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**IPESL Grant Application**  
**(Initiative to Promote Excellence in Student Learning)**  
**Minnesota State University, Mankato**

**PROPOSAL COVER PAGE**

Title of Project: Critical Thinking Assignments for Accounting Capstone Course

Name: Jane Baird

Are you full-time faculty in 2006-2007?      Yes    No  
(fixed-term faculty are not eligible to apply)

Do you plan to return to MSU in 2007-2008?      Yes    No

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Campus Address: MH 258

Campus Phone: 2314

College: College of Business

Department: Department of Accounting and Business Law

Spring Semester Schedule:

List times when available to participate in Learning Communities and workshops.

Mondays: 1-5 \_\_\_\_\_

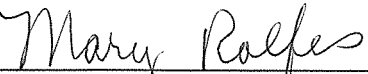
Tuesdays: \_\_\_\_\_

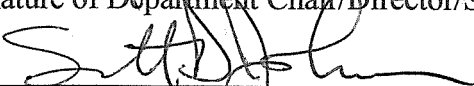
Wednesdays: 1-5 \_\_\_\_\_

Thursdays: \_\_\_\_\_

Fridays: \_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Department Chair/Director/Supervisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of College Dean/Vice President

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## Proposal Details

[Please do not use your name(s) in the proposal for purposes of blind review.]

**Please address the following in your proposal:**

1. Title of Project: Critical Thinking Assignments for Accounting Capstone Course
2. Explain the purpose of your project (e.g., need, project goals or outcomes, significance, affected student population) and include a definition of “critical thinking” as appropriate to your project.  
(maximum 250 words)

This project will be utilized in the Accounting 470 – Advanced Topics course, which is a new course required of all Accounting majors. This course was designed to foster critical thinking by requiring students to analyze business situations, determine relevant accounting, auditing and tax theories, rules and regulations, and explain how they apply to those situations. Critical thinking in this context corresponds to its definition as a “purposeful, self-regulatory judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based.” (<http://www.insightassessment.com/dex.html>) This course is a problem-based learning course in which students learn through case activities. Unfortunately, most available accounting cases focus mainly on calculations, on problems with clear-cut answers, or on very focused and limited issues. To meet our course objectives I need to develop materials with more complex, multifaceted situations without clear-cut solutions so that students must analyze, interpret, and evaluate the situations and construct arguments to justify their decisions.

3. Describe your project and how it will enhance students’ critical thinking through one or more of the following activities:  
(maximum of 250 words)
  - development, implementation, and assessment of new instructional or curriculum materials
  - development, implementation, and assessment of new support mechanisms
  - development and implementation of new assessments

I will develop, implement and assess new instructional materials for the Accounting 470 course. Specifically, I will:

- a. develop a case for the final course project (a case competition) that integrates several advanced accounting issues within a realistic business situation. Students will work in groups to research professional standards, determine what standards are relevant to the company’s situation, formulate decisions and construct arguments to support those decisions. Development of this project will require researching companies, industries, and current events for relevant background information and challenging issues, then writing the case and accompanying teaching notes.
- b. write three shorter activities that students will complete individually at the beginning of the semester. My goal is to build more individual accountability into the course. I want the

early assignments to involve students analyzing situations independently and learning to propose solutions before working in groups. These activities will be narrower in scope than the final project, but will still require students to do research, evaluate alternative solutions to a problem, and construct arguments to support their proposed solutions.

Many situations involve ethical issues. One example of the type of activity I am proposing would involve a current event, such as companies being investigated for stock option backdating practices. These practices allowed executives to reap huge profits from stocks. The activities were not properly reported to the SEC or to stockholders. Students would research and analyze the related financial reporting implications, tax ramifications, and ethical considerations and recommend actions for management.

4. How will you assess the results of your completed project?  
(maximum of 150 words)

The students in Accounting 470 will present their results for the final project both in writing and orally. There will be written reports for the shorter activities. I will evaluate the written reports utilizing the College of Business assessment rubric for written reports. The oral presentations will be evaluated by a team of Accounting practitioners utilizing the College of Business assessment rubrics for decision making and oral presentations.

5. How will you disseminate your project and its results? (e.g., department colloquium, professional conference, college colloquium, university-wide colloquium, publication, IPESL website)  
(maximum of 100 words)

I plan to present the case at a national conference and then submit it for publication in a journal such as the Journal of Business Case Studies.

6. How will your project support department/university goals?  
(maximum of 50 words)

This project supports these learning outcomes:

- a. "Students can apply accounting techniques, rules and concepts to solve problems in all areas of accounting" (Department).
- b. "Students can analyze business problems utilizing information technology and research methods appropriate to their discipline(s), and then use the results in business decision making." (College)