SPECA Proposal - Evaluation Plan Development

In addition to the expected outcomes outlined in the SPECA RFA:

a) The evaluation may also include assessment of other outcomes, particularly if the project aims to change organizational structures, create cost-efficiencies, or achieve other ends. Explain the data gathering procedures that will be used to monitor and assess progress toward intended project goals. When describing the measurement instruments you plan to use (surveys, interviews, focus groups, assessments of e-portfolios or capstone projects, measures of class performance, scores on standardized tests, cost-benefit analyses, etc.), be sure to mention why they are appropriate to gauging success.

b) The evaluation plan section should make a convincing case to reviewers that - at the conclusion of the grant - the grantee could report the extent to which learning and engagement outcomes, professional development goals, and/or organizational outcomes have been achieved. Reviewers will be looking for evidence that the applicant thought about how to measure what worked, what did not work as planned, and what adjustments could be made to enhance program outcomes in the future. Collection of this evidence is critical to achieving SPECA's goal of making data about educational improvements and innovation available to the education community. An evaluation plan that only indicates a desire to develop assessment measures once the project is underway, and an eventual description of resulting project activities and outcomes, would be considered a poorly prepared and inadequate evaluation plan.

c) The project budget should contain funding to either hire an outside project evaluator, or to present convincing evidence that an appropriate evaluator is already on staff and available to provide assistance with assessment and evaluation throughout the life of the project. As a guide, up to 10 percent of grant funds may be used to support this purpose. The following activities are examples of items that may be included in the Evaluation Plan: project objectives that lend themselves most readily to measurement and evaluation, baseline assessment data and a planned collection process from a possible comparison or control group, possible measurement instruments (surveys, student journals, standardized tests, interviews, focus groups, analysis of e-portfolios or capstone projects, cost-benefit analyses, etc.), a strategy for what assessment measures will be a part of the annual and final Project Performance Reports (Part VI. D.) and how this information will eventually be disseminated to interested parties and to the public.

d) Finally, the Evaluation Plan itself should contain measures of (1) student learning or engagement and/or faculty professional development and (2) the number of students or faculty impacted by your project as a result of the proposed activities. In addition, the PD should specify metrics summarizing who benefited the most (and the least) from your project, an explanation of what revisions, improvements, or enhancements you would make, funding permitting, to increase the value of this project in the future, and ideas about how to make projects like yours more cost-effective. These, and other funded project assessments determined by the project director and evaluation team should be reported both annually and in the final performance report (Part VI. D.).

The following, suggested evaluation examples are derived from the Department of Education's Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007, Education Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics.

"To demonstrate progress toward increasing the number of graduates, the following metric is suggested: first provide baseline data for the year preceding the grant award showing the number and/or percentage of students who declare and/or complete a major program of study of agriscience or agribusiness within your unit; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data. List the expected number of students benefiting from this project and their level of education, a table is recommended.

To demonstrate progress toward increasing the quality of instruction, the following metric is suggested: first provide baseline data for the year preceding the grant award showing the current number and/or percentage of graduates who either graduate and pursue a vocation in the [FANH] sciences, or who pursue advanced degrees within the [FANH] sciences; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data".

Suggested resources to obtain quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data for comparison purposes; postsecondary institutions may find appropriate: information in the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) at: http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/ , and from the publication: Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Renewable Energy, and the Environment United States, 2010-2015 at: http://www.ag.purdue.edu/usda/employment/pages/default.aspx. Other, similar sources may also be consulted.

Additional Resources for Project Evaluation:

NSF 02-057: The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, a basic guide to quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods for educational projects
http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/start.htm

Field-Tested Learning Assessment Guide (FLAG): This website is designed for Science, Math, Engineering, and Technology Instructors who are interested in new approaches to evaluating student learning, attitudes, and performance. It has a primer on assessment and evaluation, classroom assessment techniques, discipline-specific tools, and resources - all in a searchable, downloadable data base, http://www.flaguide.org

American Evaluation Association. Online Resources: http://www.eval.org/