

## **Proposal for Center for Intercultural Learning, Mentoring and Research (CILMAR)**

### Introduction

We propose the creation of CILMAR within International Programs to build upon the already existing efforts promoting intercultural learning among international students and American students. We seek no funding for this initiative as we intend to reallocate internal resources, as well as compete for and win external funding. We will apply a cutting-edge approach, grounded in learning-outcomes research, active-learning techniques, and reliable and valid assessment techniques. Our center will centralize intercultural programming, training, research, grant writing and mentoring under one roof, an unparalleled achievement in US higher education.

### Rationale

Why is this important? Our own future is now shared with others who are different from ourselves in values, priorities, and assumptions. Simply discussing or knowing cultural differences in food, dress, music, art, dance, language, and festivals is insufficient. Our future now depends not only on our own self-awareness of the cultural lens through which we make meaning when facing diversity or cultural differences, but it also depends on the mandate to increase awareness of the lens of others who are culturally different and diverse.

Our center's central goal is the development of behavioral interpersonal intercultural competence in Purdue students in partnership with the faculty, staff and community members who support their curricular and co-curricular learning. We desire for intercultural adeptness to become as well-known an element of the Boilermaker identity as are technical and scientific virtuosity. In pursuit of this vision, we will implement best practices in on-campus and off-campus intercultural learning, so that all students, regardless of income level, major, family background, national origin or ethnicity develop the ability to work effectively and appropriately with culturally different others.

Purdue is a leader in developing and providing global design team experiences, including multi-university student teams and global professional internship experiences (e.g. via the GEARE program). Also, Purdue was funded by NSF to create globalhub.org, which supports Engineering Cultures © courseware to facilitate interactions of these global teams. These semester-long, face-to-face projects compel effective cross-cultural communications for success, but the experiences are only available to a limited number of students. While it would be fortunate if short term and/or less immersive experiences could produce global competency, research over the last 15 years or so has repeatedly shown that simply putting students in the vicinity of culturally different others is not, in and of itself, an effective method of building the interpersonal skills of intercultural competence. Without intercultural mentoring, it is in fact rare that a college student masters the skills of openness, communication, empathy, curiosity, teamwork, and other appropriate behaviors in the presence of cultural diversity. SERU and Gallup-Purdue data indicate that our international students and minority students are less likely to feel that they belong at Purdue, less likely to report that they received mentoring support and have lower post-college career engagement and life satisfaction. Infusing intercultural competence into the Boilermaker identity will contribute to increased retention rates, engagement with others, and the long-term impact of a Purdue education.

### Uniqueness

The US higher education landscape is rich in Centers for Intercultural (or Global or International) Learning which are in fact centers for intercultural experience. They focus primarily on increasing participation in study abroad and/or local-global community service. Rarely do any of them focus on the joint on-campus intercultural learning needs occasioned by combining America's domestic cultural diversity with incoming perspectives of students from other nations.

Purdue is unique and is well positioned to create this center. CILMAR has the potential to become the leader in US higher education. There is no other institution like Purdue that has the following combination:

- skills-based definition of intercultural competence in its core curriculum,
- commitment to an evidence-based vision of developmental intercultural competence for 100% of their Engineering students,
- commitment to an evidence-based leadership skills development initiative for all incoming first-year students,
- commitment to an evidence-based intercultural skills training program for staff and faculty
- 15 years of experience administering more than a 1000 IDI assessments

Yet despite our uniqueness we do not have a cohesive plan to systematically implement intercultural competence on a broad scale. This center would accomplish this task and become the hub for the development of intercultural learning and intentional pedagogy; a hub for learning, research, assessment, and also grant writing, with coordinated efforts with all Purdue colleges and schools

Following the Purdue model of the IMPACT project and the Teaching Academy, we propose to have Faculty Fellows who will, as part of their period of fellowship, work on publishable action-research projects that connect their discipline to outcomes-based intercultural learning and to potential external sponsors and co-investors in the program. We furthermore initially aspire to accomplish the following goals:

- 1) Create action plans to liaise with each Purdue college/school, beginning with the College of Engineering, to promote student intercultural learning and to assist faculty to further develop intercultural mentorship skills.
- 2) Collaborate with Student Success and Learning Community professionals to upgrade staff capacity to offer *intercultural* leadership development programs within students' daily residential life experiences.
- 3) Pursue large research projects with other universities, preferably within the Big Ten Academic Alliance, that will advance intercultural learning and assessment.
- 4) Analyze the case for establishing a peer-researched journal on Innovation in Intercultural Learning, Teaching and Mentoring.
- 5) Secure donors for a challenge-grant project for undergraduates, similar to the Davis Projects for Peace, with a focus on putting into practice the skills of Empathy, Communication, Openness, Teamwork and Leadership.
- 6) Coordinate and promulgate the use of Gradient to create a repository of peer-reviewing excellence which allows students to 'grade' others' written intercultural reflections in large-enrollment courses or co-curricular programs which teach (for example) diversity, teamwork, leadership and/or communication.
- 7) Create an annual action-research forum that would go beyond the current WISE Conference on Intercultural Learning hosted by Wake Forest University.

### Summary

For reasons outlined in this document we seek formal approval for the creation of CILMAR to become a recognized center at the University. We seek no funding for this initiative. We will reallocate internal resources, and generate external support, to be even more strategic in our intercultural work.