

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
IPESL (Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning) PROSPECTUS

I. INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION

A. Problems

1. There is a continuing need to develop, revise, and assess curriculum and course activities (i.e., course redesign) to enhance student learning particularly as it relates to critical thinking.
2. There is a continuing need to create, cultivate, and continue faculty communities of practice ensuring programs of excellence.
3. There is a continuing need for accessible resources for students and faculty in developing academic skill sets that enhance critical thinking.
4. There is a continuing need to utilize educational technologies in promoting excellence in undergraduate student learning especially as it relates to critical thinking.

B. Initiative's Planned Goals and Methods

Goals:

1. Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU) faculty will create and implement new instructional/curriculum materials, assessments, and delivery and/or support mechanisms that promote student engagement and skills in critical thinking.
2. MSU faculty will enhance cross-discipline collaboration by participating in professional communities of practice that support improving critical thinking skills.
3. MSU faculty will make instructional/curriculum materials, assessments, and delivery and/or support mechanisms about critical thinking more accessible to students and peers.

Methods:

1. Innovative Course Development: Using their communities of practice for support and innovation, faculty will redesign an element of their course to improve critical thinking skills and to utilize instructional technologies to improve student accessibility.
2. Communities of Practice Selection and Organization: MSU faculty will be selected through an application process and grouped into professional critical thinking communities of practice. Faculty selection and participation will be based on proposed instructional/curriculum materials, assessments, and delivery and/or support mechanisms that promote critical thinking. The MSU Faculty Association, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and the Information & Technology Services will participate in the organization of the program. Communities of Practice Coordinators will be recruited for each community of practice.
3. Course Redesign, Critical Thinking, and Instructional Technologies Training:

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and Information & Technology Services will work together to develop the necessary training sessions on course redesign, critical thinking, and instructional technologies.

4. Demonstration and Reflection: Faculty will share their curricular innovations in a variety of settings as specified in individual project proposal.

In sum, the methods and mechanisms for program coordination, implementation, and assessment include the established departments and resources at MSU:

- Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL): <http://www.mnsu.edu/cetl/>
- Information & Technology Services: <http://www.mnsu.edu/its/>
- Educational Technology Services: <http://www.mnsu.edu/its/ets/>
- Extended Learning: <http://www.mnsu.edu/ext/>
- Office of University Assessment
- Faculty Association

C. Project Addressing Initiative's Goals:

The MSU IPESL would address the goals by meeting one or more of the following:

- a. increasing access and opportunity for learners to develop the targeted skill sets of critical thinking (Initiative Goal 1.1: “increase access and opportunity”)
- b. using technologically enhanced media (e.g., web pages, pod casts, etc.) to eventually share critical thinking materials on the websites of MSU departmental units (e.g., TRIO and ACCESS programs) that help prepare first-generation and underrepresented high school students for a college (Initiative Goal 1.3: “prepare all young people to . . . enroll in college ready for success”).
- c. improving teaching quality and engagement by redesigning courses to reflect the learning needs and styles of today’s college student (Initiative Goal 2.1: “demonstrate high quality in all educational programs:)
- d. encouraging faculty to utilize current critical thinking knowledge and practices to promote masterful student critical thinking (Initiative Goal 2.2: “adaptable and flexible skills”).
- e. providing a mechanism to encourage faculty to use more multiple delivery options especially multimedia and web-based educational technologies for educational programs (Initiative Goal 2.3: “multiple delivery options”)

D. New Initiative Innovations

The MSU IPESL would build upon faculty grant proposal programs previously administered at MSU (e.g., faculty improvement grant, etc.). The new innovations for MSU would include:

1. critical mass of faculty (i.e., 30-42) focusing on critical thinking knowledge building, understanding, and course implementation.
2. implementing the communities of practice concept with many faculty as supported by the newly awarded Carnegie Leadership Campus distinction.
3. creating synergies among various MSU units striving to support excellence in faculty teaching (e.g., Faculty Association, Center for Excellence in Teaching and

Learning, Information & Technology, Office of University Assessment, and Educational Technologies Services)

4. the adoption of instructional technologies by many faculty to improve student accessibility, critical thinking.

E. Anticipated Number of People Directly Involved in MSU IPESL (the number of students affected would potentially be in the thousands)

Group Type of People Involved	Project Managers (MSU Personnel and Faculty acting as a Communities of Practice Project Manager, Assessment Project Manager, Faculty Fellow Assistant, and MSU IPESL Campus Project Manager)	Steering Committee (MSU Faculty defining MSU IPESL criteria, selecting participating faculty, and assisting in the assessment of the project results)	Communities of Practice Facilitators (MSU Faculty and Staff facilitate communities of practice faculty and facilitate the coordination, presentation, and assessment of faculty course redesigns)	Resource Educators (e.g., Critical Thinking, Course Redesign, and Instructional Technologies—MSU Faculty and Staff)	Faculty Redesigning Courses	Estimated Total
Estimated # of People Involved	4	5	5	5	30-42	49-61

II. RATIONALE/EVIDENCE

A. Initiative Importance

1. Critical Thinking: Using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey instrument, 2005 data for MSU indicates that the teaching of critical thinking skill sets are needed: Specifically,

- MSU first year and senior students significantly ($p < .05$) lagged behind other first year and senior students from Master level institutions and NSSE participating institutions as a whole in relation to writing and speaking clearly, and thinking critically and analytically.
- MSU first year and senior students significantly ($p < .05$) lagged behind other first year and senior students from Master level institutions and NSSE participating institutions as a whole in relation to engaging in higher-order mental activities (e.g., analysis, synthesis, making judgments, application).

2. Instructional Technologies: 2005 PSOL data indicate that the use of on-line instruction and instructional materials need improvement at MSU. Specifically, MSU students significantly ($p < .001$) rated the quality of online instruction, appropriateness of

instructional materials and the reasonableness and clarity of assessment less highly than participating Noel-Levitz (PSOL) institutions.

- 3. Scholarly Communities of Practice** are used throughout higher education and business throughout the world today. Recently, MSU was selected as one of 87 universities in the world to be a part of a three year program through the Carnegie Foundation. The initiative is known as the CASTL Leadership Project.

MSU has a steering committee of five faculty who are meeting regularly as a team to help develop a plan to implement Scholarly Communities of Practice through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). CETL already has a couple of these communities and plans to create many more in the next few years. Communities of Practice come together around common interests and expertise. Faculty create, share, and apply knowledge which can then be shared with others. The communities can be leveraged to create best practices and generate new knowledge for participants which can then be shared in-house and with other campuses. MSU has a strong tradition in the past few years of building learning communities. With the addition of the MSU IPESL, MSU can continue the work of faculty in Communities of Practice long past the deadline of the project itself.

In just the past year well over 200 faculty have been a part of a learning community at MSU through CETL programs. MSU has the know how to help create and nurture more communities which would be created through the MSU IPESL.

B. MSU IPESL Conditions and Contexts: The MSU IPESL will be implemented using established campus centers (CETL, Information & Technology, etc.), faculty and staff experts (Faculty Association, Educational Technologies Services staff, Director of University Assessment, etc.), and the communities of practice concept to build sustainable faculty work groups.

C. Link to University and System Priorities and Initiatives

The MSU IPESL is directly related to three of the Minnesota State University's strategic priorities and the Office of the Chancellor Work Plan for the MnSCU System. The plan is directly tied to MSU strategic priority to increase its technology in the classroom and enhance access for all students through web-based instruction 24/7. The Initiative is designed to promote diversity and reach out to underserved and underrepresented groups and its strategic recruitment plan found in the University's strategic priority on enrollment management and diversity. These MSU strategic priorities are in line with and link up with the Office of the Chancellor Work Plan under Goal 1.1(to increase access for underrepresented groups) and Goal 1.3 (to increase representation of underrepresented groups in STEM).

D. MSU IPESL Continuance: The MSU IPESL will yield long term benefits to MSU:

- the faculty will continue to refine and implement what they created during the Project into their courses and programs;
- the MSU IPESL will expand and become a continuous element of the Communities of Practice. These Learning Communities concepts and practices are currently utilized and nationally recognized as a foundational element of MSU's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning;
- the Technology & Training Center, which is a part of Information & Technology Services, is a long-term center established to support faculty development in utilizing instructional technologies. The new approaches and resources developed from the MSU IPESL will be made available to all faculty and become a part of the permanent technology support;
- the Executive Director of University Assessment will be involved in designing, implementing, and interpreting the assessment of the project and design assessment approaches which will continue at MSU;
- appropriate technologies developed by the MSU IPESL will be field-tested and become permanent practices used by academic support services (e.g., Center for Academic Success, College Access Program) working with both on-campus and off-campus students (high school and university).

III. ANTICIPATED DIFFICULTIES AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

A. MSU IPESL Logistics and Coordination Challenge: A challenge is to select faculty, develop and implement communities of practice, provide multiple levels of training, facilitate new course redesign, reward faculty, and assess the Initiative using multiple centers, departments, and offices on campus. **Resolution:** Promote utilization and partnership between the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Information & Technology Services.

B. MSU IPESL Compressed Timeline: It will be a terrific challenge to fully implement and assess the MSU IPESL in the compressed timeline (less than 9 months to complete the Initiative). **Resolution:** Hire one to three MSU IPESL Coordinator(s)—most likely MSU faculty member(s) on special assignment during the spring, 2007 and summer, 2007 semesters).

C. Faculty Resistance: A major hurdle will be convincing tenured faculty to improve teaching in the area of critical thinking and in the use of instructional technologies to improve student accessibility. **Resolution:** Offer significant faculty stipends, utilize communities of practice structure through CETL, and create campus support and recognition.

IV. TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

IMPLEMENTATION DATES	PHASE	ACTIVITIES
Sept-Nov 2006	Phase 1: Awareness	Call for Proposals is announced to MSU faculty
December 1, 2006	Phase 2: Proposal Review	Faculty submit proposals that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address redesigning a course to pull out at least one course unit; • develop critical thinking skills. • utilize learning technologies to facilitate student accessibility.
January, 2007	Phase 3: Communities of Practice	Selected faculty are grouped into MSU IPESL critical thinking communities of practice based on common proposal elements.
Jan-Feb 2007	Phase 4: MSU IPESL Training	Faculty attend training workshops facilitated by MSU faculty and staff experts to prepare them to redesign course units focusing on the initiative's focus areas.
Jan-Feb 2007	Phase 5: Instructional Technology Training	The faculty communities of practice receive support from MSUs instructional technology faculty and staff experts.
March-April, 2007	Phase 6: Course Redesign	Faculty utilize their communities of practice and resource educators as a support mechanism for redesigning an element of their course.
March-April, 2007	Phase 7: Instructional Technology Application	Faculty develop new course materials utilizing educational technologies for delivery and out-of-class accessibility.
April - Sept 2007	Phase 8: Demonstration and Reflection	Newly developed faculty critical thinking course materials and supporting instructional technologies are demonstrated in a variety of settings as specified in individual project proposals
June-Sept 2007	Phase 9: Assessment	Faculty complete assessments; assessment results are gathered and summarized in final MSU IPESL report.
August, 2007 and subsequent semesters)	Phase 10: Dissemination	Newly created faculty critical thinking and instructional technology innovations are implemented into courses to improve student learning and student accessibility. Applicable MSU IPESL innovations are utilized by other MSU-sponsored student support programs (e.g., Center for Academic Success, TRIO programs, CAP program, etc.).

V. OUTCOMES

The following outcomes are associated with the project's three goals:

Goal 1. MSU faculty will create and implement new instructional/curriculum materials, assessments, and delivery and/or support mechanisms that promote student engagement and skills in critical thinking.

Outcome 1.1 Students of faculty participants will report greater engagement in activities that promote critical thinking than students surveyed prior to IPESL implementation. (survey)

Outcome 1.2 Students of faculty participants will demonstrate higher critical thinking work samples than students measured prior to IPESL implementation. (rubric)

Goal 2. MSU faculty will enhance cross-discipline collaboration by participating in professional communities of practice that support improving critical thinking skills.

Outcome 2.1 Faculty participants will actively attend and engage in professional community of practice activities. (attendance, survey)

Outcome 2.2 Faculty participants will report enhanced cross-discipline collaboration and support through their participation in professional community of practice activities. (survey)

Outcome 2.3 Faculty participants will report an enhanced knowledge and ability to promote student engagement and skills in critical thinking. (survey)

Goal 3. MSU faculty will make instructional/curriculum materials, assessments, and delivery and/or support mechanisms about critical thinking more accessible to students and peers.

Outcome 3.1 Faculty participants will develop critical thinking resources for students that conform to standards of effectiveness and technological dissemination. (rubric)

Outcome 3.2 Technologically enhanced resources will be regularly accessed from on- and off-campus visitors (visit counts)

Outcome 3.3 Technologically enhanced resources will be viewed through on-campus presentations. (attendance)

VI. Evaluation Plan: The following measures are meant to provide evidence as to whether the outcomes of the grant are achieved.

Outcome	Measure(s)	Evidence	What is Hoped to be Learned?
Outcome 1.1 Students of faculty participants will report greater engagement in activities that promote critical thinking than students surveyed prior to IPESL implementation. (survey)	Faculty survey results (participants and non-participants) from learning community entry and exit meeting times (i.e., January and May meetings).	Faculty ratings of their use of various activities and skills that promote critical thinking.	Do faculty participants report an increased use of activities and skills that promote critical thinking through their participation in professional community of practice activities?
	Student survey results (from faculty participant and non-participant classes)	Student ratings of engagement in various activities that promote critical thinking.	Do students of faculty from the participant group report greater engagement in activities that promote critical thinking than students from non-participant classes?
Outcome 1.2 Students of faculty participants will demonstrate higher critical thinking work samples than students measured prior to IPESL implementation. (rubric)	Critical thinking rubric	Student rubric results (from faculty participant and non-participant classes)	Do students of faculty from the participant group demonstrate higher critical thinking work samples than students of faculty non-participants?
Outcome 2.1 Faculty participants will attend and actively engage in professional community of practice activities.	Participant attendance rate	Faculty participant attendance record for professional learning community activities and meetings.	Do faculty participants regularly attend community of practice activities?
	Survey results from each learning community meeting.	Faculty ratings of own interest and engagement in professional learning community activities	Do faculty participants feel they were actively engaged in learning community activities?

Outcome	Measure(s)	Evidence	What is Hoped to be Learned?
		and meetings.	Also, do faculty participants have interest in topics presented through learning community activities and meetings?
Outcome 2.2 Faculty participants will report enhanced cross-discipline collaboration and support through their participation in professional community of practice activities.	Survey results from learning community exit meeting (i.e., May meeting)	Faculty ratings of collaboration and support provided through professional learning community activities and meetings.	Do faculty participants feel they have engaged in cross-discipline collaboration and been provided support through professional learning community activities and meetings?
Outcome 2.3 Faculty participants will report an enhanced knowledge and ability to promote student engagement and skills in critical thinking.	Survey results from learning community exit meeting (i.e., May meeting)	Faculty ratings of their knowledge and ability to promote student engagement and skills in critical thinking through professional learning community activities and meetings.	Do faculty participants feel they have increased their own knowledge and ability to promote student engagement and skills in critical thinking through professional learning community activities and meetings?
Outcome 3.1 Faculty participants will develop critical thinking resources for students that conform to standards of effectiveness and technological dissemination.	Content & technology rubrics	Faculty developed resources will be evaluated using a rubric for effectiveness and technology	Are faculty participants creating high quality critical thinking resources that conform to standards of effectiveness and technological dissemination?
Outcome 3.2 Technologically enhanced resources will be regularly accessed from on- and off-campus visitors	Visit counts	Web site visits will be calculated by on- and off-campus visitors.	How interested are campus visitors, staff, and faculty in viewing technologically enhanced resources via the web?

Outcome	Measure(s)	Evidence	What is Hoped to be Learned?
Outcome 3.3 Technologically enhanced resources will be viewed through on-campus presentations.	Event attendance	Attendance count will be calculated for each demonstration event.	How interested are campus visitors, staff, and faculty in viewing technologically enhanced resources?

VI. Dissemination

This prospectus has been shared with all members of the MSU learning community including all faculty, as well as administration and support personnel. The information has been shared through the existing information flow in our shared governments using the executive arm of the faculty association and its representatives from the various sub-meet and confer units embedded in our governing structures. The information will be disseminated, reviewed and discussed at the Academic Affairs Council, which consists of the six college deans, two assistant vice presidents for undergraduate programs and planning and the four service deans, which consists of the Dean for Institutional Diversity, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Library Services and Dean for Extended Campus. The MSU IPESL website will enable the steering committee for this project to present the application process review and assessment of projects to all members of the MSU community. Information in this project will continuously be disseminated and monitored by the MSU IPESL Steering Committee and the staff in the Center for Teaching and Learning. The products that are created through the MSU IPESL will remain in the hands of the individual faculty producing learning materials. The steering committee of the MSU IPESL will serve as the body to discuss any concerns over intellectual properties that arise during the duration of this project. The steering committee will maintain contact with the campus IP representative to ensure the rights of faculty and intellectual property issues are addressed. In addition to disseminating this information to the Academic Affairs Council and through the existing information network of our shared governments, the information will also be shared with members of the President's Expanded Cabinet and the President's Cabinet.

VII. Budget Narrative

MSU IPESL Budget Narrative* **Minnesota State University, Mankato**

1. MSU IPESL Managers: The MSU IPESL Managers will include a) a Communities of Practice Coordinator to form, coordinate, and implement the structure of the Communities of Practice; b) an Assessment Coordinator to help define, implement, and collect assessment information; and c) a non-salaried administrator to facilitate completion and communication associated with the MSU IPESL.

- 2. MSU IPESL Faculty Fellow:** An MSU IPESL Faculty Fellow would be selected from a pool of MSU Faculty by the MSU IPESL Managers and the MSU IPESL Steering Committee to work during Spring, 2007 and Summer, 2008 to help implement the MSU IPESL, assess the outcomes, and write the final MSU IPESL report.
- 3. MSU IPESL Steering Committee:** The Steering Committee will consist of 5 MSU Faculty Association members working to shape the goals and outcomes of the MSU IPESL, develop the MSU IPESL faculty project selection criteria, evaluate faculty proposals, and facilitate faculty development. The Steering Committee members also will work closely with the MSU IPESL Managers to facilitate project implementation, provide feedback, and enhance communication for all project activities.
- 4. Communities of Practice Facilitators:** The 5 Communities of Practice facilitators will be faculty committed to facilitating the development of faculty dialogue, knowledge, and pedagogy associated with the goals of the MSU IPESL. The faculty will be selected by the Steering Committee through a call for participation process.
- 5. Course Redesign Educator:** A faculty member with an expertise in course redesign will act as the Course Redesign Resource Educator and will offer group workshops and one-on-one assistance to faculty as they redesign their courses to address the goals of MSU IPESL. The Steering Committee will help to select the Course Redesign Educator.
- 6. Critical Thinking Educators:** Three faculty members with an expertise in critical thinking will act as the Critical Thinking Educators. Because the focus on the MSU IPESL is critical thinking, three faculty experts will be needed to offer group workshops as well as one-on-one assistance to faculty as they integrate more critical thinking elements into their courses for improved student learning. The Steering Committee will help to select the Critical Thinking Educators.
- 7. Instructional Technology Educator:** An MSU instructional technology educator will be important in the identification and instruction of appropriate educational technologies to help improve the accessibility of information for students and peers.
- 8. Faculty Awards:** Between 30-42 MSU faculty will be awarded monies as they create and implement new instructional/curriculum materials, assessments, and delivery and/or support mechanisms elements of their courses to improve students' critical thinking skills. Faculty will submit proposals to be evaluated and selected by the Steering Committee as corresponding with the goals of the MSU IPESL.

**See the superscript category numbers from the proforma MSU IPESL Budget as an accompaniment to this budget narrative.*

**Minnesota State University, Mankato
ProForma MSU IPESL Budget
November, 2006-September, 2007**

Budget Category	MSU IPESL Salaries
MSU IPESL Managers¹:	\$0
Communities of Practice Coordinator (Stewart Ross)	\$10,000
Assessment Coordinator (Tracy Pellet)	\$10,000
MSU IPESL Faculty Fellow²	\$12,000
MSU IPESL Steering Committee³:	\$25,000
5 faculty @ \$5,000 each	
Communities of Practice Facilitators⁴:	\$15,000
5 faculty Facilitators @ \$3,000 each	
Course Redesign Resource Educator⁵:	\$5,000
1 faculty @ \$5,000 each	
Critical Thinking Educators⁶:	\$12,000
3 faculty @ \$4,000 each	
Instructional Technology Educator⁷:	\$5,000
1 Educator @ \$5,000 each (Wayne Sharp)	
TOTAL SUPPORT COSTS	\$94,000
TOTAL FACULTY AWARDS⁸	\$210,000
42 Faculty @ \$5,500 each	
35 Faculty @ \$6,000 each	
30 Faculty @ 7,000 each	
TOTAL PROJECTED BUDGET	\$304,000

MSU, Mankato IPESL Grant
Organizational Structure
10/03/06 Draft

