

# Perspectives/Key Issues on Evaluation: An Illinois Case Study on Use and Efficiency

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# The Illinois Context

- Eight Area Centers on campus
  - African Studies
  - East Asian and Pacific
  - European Union
  - Global Studies
  - International Business Education and Research
  - Latin American and Caribbean
  - Russian, East European and Eurasian
  - South Asian and Middle Eastern
- International Programs and Studies/Provost's Office

# Evaluation History

- Prior to 2003, each Center did its own internal evaluation on a shoestring:
  - IRIS
  - Demographics and satisfaction
- Some Centers had limited external advisory/expert review
- Evaluation done to serve external mandate
- Annually burdensome to centers, units, and campus.

# Paradigm Shift

- Prior to 2003 submission, Center Directors asked me to meet with them to help plan evaluation sections of their proposals
- Through discussions it became clear that:
  - Although their activities differed somewhat, there was a significant common core;
  - Evaluation resources and capacity at the individual center level were inadequate;
  - External expert review varied in rigor across Centers;
  - Use of evaluation information was minimal.

# Paradigm Shift: Joint Evaluation

- The regular meetings focused on evaluation were viewed as productive
  - Centers began to see new connections and efficiencies
  - The Campus began to see the Centers collectively as a campus asset
- The group began to warm to the idea of a joint evaluation effort.

# Advantages to Joint Evaluation

- Pooled resources to hire experienced evaluator (.50 FTE GRA/AP) increased rigor and reduced burden on Centers and Units
- Unified Theory of Action/Logic Model promoted coherence and communication among Center
- Common core of instruments and standardized data collection and reporting permitted aggregation and comparison across Centers
- Regular meetings with evaluator promoted use and built evaluation capacity

Joint evaluation allows for reporting at the campus level, answering the question:

“What is the impact of the Title VI Centers on the campus, the community, the state and the nation?”

# Challenges to Centralization

- Other evaluation commitments;
- Concern about revealing Center weaknesses or fostering comparisons across Centers;
- Maintaining the common core while tailoring the evaluation to reflect uniqueness of each Center;
- Meeting the timelines and needs of 9 clients in a single evaluation!

# Evaluation Framework

- Comprehensive, Goal Oriented
- Formative—guide improvement
- Summative—annual and long term goals and outcomes
- Common measures and longitudinal tracking allow for long term impact on undergraduate, graduate and professional training programs and the institution as a whole.

# Evaluation Framework (cont'd)

- Quantitative
  - Faculty, Student, Participant and Alumni Surveys
  - Language and content testing
  - Enrollment
  - Graduation and employment data
- Qualitative
  - Interviews
  - Observations
  - Document review

# Evaluation Framework (cont'd)

## ■ Internal and External

- As a means of increasing efficiency, building evaluation capacity, and promoting use, Center and IPS staff and GAs share in responsibility for data collection, analysis and interpretation
- DeStefano and Burke oversee and audit the quality of internal evaluation, conduct independent data collection and analyses, develop findings and recommendations and author reports
- Advisory and Executive Committees, SLL Language Coordinator, Associate Provost, OMSA and others are involved routinely in evaluation activities, reporting and response.

# Evaluation Components

- Common Instruments and Data Collection
  - FLAS Fellows and Alumni Surveys
  - Faculty Survey
  - Language Testing and Survey
  - Outreach event survey (with item bank)
  - Shared Title VI FLAS and language database
- Center Specific Evaluation Activities
- Reporting
  - Informal reports; Center report; Cross-Center report
- Monthly evaluation meetings

# CORE Evaluation Questions

1. Do the Center's activities and training programs significantly **impact the university, community, region and nation**?
2. Does the Center provide equal access and treatment to eligible project participants that are **members of underrepresented groups**?
3. Do the Center's language instructional programs and curricula address national needs; are they of high quality; and are they producing the **next generation of language specialists and international experts**?
4. Does the Center demonstrate a significant and measurable local, regional and national impact on **1) K-12 teachers and students; 2) post-secondary instructors; 3) business, media and general public**?
5. Does the Center demonstrate both short and long term impacts on **Illinois' undergraduate, graduate and professional programs**?
6. How and to what extent does the **consortium** increase the cost effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Center?

# Lessons Learned

- Joint evaluation of Title VI Centers on our campus has resulted in:
  - Increased efficiency and cost effectiveness
  - Reduced redundancy and burden
  - More rigorous and comprehensive evaluations
  - Greater evaluation capacity and use
  - More interaction and coordination among Centers
  - Ability to assess and communicate the impact of Centers on campus
  - Better programming!