DePaul University
OFFICE FOR TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

SoTL Grant Application Form

(2017-2018)

I. Basic Information

Title of Project: Faculty Collaboration for Program Curricular Coherence

Investigator(s) Information

Principal Investigator:
Name: Gonzalo Obelleiro
College: Education (COE)
Department: Language, Leadership, and Curriculum (LLC)
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Other Investigators (Co-Pi):

Name	College	Department
Jason Goulah	COE	LLC
Nozomi Inukai	COE	LLC

For each investigator, please include an abbreviated CV using the SoTL grant CV template.

Will your project involve human subjects?   ☒   Yes   ☐   No
If Yes, you must include evidence of IRB approval or exemption, or of having applied for IRB approval or exemption. Please note that before any granted funding can be made available, you will be required to provide evidence of IRB approval or exemption.

Currently in the process of applying for "exempt" approval. Both PIs are trained

Requested Funds
Amount Requested (up to $2,500): $2500

II. Project Abstract (250 words or less)

The newly established M.Ed. Program in Value Creating Education will be offered entirely online. The academic focus of the program entails a commitment to innovation in education and this commitment is reflected in various aspects of the program design.

Beginning in the Spring of 2017, the program faculty (one tenured, one full-time term, and for adjuncts) have been collaborating intensely on course development with a special focus on curricular coherence, aligning course objectives, readings, assignments, and assessments horizontally and vertically with a level of precision supported by theory, but rarely implemented in practice. Faculty collaboration includes not only co-creative planning and design, but also sharing all content, and developing a flexible approach to course design on D2L including modules that can be moved or linked from course to course, supporting personalization in learning.

The purpose of this project is to investigate whether program-wide curricular coherence based on faculty collaboration in planning and instruction has an effect of students' perception of their learning.

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III. Project Description (1000 words or less)

<u>Purpose of Project</u>

The purpose of this project is to investigate whether program-wide curricular coherence based on faculty collaboration in planning and instruction has an effect of students' perception of their learning. Although most, if not all, graduate programs have program learning outcomes and a description of how each course contributes to fulfilling the program learning outcome, it is rare for all the faculty who teach in the program to come together and discuss the content of the course, such as course objectives, readings, assignments, and assessments. It is probably even more rare for faculty to have access to each other's course content. Therefore, the impact of program-wide curricular coherence on student learning is largely uninvestigated.

Our new MEd program on Value-Creating Education for Global Citizenship provides a unique opportunity to explore the effect of program-wide curricular coherence on student learning as all the faculty members who will be teaching in the program has engaged in and continue to engage in dialogue about each other's course content. Furthermore, in order to create curricular coherence, we will plan to create a D2L course where all students will have access when they enroll in the program and to provide all faculty access to each other's D2L courses. For this project, we would like to investigate 1) Whether students perceive a curricular cohesion throughout the program, and 2) Whether students perceive that presence or absence of curricular cohesion has an influence on their learning.

<u>Theoretical Framework</u>

This investigation finds grounding in a three-pronged theoretical framework. It builds on theories of curricular coherence that emphasize the importance of systematic alignment and sequencing of ideas to support integrated understanding (AAAS, 2001; Schmidt, Wang & McKnight, 2005; Shwartz, Weizman, Fortus, Krajcik & Reiser, 2009), and it draws from both theories of faculty collaboration (Blanton & Pugach, 2007; Bondy & Ross, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Pugach & Blanton, 2009) and the theory of value creative education that informs the focus of the program (Goulah, 2012; Goulah, 2015; Goulah & Ito, 2012; Gebert & Jofee, 2007; Obelleiro, 2012; Sharma, 2011; Inukai, 2013). There is strong evidence for the impact of curriculum alignment in specific subject matters on student success (Crooks, 1988; Walvoord & Anderson, 1998; Wiggins, 1993). At the same time, the extant literature suggests that curriculum coherence is not the norm in higher education (Biggs, 1999, 1996; Cohen, 1987; Ramsden, 1992; Pellegrino, 2006).

<u>Research Methodology</u>

For this project, we will develop a program-wide course evaluation questions asking students' perception of curricular coherence throughout the program and their perception of the presence or absence of curricular coherence on their learning. The responses will be measured on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). These questions will be added to the end of the quarter course evaluations for each of the courses offered in the program.

Once the data is collected, we will analyze 1) whether students perceived program-wide curricular coherence in the courses they have taken, and 2) whether there is a correlation between their perception of curricular coherence and perceptions of their own learning.

<u>Impact of Project</u>

Because the impact of faculty collaboration for curricular coherence on student learning is an area still largely uninvestigated, the potential contributions of this project are significant. This proposed project seeks to to quantitatively examine the relationship between curricular coherence and students' perception of their own learning. A second stage of this research programme would consider the impact of curricular coherence on student learning based on completed projects/assignments. If the findings support our hypothesis that curricular coherence will be apparent, valued, and will

have an impact on students perception of their own learning and on independent indicators of student learning, we will have a strong argument for more faculty collaboration in higher education programs.

<u>Dissemination of Results</u>

We plan to work with FITS to disseminate the results of this project, in particular amongst a core group of faculty committed to innovation in online education—DOTS alumni and participants in the Distant Teaching and Learning Annual Conference.

Beyond DePaul, we plan to present the results of our investigation at national and international educational research conferences including AERA, AESA, and the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice. Our program faculty are active members of these communities of research and our scholarship over the years have generated great anticipation and excitement about the new M.Ed. Program. A receptive audience is already awaiting.

IV. Project Plan and Timeline

<u>Fall 2017</u>
Obtain IRB approval and consent from participating faculty.
Complete first iteration of collaborative curriculum alignment.
Develop program wide evaluation questions targeting specific goals for curriculum coherence.
Write a paper developing the three-pronged theoretical framework for publication in top-tier curriculum studies journal.

<u>Winter/Spring 2018</u>
Data collection.
Meeting of faculty program to review early results of implementation of program curricular design. Begin second iteration of collaborative curriculum alignment.
Share early results with DePaul community.

<u>Summer 2018</u>
Data analysis.
Submit proposals for international research conferences.

V. Budget

Student research assistant. Data analysis. $1200

Student research assistant. Research for publication $500

Travel support for adjunct faculty (residing out of state and overseas) to participate in planning sessions. $800

Funds for this project, including support for faculty travel for planning sessions, is available from the Institute for Ikeda Studies in Education.

Appendix A: Bibliography

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