doing, giving it a name and criteria that are easy for donors to understand.

Although the Award as described above costs very little money aside from the time spent in its creation and implementation, it could be expanded to include student financial support. We have spoken with students already to gauge their interest and seek ideas for incentives. Relatively inexpensive items are regularly discussed: from a parking pass or a bookstore voucher to a semester’s worth of printing costs covered. None of these options involve direct compensation to the student, but they each would provide a noticeable and useful token of appreciation on behalf of the university.
Timeline:

May-August 2015: VanderVeen will spend the summer talking with colleagues at IUPUI (who created the model), IU East (who are creating a system now), and IU Kokomo (who did not success in creating their system) to develop a list of criteria to share with chairs and heads.

May-August 2015: VanderVeen and the student will review the data of the past years’ NSSE and note in which HIPs students are already participating and at what level.

May-August 2015: The student will review course descriptions and begin the assignment of requirement designation during the summer, under the supervision of VanderVeen and with the consultation of Dawson.

August-November 2015: The team will discuss existing courses with faculty at meetings and in workshops, during the Fall semester, starting at the Fall Senate meeting and continuing in October and November, before Fall 2016 schedules are due to the Registrar in early December.

January-April 2016: The team will review the data of the most recent NSSE and academic year’s enrollment and note in which HIPs students are already participating and at what level.

February 2016: VanderVeen will purchase a plaque in the spring to recognize supporters and successes and increase visibility of Award. The team will speak with the Development Office about the goal of finding donors to sponsor the Award and bring in additional funds to the university.
References:


