



THE COUNCIL OF  
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

# ENGAGING EVIDENCE CONSORTIUM: Using Data to Strengthen Student Learning in Independent Higher Education

## *Invitation for Applications*

*The Council of Independent Colleges is grateful to the  
Teagle Foundation for its generous support of this project.*

THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES (CIC) INVITES MEMBER colleges and universities to apply to participate in the CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium. CIC has long been an advocate for the development of assessment models for individual institutions, and it has also been an incubator for a distinctive CIC approach to stimulating change on college and university campuses. Consistent with this perspective on evidence-based decision making and encouragement of outcomes assessment, CIC will organize a network of colleges and universities that have had positive experiences in the use of results of student outcomes assessment to improve student learning. This effort is supported by the Teagle Foundation.

CIC's Engaging Evidence Consortium will provide up to 40 institutions with guidance and resources to conduct a campus project that uses assessment data to improve student learning. Because the most common use of outcomes assessment data is to maintain regional accreditation, institutions in the network will undertake projects that are close to the heart of the instructional mission—helping students to learn and to succeed academically. Institutions will propose a campus project that is specifically designed to use outcomes assessment data to make significant adjustments in curriculum, pedagogy, or student support toward increased student learning. Consortium members will participate in a two-and-a-half-day workshop in which leading experts will facilitate discussions of pertinent assessment topics. Participating institutions are eligible to apply to receive modest follow-up grants to help with completion of their campus projects. In addition, members will be provided with a variety of other resources, made available through an online community of practice for the Consortium.

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## *The Engaging Evidence Consortium*

CIC will form a consortium of up to 40 member colleges and universities. Each institution will undertake an individual project that is consistent with its mission and strategic plan and that uses data to inform curricular and instructional changes that increase student learning. An example might be a project that is designed to improve the performance of minority students in introductory science courses by analyzing existing data from NSSE, CLA, course grades, and other sources. The institution would then apply what was learned from the analysis to make changes, such as revising course materials, arranging for peer mentoring and tutoring, or altering pedagogical approaches in those courses.

Each campus project should:

- Address an area of concern for the institution that has the potential to make a significant difference in improving student learning;
- Use existing student learning outcomes data that can inform and guide action steps in the campus project;
- Have a feasible action plan that includes specific steps designed to increase student learning; and
- Identify outcomes measures for the project that will determine whether or not the initial goals of the project were met.

While each campus will be engaged in its own campus project, the Consortium will provide a network to support all projects. Because it can be difficult to sustain efforts to use data to make improvements, the Consortium will provide a network of institutions with the common bond of a desire to use data to improve student learning. Furthermore, the network will be one in which participating institutions can share successes and work collaboratively to improve assessment practices.

## *Activities and Benefits of Participation*

Each Consortium member institution will appoint a team that includes (a) the chief academic officer or other senior academic administrator, (b) a faculty leader with a demonstrated commitment to the improvement of student learning, and (c) the person at the institution who coordinates assessment of student learning. During the initial 18-month period of the Consortium, these team members will benefit from a variety of resources and activities that are focused on using outcomes assessment data to improve student learning.

- **Participation in a 40-institution Consortium.** The CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium will provide a network for institutions to focus on the use of outcomes assessment data to improve student learning. The Consortium will provide members with information on best practices in assessment and will help institutional teams overcome the most common pitfalls that lead to ineffective use of student learning outcomes results. To provide more focused collaboration and support for campus projects, institutions will form clusters within the Consortium around similar campus projects.

- **Consortium Meeting.** The Consortium will convene once with sessions led by national experts, including Charles Blaich, director of the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College, on how to make effective use of assessment data to inform campus action. The meeting will provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction with colleagues from other campuses and for collaborative work to achieve project objectives. CIC will cover lodging, most meals, and meeting materials for three-person campus teams participating in the meeting.
- **Participation in an Online Community of Practice.** An online community of practice will be created using CIC's SharePoint software. This site will provide Consortium members with continued interaction among CIC staff, expert consultants, and institutional teams—prior to and after the Consortium meeting—to assist with implementation of the campus project. In addition, this online community will provide access to resources on assessment and will facilitate interaction among colleagues from other campuses.
- **Campus Grants.** Small monetary awards can make a difference in whether plans made during the Consortium meeting can become a reality. Therefore, CIC will make grants available for follow-up activities that stem from the teams' plans. CIC will request brief proposals from participating institutions for the use of grants in the amount of \$1,000.
- **Leadership and Support.** CIC staff, led by senior advisor Mary Ann Coughlin, will provide leadership and support to participating colleges throughout the project. Coughlin is assistant vice president for academic affairs at Springfield College and past president of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR). She helped design and lead the six-year-long series of Data and Decisions Workshops, cosponsored by CIC and AIR, and she participated actively in CIC's Collegiate Learning Assessment Consortium.
- **Periodic Web Seminars.** Senior advisor Mary Ann Coughlin will conduct several web seminars. These seminars will be designed both to inform participants about various resources and Consortium activities and to provide Consortium members with training and assistance as they complete their campus projects. These web seminars will be available at no cost to Consortium members.
- **Project Report.** Campus teams will be expected to submit final written reports. These reports will be published on the CIC website and will be distributed widely to the higher education community.

## *Eligibility*

To be eligible for participation, applicants must be Institutional Members of CIC and have a commitment to and experience with collecting, analyzing, and using assessment of student learning results to improve student learning outcomes. Institutions must also agree to undertake a campus project that will use data to inform curricular and instructional changes designed to increase student learning. While the focus is on undergraduate programs, institutions that also offer higher degrees are eligible.

## *Selection Criteria*

A selection committee will choose participant institutions that:

- Have a proven record of using evidence of student learning to improve teaching and learning;
- Document a campus project that fits the institutional culture and uses existing data that can make a significant difference in student learning;
- Provide a plan for the campus project that is feasible and that involves the members of the institutional team in substantial ways;
- Identify measures for the campus project that will provide evidence of the success of the project; and
- Reflect the diversity of independent higher education.

## *Expectations of Participating Institutions*

If selected, the institution will agree to:

- Make a good faith effort to complete the campus project described in the application;
- Send the three-person team to participate in the meeting of the Consortium; institutions are welcome to send additional team members to the meeting at their own expense;
- Collect, analyze, and share evidence of student learning with Consortium members;
- Participate in the online community of practice by sharing their experiences and resources with other Consortium institutions;
- Participate in webinars, conference calls, or other activities to share information;
- Provide a final written report describing the outcome of the project, including a reflection on the successes and disappointments of the experience with possible recommendations for future projects; and
- Identify the funded activities as supported by CIC and the Teagle Foundation in all project materials and publicity.

## *Timeline*

January 20, 2012	Applications Due
February 20, 2012	Selection of Participating Teams Announced
Spring 2012	Special Topics Webinar #1
August 5–7, 2012	Consortium Meeting in Washington, DC
Fall 2012	Special Topics Webinar #2

October 15, 2012	Interim Report and Campus Grant Application Due
November 2012	Special Topics Webinar #3
October–November 2012	Campus Project Grants Disbursed
Winter 2013	Special Topics Webinar #4
Spring 2013	Special Topics Webinar #5
July 1, 2013	Final Report on Campus Project Due

## *Application Instructions*

Interested CIC member colleges and universities should submit an application with supporting materials to CIC by **January 20, 2012**. Each institution should make its case for participation in the CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium based on the challenges and strategic priorities that it faces, the relevance of the project to those challenges and priorities, and the potential contribution the institution can make to advancing the concept that outcomes assessment data can and should be used to improve student learning outcomes. The application should explain how the team will carry out a campus project that will use outcomes assessment data to inform modifications in curriculum or student support in ways that lead to improved student learning, and a proposed timeline for the project.

The application consists of four parts: (a) a cover letter from the president, (b) a completed application form that includes a listing of the institution's proposed team members, (c) a two-page narrative describing the proposed project and covering the elements listed below, and (d) a one-page project plan and timeline for implementing the project. The completed application with supporting materials should be submitted by email or printed and sent by fax or mail to CIC at the address listed below by January 20, 2012.

### **A. Cover Letter**

A cover letter from the president should indicate the institution's support of the application and commitment to the project goals, activities, and implementation.

### **B. Application Form and Team Description**

On the application form that follows, please identify the three team members and briefly describe why each person was selected for the team and what contribution each will make to the project. Teams normally will consist of a senior academic administrator, preferably the chief academic officer; a faculty leader with strong commitment to outcomes assessment and student learning, such as the chair of the campus assessment committee or curriculum committee; and the faculty member or administrator with the primary responsibility for assessment implementation and analyses of data on student learning.

### **C. Project Narrative**

In no more than two pages, please describe the specific project you propose to complete at your institution. The description should address the following:

- Describe your institution's outcomes assessment protocol or plan and describe your proposed project.

- Discuss why this project was selected and how this project complements your institution's outcome assessment protocol or plan.
- Describe how your campus project helps the institution improve its understanding of student learning.
- Articulate the goals and expected outcomes of your project.
- Identify how you will measure success in meeting the goals of the project.
- Discuss how the project will benefit your institution, and how your institution's participation in the CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium will benefit the institution.

#### **D. Project Plan and Timeline**

In no more than one page, please describe the specific plan and timeline for your campus project. The description should include specific action steps and a timeline for the successful completion of the project. Preference will be given to projects that can be carried out in full between March 2012 and June 2013.

## *Application Submission*

Please send as one package the completed application form, along with a cover letter of support from the president, the project narrative (no more than two pages), and project plan and timeline (one page) by January 20, 2012 to:

**CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium**  
 Council of Independent Colleges  
 One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 320  
 Washington, DC 20036-1142  
 Fax: (202) 466-7238  
 Email: *EngagingEvidence@cic.nche.edu*

## *Questions?*

For questions about the CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium and application procedures, please contact CIC Senior Advisor Mary Ann Coughlin at *mcoughlin@cic.nche.edu*.

# *CIC Engaging Evidence Consortium*

## APPLICATION FORM

Application Deadline: January 20, 2012

Name of Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please provide the names, titles, and contact information for the three team members from your institution, along with a brief explanation of what each team member will contribute to the project.*

### 1. Chief Academic Officer or Other Senior Academic Leader

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Faculty Leader

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Assessment Officer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please send as one package (a) the completed application form, (b) a cover letter of support from the president, (c) the project narrative (no more than two pages), and (d) a project plan and timeline (one page) by **January 20, 2012** to:*

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