

SoTL Grant Application Form

(2016-2017)

I. Basic Information

Title of Project: Student Learning Across the Common Hour Curriculum

Investigator(s) Information

Principal Investigator:

Name: Antonieta S. Fitzpatrick
 College: N/A
 Department: Division of Student Affairs, New Student & Family Engagement
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Other Investigators (Co-Pi):

Name	College	Department

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.

Requested Funds

Amount Requested (up to \$2,500): \$2,500

II. Project Abstract (250 words or less)

The Chicago Quarter is a required credit-bearing course all new freshmen complete during their first quarter on DePaul’s campus. New Student & Family Engagement is responsible for the Common Hour component of the courses which supports students’ academic and social transition to the university through a ten-hour integrated curriculum. The Common Hour curriculum is developed in partnership with several offices across campus and consists of ten one-hour lessons. Currently there is not data to understand what students are learning as a result of the Common Hour curriculum broadly. In order to begin collecting this data, NSFEE brought together campus partners

to develop a 25-item questionnaire to directly assess student learning. The questionnaire was rolled out in a small pilot of 14 sections of the Chicago Quarter program in the fall of 2016. While some findings around student learning were statistically significant the focus of the pilot cycle was to strengthen the quality of the tool for measuring learning. The tool is currently in the final stages of revision and will be rolled out to all new freshmen in August and then again once the fall quarter ends. Once we complete this assessment project we will have a data set to review to begin to understand what students are learning and what they may not be learning through the curriculum. This knowledge will be critical as we look towards reviewing both the curriculum and instructional staff development and training for future years.

III. Project Description (1000 words or less)

Purpose of Project

The Common Hour curriculum is focused on the academic and social transition of DePaul's first year students. The curriculum includes 10 one-hour lessons and is delivered by a current undergraduate student and a professional staff member. The curriculum has been developed to address common barriers of student success and based on the research on student success the curriculum is considered to be a strong one. The challenge is that there has never been any direct assessment of student learning to determine how the curriculum contributes to student learning. The 2012 Academic Program Review of the Liberal Studies Program specifically mentioned Common Hour and called on administrators to "critically examine" the content of the curriculum. The curriculum has been reviewed, but it has been without an assessment of student learning on a large-scale. To be clear, the assessment question is, "what are first-year students learning as a result of the Common Hour curriculum?" Finally, this assessment project directly aligns with Vision 2018 outcome 1a. (To focus the entire university community on student learning and success).

Theoretical Framework

This assessment project connects to existing literature on first-year student success as well as research on teaching and learning. Kuh's (2008) research has proved and validated the impact of first year seminar courses on a broad level. This research allows us to have a sense of confidence in the impact of the Chicago Quarter, but also challenges us to seek to better understand the impact of the program within the context of a DePaul education. Recently, NSFE has worked with campus partners to better address the barriers to student success using Sternberg's (2013) research on retention risk factors as well as Fink's (2003) research on significant learning. Sternberg's research outlines 12 research-validated risk factors that are common in the first year and the current Common Hour curriculum (indirectly and in some cases directly) addresses these risk factors. DePaul's high retention rate leads us to believe the Common Hour curriculum is impacting student success, but again we do not have data to demonstrate student learning. Finally, research by Fink (2003) highlights the need for integrated course design in order to create opportunities for significant learning. This type of learning is critical to student success which has been outlined in Tinto's (1999) conditions for student success as it relates to retention and persistence. The results of this assessment project will allow us to bring all this research together in understanding the connections between student learning, first year student success, curriculum design, and instructional staff training and development.

Research Methodology

To answer the research question an online questionnaire was developed to directly assess student learning. The items on the questionnaire connect directly to the learning outcomes for each of the ten Common Hour lessons. Due to the size of the sample (nearly 2,500 new students) an online questionnaire is easily distributed and data will be easily collected. The tool and data will be housed in Qualtrics and will be quantitative. All new students will receive a link to the online questionnaire in an email before the fall quarter begins. All new students will be asked to complete the same questionnaire at the end of the quarter. Students who complete both the pre-quarter and post-

quarter questionnaire will be a part of a “matched sample” and the data will be analyzed to look for changes (increases or decreases) in level of knowledge. The data will be analyzed using SPSS and other quantitative assessment tools. The questionnaire can be viewed here:

http://depaul.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_7TLmpF3SHecvGBf

Impact of Project

As mentioned, the results of this project will inform changes to the Common Hour portion of the Chicago Quarter curriculum. Changes to the curriculum will impact every new student that starts at DePaul in the fall of 2017 making the potential impact rather significant. The results will likely challenge us to revise training and development opportunities for the undergraduate students and professional staff who teach the Common Hour. Finally, the results can provide a framework for others interested in understanding and exploring student learning that occurs within a large-scale academic program.

Dissemination of Results

The results of the project will be shared first within New Student and Family Engagement and then will be shared with the campus partners who assist in the development of the Common Hour curriculum. Outside of those audiences, the results will be shared with all members of the Chicago Quarter community, including faculty, staff, student mentors, and the Chicago Quarter Committee. A final report would also be shared with leadership within the Division of Student Affairs, all Student Affairs staff, and with the Liberal Studies Program. A program proposal would also be submitted for the TLA conference for next May as well as any Student Affairs Divisional conferences/events.

Outside of DePaul the results of this project can be shared at the National Symposium on Student Retention, the Annual Conference on the First Year Experience, and/or one of the Lilly Conferences on Evidence Based Teaching and Learning.

IV. Project Plan and Timeline

The project is currently in progress and the timeline below outlines what is ahead for the 2016-2017 academic year.

- June:** Finalize questionnaire in consultation with Student Affairs Assessment Coordinator and TLA. Review email drafts and update as necessary.
- July:** Test the questionnaire and emails with current students. Post Assessment Intern position.
- August 15:** Students who attended Premiere DePaul (PD) orientation sessions 1-11 receive email with pre-quarter questionnaire.
- August 16-19:** Assessment Intern Interviews
- August 26:** Students who attended Premiere DePaul (PD) orientation session 12 receive email with pre-quarter questionnaire.
- August 29:** PD 1 – PD 12 students receive reminder email
- August 31:** PD 13 students receive email with pre-quarter questionnaire
- Sept. 6:** PD 13 students receive reminder email
- Sept. 9:** Pre-Quarter Questionnaire Closes
- Sept. 26** Assessment Intern Start Date
- Sept.26-**
- Oct. 31:** Pre-Quarter Data Analysis Begins (Intern Leads)
- Oct. 31:** Discover Chicago students receive email with post-quarter questionnaire
- Nov. 7:** Discover Chicago students receive reminder email

Nov. 18:	Explore Chicago students receive email with post-quarter questionnaire
Nov. 21:	Explore Chicago students receive reminder email
Dec. 2:	Post-Quarter Questionnaire Closes
Dec. 3-	
Feb. 15:	Post-Quarter Data Analysis Begins & Matched Sample Analysis Begins
Feb. 15-	
May 18:	Share data and reports; review and revise Common Hour curriculum for fall 2017

V. Budget

The funds requested would be used to extend the employment period for a graduate assessment intern for the 2016-2017 academic year. Last year we had an intern with us from January to early May. With expanding this year's assessment project to include all new students we anticipate having a much larger data set to analyze. We also will be focused on understanding student learning this year rather than be focused on improving our tool which will take additional time and attention. With both of these factors in mind, we would like to have the intern with us from September 2016 to April 2017. The intern will work 12 hours/week for roughly 28 weeks. The intern will wrap up their experience at the end of April 2017. The hourly rate for the graduate intern would be \$15/hour.

- Funds Requested: \$2,500
- A breakdown of the total cost for the intern is as follows:
 - \$15/hour @ 12 hours/week = \$180/week
 - 28 weeks total = \$5,040
 - NSFE budget will be used to cover \$2,540 of the graduate intern's pay.
 - SOTL grant funds would be used to cover the remaining \$2,500.

VI. Bibliography

- Kuh, G. D. (2015). Using evidence of student learning to improve higher education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Kuh, G.D. (2008). High Impact Educational Practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities
- Kuh, G.D. (2005). Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Fink, D.L. (2003). Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sternberg, R.J. (2007, February 7). Research to Improve Retention. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/02/07/essay-use-research-improve-student-retention#ixzz2KFAxdWKz>
- Tinto, Vincent (1999) Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. NACADA Journal: Fall, Vol. 19, No.2, pp. 5-9.