1. Applicant Information

Principal Applicant:

Geoffrey Webb, Senior Manager, Experiential Education, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3 gwebb@yorku.ca   416 736 2100 ext. 33453

Partners:

Ros Woodhouse, Academic Director - Centre for Support of Teaching, York University, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3   rosw@yorku.ca   416 736 2100 ext. 22884

Maureen Connolly, Director - Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Educational Technologies, Brock University, Saint Catherines, ON   LST 3A1 maureen.connolly@brocku.ca   905 688 5550 ext. 3933

Joy Mighty, Director - Centre for Teaching and Learning, Queen's University, Kingston, ON   K7L 3N6   mighty@queensu.ca   613 533 6428

2. Overview

Descriptive Title

Generating effective assessment and evaluation tools that identify Community Service Learning's ability to achieve Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents' (OCAV) degree level expectations.

Intended Outcomes

This project is intended to be the first step in assessing the effectiveness of achieving 'OCAV Guidelines' via Community Service Learning (CSL). There are two distinct phases to this initiative:

Phase One

• Develop a set of valid, sound, and reliable measures that will help to determine student learning in existing CSL courses across 'Degree Guidelines' at York University.

• Pilot test online questionnaires to evaluate the the degree to which CSL students in achieve the Guidelines at York University and a handful of other southern Ontario institutions who offer CSL courses. These include Queen's University, Brock University, and the University of Toronto.

• Data collection will also include focus groups and interview of students; the need for an ethics review is paramount.

<u>Phase Two</u>

• Together, these evaluation tools/findings will gauge the capacity of existing CSL courses to meet external calls and demands regarding the attributes of university graduates; they will also permit educational developers to partially comprehend if CSL lends itself to meeting OCAV learning benchmarks.

• Further investigate and discuss the ways, opportunities and challenges that CSL offers as a means to meet OCAV Guidelines.

3. Rationale

In response to a national initiative to state degree expectations, the Executive Heads of Ontario's publicly assisted universities asked the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) to prepare a framework to reflect expectations of performance by the graduates of the Baccalaureate/Bachelors programs of Ontario's universities. The degree level expectations in OCAV's Guidelines elaborate the intellectual and creative development of students and the acquisition of relevant skills that have been widely, yet implicitly, understood. These guidelines were originally approved by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) in December, 2005, updated in September, 2007, and are currently being implemented by Ontario Universities through the periodic review and updating of degree programs.

A review of the guidelines suggests numerous examples of University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations and Competencies that might be effectively addressed by CSL:

•*critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline*
•*the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline*
•*evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; and devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods.*
•*the ability to communicate accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.*
•*an understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations.*
•*qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:*
•*the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making;*
•*working effectively with others;*
the ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study; and behavior consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.

This approach targets a number of realms important to EDC's five year plan:
•Encouraging new directions in educational development;
•Enhancing communication among development professionals;
•Expanding the impact of successful practices beyond local environments;
•Building collaborative structures between and among institutions.

4. Scholarship

At a macro level, a number of other jurisdictions including England, Australia, and a small number of U.S. states have developed university program learning objectives across a range of disciplines similar in nature to the OCAV guidelines. All of these initiatives all have implications for university programs, course design, and assessment of student learning in that each seeks to articulate the outcomes of a university education through a description of graduates' attributes (Barrie, 2006; Bowen and Kaiser, 2009).

The Community Service literature itself contains a wide array of assessment techniques which provide a strong conceptual basis for understanding the strengths and limitations of service learning as a pedagogy that involves distinct instructional methods and evaluation components (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Bringle and Hatcher, 2000). Assessment types include both qualitative and quantitative methods; each approach has been demonstrated to be effective at measuring student learning outcomes across a wide variety of CSL courses encompassing Science, Education, Liberal Arts, Social Science, and Social Work offerings (Hatcher, Bringle and Muthiah, 2004; Ash, Clayton and Atkinson, 2005).

What has not been identified is if, how and by what means CSL may enable Ontario faculty members to achieve OCAV type guidelines through community based teaching. While certain U.S. institutions may appear to some to be much more adept and advanced at using CSL and other pedagogies of engagement to meet OCAV type guidelines, CSL remains a pedagogy at the margins that continues to struggle to demonstrate relevance in order to attain academic legitimacy in order to secure university resources that follow from recognition and institutionalization (Martin et al, 2002).

This one year study is a focused and concerted cross-institutional attempt to locate CSL as teaching and learning mechanism that may have the ability to meet Ontario-specific teaching and learning yardsticks that relate to points of reference in other jurisdictions.

5. Dissemination

(1) conference/association meeting presentation (EDC Conference)

(2) project iterations and findings shared through The Canadian Alliance of Community Service Learning website/listserv and teleconferences: http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/

(3) presentations and talks to southern Ontario institutions

(4) production of an online streaming video highlighting results of this endeavor similar in nature to this:
http://www.yorku.ca/akevents/flash/experiential/wartowerproductions/clients.html

6. Budget

For the purposes of this grant, a research assistant (RA) will be hired to support our cross institutional work in addition to writing up the findings and for presentation to parties across project timeframes. **The student will be hired for a total of 100 hours at $22 per hour (including vacation and benefits) for a total request of $2,500**. York University's FLA&PS EE Office and York's Center for the Support of Teaching will provide whatever in-kind support may be needed to enable the project (e.g., office, computer, administrative and research assistance).

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