**Student Affairs Learning Improvement Application**

Please complete the application below to apply for the learning improvement initiative with Student Affairs Support Services ([SASS](https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/FacultyStaff/StudentAffairs/About.shtml)) within the Center for Assessment and Research Studies ([CARS](https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/index.shtml)). This initiative is a partnership between SASS and the Division of Student Affairs to focus on the improvement of student learning and development.

At Madison, we value improvement of learning and development, which can be accomplished by well-thought-out programming and assessment. In turn, a complete and coherent application is a first step to making such initiatives successful. **Applications are due May 15th**.

There are two options for when programs may begin the project: Summer or Fall. In the application, you will be asked to indicate whether you plan to begin the project in the Summer or Fall. Please select a starting date that best aligns with your office schedule. **Selected programs will be notified by May 31st**.

Please select one starting date: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer

\_\_\_\_\_ Fall Semester

Although several application questions will ask you to describe previous assessment results and previous improvement efforts, programs will not be selected based on the number of years they have conducted assessment or demonstrated improvement. **Rather, programs will be selected based on readiness and commitment to a long-term improvement process**. Up to 2 programs will be selected per year based on their readiness and commitment.

Should any questions arise while completing this application, you may contact SASS (SASS@jmu.edu).

Once completed, submit your application to the co-chairs (Sarah Sunde, sundesa@jmu.edu; Kathleen Campbell, campbekl@jmu.edu) of the [Student Affairs Assessment Advisory Council](https://www.jmu.edu/studentaffairs/staff-resources/saac/index.shtml) for review.

In this section, please provide general information about your program. Responses are meant to be **short**, as you will have the opportunity to provide more detail in the sections below.

1. **Program Overview**
2. Name of applicant’s office:

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1. Name of program of interest:

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1. Purpose of the program (1 paragraph max):

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1. Number of students who complete the program:

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1. Number of staff members who facilitate the program:

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1. Point person/primary overseer of the program:

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**II. Current Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

The goal of this section is to ensure your office is well acquainted with the assessment process. We find that offices that have carefully thought about programming and assessment are in a better position to make improvements. In the space below, please provide a **brief** summary of the program of interest. In your summary, please include 1) your student learning and development outcomes; 2) a **general/broad** description of the programming in which students are provided the opportunity to learn or develop; and 3) the procedures used to assess whether the desired outcomes are actually being met. Careful consideration of these questions is crucial to the success of a learning improvement project. Please address 1, 2, and 3 within 1 to 2 pages maximum:

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You may want to improve learning/development related to all outcomes. However, for this partnership, you will need to **select 1 or 2** learning/development outcomes on which to focus. These outcomes should be sufficiently important to warrant the ample resources that will be devoted to improving all related programming and assessment activities.

**III. Focus of Partnership with SASS**

The most crucial information you will provide in this section concerns the **program theory** that guides your program. In other words, how was your programming *intentionally designed* to achieve the student learning and development outcomes you’ve decided to focus on for this partnership? Programs that have not given this considerable thought will find it difficult to engage in a learning improvement initiative.

1. Student learning/development outcome(s) **selected** for the improvement initiative (1 or 2):

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1. Description of **why** these outcomes were selected for the learning improvement initiative. Why are these outcomes important to your department? (1-2 paragraphs):

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1. Description of why these outcomes are important to JMU (1 paragraph):

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1. Description of the specific programming (curriculum, pedagogy, intervention, etc.) used to provide students with an opportunity to meet the **selected outcome(s) only**. An objective-to-curriculum map should be included as part of this description (may be attached as an appendix):

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1. Describe *how* this programming is expected to result in the desired student learning/development outcome(s). In other words, please explain the logic behind why certain program features were chosen to achieve the selected outcomes. This is often referred to as program theory or logic. If you are unfamiliar with these terms, please watch [this short introductory video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nw5TsRw6Eo&feature=youtu.be) before constructing your response (1 page max). If you need support using program logic to develop curriculum/programming, please visit JMU’s Center for Faculty Innovation (CFI):

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1. Summarize the results of previous assessment related to the selected outcomes (1 page max):

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**IV. Action Plan**

In this section, you will be asked to consider why the student learning/development outcomes you selected are not being met and propose possible strategies for addressing these obstacles.

1. For each selected outcome, provide an explanation/hypothesis about why current programming is not supporting student learning/development to the degree you desire (1-2 page max):

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1. Prior to this new partnership with SASS, have you tried to ***improve*** student learning/development related to these outcomes? If so, please describe the improvement initiatives. Have those initiatives been successful? (1 page max):

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1. Based on your answers to the questions above, what changes to a) your programming and b) your assessment processes do you believe are necessary to demonstrate improvements in student learning/development?

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1. Provide a detailed timeline that articulates your plan to improve student learning/development to the degree you desire. This timeline should include 1) whether you plan to begin this work in Summer or Fall, 2) plans to initially assess the program, 3) plans to make programmatic changes, and 4) plans to re-assess the program:

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One of the most important resources needed to evidence student learning improvement is time. As such, **each program will commit 10 hours per week to the initiative**. This amount of time is necessary to think critically about the program, collect evidence regarding student learning and development, and engage in evidence-based, intentional program redesign. By committing this time up front, programs will be able to distribute other responsibilities accordingly.

**V. Commitment to Partnership**

1. Weekly Time Commitment (10 hours/week)

Please select a Lead Coordinator who will serve as the primary contact and chief overseer of the initiative. This person may choose to commit all ten hours each week, or assemble a team to share the workload. *Note: Graduate assistants may lend support where needed, but most decisions/discussions will require extensive familiarity with the program over several years, an understanding of the program theory/logic behind the program, knowledge of departmental resources, and a level of authority beyond what most graduate students possess. As such, graduate assistants may not serve as lead coordinators and should contribute less than 1/3 of the total hours spent on the initiative each week.*

1. Support from Direct Supervisor (1 hour/week)

Regular contributions from upper-level administrators are crucial to the long-term success of a learning improvement initiative and, in turn, the future of the program. Direct Supervisor, please sign below to indicate **a commitment of 1 hour per week** to the learning improvement project detailed in this application. This time may be spent in whatever manner is most helpful to the program.

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| Lead Coordinator: | | | | | |
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| (Name) |  | (Signature) | |  | (Date) |
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| Other Team Members (names only; no signatures required): | | | | | |
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| Direct Supervisor (1 hour commitment each week): | | | | |
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| (Name) |  | (Signature) |  | (Date) |

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| Director: | | | | |
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| (Name) |  | (Signature) |  | (Date) |