Project Description

Active Learning Initiative at South Alabama (ALISA)

The Active Learning Initiative at South Alabama (ALISA) advances the quality of education at the University of South Alabama (USA) by increasing student engagement through active learning. This document briefly describes an operational approach to two complementary opportunities: (1) the redesign of existing courses, emphasizing foundational and strategically important courses with multiple sections; and (2) the development of a limited number of new high-quality, academic courses or programs that have the potential for sustained viability and growth. By emphasizing strategically important courses the program leverages whole course opportunities for increased academic success, student retention, and degree completion.

Mission

The mission of the ALISA project is to improve student competencies, academic success, student retention, and degree completion through faculty-led use of campus-wide resources, best-practice quality standards, active learning strategies, scalable and sustainable coursework development, online technologies and media with high-quality production values, and evaluation processes aimed at continuous improvement.

Project Goals

- Select up to 15 courses per year to be part of project; implementations within one year of completion of course design/redesign.
- Establish and support faculty cohorts that meet regularly for collaboration, professional development, course development, project information, data gathering, and contributions to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).
- Work closely with faculty to develop creative, high-quality web-enhanced, blended, or online courses that emphasize active learning strategies.
- Provide increased instructional development support to impact a whole course versus a limited number of sections of a course.
- Use focused campus-level resources (instructional design and development, technology and media production, library assets, student support, faculty development, and assessment).
- Use research-based best-practice pedagogies to foster instructional innovations.
- Incorporate e-learning technologies, when appropriate, to support learning and assessment.
- Create model courseware for foundational and large-enrollment courses.
- Systematically design and develop new programs that evidence quality and support sustainable growth.
- Develop assessment plans that emphasize evidence-based student, faculty and institutional outcomes.

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1 The initiative builds on the extensive analysis conducted by Eduventures during the Fall 2013 semester and incorporates aspects of the IMPACT program at Purdue University.
Participating Faculty Expectations and Benefits

All faculty members, including those in the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Health Sciences, are eligible to participate in this university-wide initiative. Faculty members who apply will work with the ILC and other participating units to prepare a written application. Applications must have the approval of the Department Chair and College Dean.

Faculty selected to participate in this program agree to participate in specific course planning and development activities, regular working sessions with the ILC and other units, and to deliver a redesigned or newly developed course within one year following completion. For courses taught by multiple faculty members, one application for comprehensive course redesign or new development may be submitted. Faculty will also participate in systematic assessment of student, faculty and institutional outcomes that support continuous improvement and long-term sustainability of their courses.

Each course is allotted up to $10,000 to fund course design/redesign and development. Funding can be used to support such activities as professional development, course innovation-related equipment and software, course releases, or summer salaries as approved by the Division Head. Faculty participating in the program will need to read and sign the ALISA Service Level Agreement and add approval signatures from the Chair and Dean for the Department offering the course before any funds are distributed to the Department.

Intrinsic benefits include participation in collaborative faculty cohort activities, intensive development and media production assistance from the Innovation and Learning Center (ILC) and individual consultation and assistance from other participating units. Additionally, the project will have potential for research and publication (SoTL) and enrich a faculty member’s dossier with evidence of superior pedagogical improvement activities.

University-Wide Initiative

ALISA is a university-wide, faculty-led initiative to promote active, student-centered learning. In addition to participating University Colleges and Academic Departments, the initiative is directly supported by the Departments within the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Health Sciences, including the Innovation in Learning Center, the Offices of Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Research, Student Academic Success and Retention, and the University Libraries.

Assessment Examples

Assessment of the initiative will compare baseline data with post-implementation results. Immediate and longitudinal methods will be used to detect change over time in the metrics of interest and inform continuous improvement strategies. The following outline the metrics of interest:

Students
- Content mastery: Measures that indicate the extent to which learning outcomes are met.
- Grade distribution: Letter grades in targeted courses and subsequent program-related courses.
- Student retention: Course, program, and institutional retention.
- Attitudes/Beliefs: Measures related to coursework, active learning, technology, and motivation.
Faculty
- Professional growth: Evidence of added competencies that result in course deliverables.
- Attitudes/Beliefs: Measures related to teaching, efficacy, active learning, and student preparedness.
- Innovation adoption: Persistence in implementation and continuous improvement.
- SoTL: Contribution to research on teaching and learning at USA.

Institutional
- Model adoption: Indicators of systematic course improvement, scalability, and sustainability.
- Course quality: Demonstration of the application of quality standards across the institution.
- Cost efficiencies: Per student/course, faculty FTE, space, increased tuition due to retention.

Costs for Course Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Item</th>
<th>Year 1 (pilot)</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>3-Year Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Development Fund award: $10,000 X 3 courses (Yr 1), 15 courses (Yr 2-3)</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$330,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milestone Funding
ALISA funds will be disbursed in accordance with completion of the following course design milestones. Funds will be transferred to the department of the faculty designer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Estimated Completion Date</th>
<th>Funds Disbursed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLA signed and participation commenced</td>
<td>August 2015</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance of Cohort at ALISA FCDs and completion of all required activities</td>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The completion of newly designed or redesigned and submission of all deliverables pertaining to the first implementation</td>
<td>May 2016, August 2016</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
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<td>The end of semester when the newly designed or redesigned course is first offered, following participation in the ALISA assessment activities</td>
<td>August 2016 (Summer) December 2016 (Fall) May 2017 (Spring)</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$10,000</strong></td>
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