Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Proposal for a

Professional Development Center

Jacksonville State University
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Background and Needs

Jacksonville State University is committed to improving teaching and learning to ensure that graduates are prepared for the 21st century. The purpose of this proposal is to enhance the learning environment through the development of a Professional Development Center (PDC) which will support the mission of the university. For the purpose of the proposal, the term, PDC, will be used, however, it is anticipated that the center will be called the Faculty Commons upon implementation. The university is moving toward the development of online courses and faculty need to be trained to design the courses using instructional design strategies in their content delivery. Many faculty have never designed nor taught an online course. Faculty has expertise in content but frequently lack training in teaching. The PDC is planned to assist faculty in the design and delivery of their courses. There are three components in the plan to assist faculty as they become more familiar with technology and online instruction: 1) Instructional design is key for planning, improving teaching strategies, and best practices. 2) Mentoring of faculty is the cohesive element that will inspire faculty to improve teaching (online, hybrid and traditional) and encourage faculty to use the newest technological innovations. 3) Professional development will facilitate the use of best practices which is crucial to bring about course design change. Instructional design training, mentoring and professional development of faculty results in ultimate benefits for enhancing student learning.

Instructional Design

Instructional design provides structure in how courses are designed to integrate technology for effective instruction. The steps in the instructional design process provide a comprehensive look at possible strategies to enhance student learning. According to Kemp, Morrison and Ross (1998), the role of instructional design is "to illustrate how to plan, develop, evaluate, and manage the instructional process effectively so that it will ensure competent performance in students…It is based on what we know about learning theories, information technology, systems analysis and management methods"(p.2-3). This

approach to instruction is based on the perspective of the learner rather than the perspective of the content. The instructional process is based on nine elements: 1) instructional problems, 2) learner characteristics, 3) subject content, 4) instructional objectives, 5) sequence content, 6) instructional strategies, 7) instructional message and delivery, 8) evaluation and 9)resources. Since JSU has identified the goal of being a learning-centered university in its Strategic Plan, instructional design fits the concept perfectly in how instruction will be designed in the PDC. Faculty using instructional design principles can expect the following benefits:

- Evidence of successful learning while finding the experience satisfying and pleasant.

- Accomplishment of program objectives by learners.

- Evidence of achievement of learning outcomes.

- Improvement of relationships with learners.

- Enhancement of student learning.

Instructional design training will increase goal attainment for both faculty and students. It will foster a positive attitude of faculty toward their subject and will promote better study habits of students.

Mentoring

This proposal supports the Jacksonville State University Strategic Plan to make the university learning-centered. For example, The Definition of a Learning Centered University at JSU in *the Strategic Plan 2011-2016* for Jacksonville State University states, "Faculty will use various methods of teaching to meet different learning styles." The plan identifies and outlines core values and strategic objectives to become a learning-centered university. Core values include quality teaching to enhance student learning, academic excellence, building effective relationships and communication paths, enhanced use of and access to current technology and continuous improvement. In the strategic objectives, "Objective 4. Increase collaboration to better serve undergraduate students", objective 4.3 states: "Establish a Professional Development Center for JSU employees." The PDC will serve as a support structure and resource for the academic growth of students through faculty..

This proposal will also support accreditation for the university as outlined in *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. The document provides comprehensive standards which are specific to university operations. It provides and identifies program requirements representing best practice in higher education and establishes a level of accomplishment expected by the accrediting agency. Within the requirements to programs, in section 3.4 Educational Programs: All Educational Programs, item 3.4.12 states, "The institution's use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. (Technology use)." Item 3.4.2 states: "The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the university's mission (Continuing education/service programs)". Through faculty training in instructional design, mentoring and professional development, students will have access to more technology and be trained in its use. Section 3.7 Faculty in the Comprehensive Standards, item 3.7.3 states, "The institution provides ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. (Faculty development)."

Mentoring Benefits for Faculty. Little research is available on how to prepare faculty to teach in an online format (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). The asynchronous online learning environment is frustrating for many faculty members (Mandernach, Donnelli, Dailey & Schulte, 2005). University teaching is a continually evolving process. A mentoring program is necessary for improvement in instructional skills and practices and will allow faculty to develop effective teaching skills more quickly. A mentoring program will eliminate trial and error, lessen classroom management problems, and allow faculty to focus more on instructional practices. Faculty involved in mentoring programs report that mentoring refines and improves their teaching skills and leads to renewed and increased job satisfaction and retention.

Mentoring Benefits to the University. A small number of faculty members are fully trained in the proper development and implementation of distance learning courses. Inexperienced instructors are among the most common reasons students in online classes give for dropping a course (Irani, 2001). The university and individual faculty members present their credentials as experts in their field, but may lack a

formal foundation in teaching/technology necessary to develop and administer various course formats effectively. Failure to provide adequate training to access and use current technology places the faculty member in a situation of being dependent on another to deliver subject matter, undermining their professional authority (Marek, 2009).

Professional Development.

Professional development for faculty is key to the success of the university's strategic plan. A professional development program at JSU should include methods to provide faculty mentoring and training in order to meet the goals and objectives established for the University in the *Strategic Plan 2011-2016*. The training program will focus on various ranges of knowledge and technological skills for faculty who are at different developmental stages. Across campus, technologies are discipline specific. Many faculty members are inadequately prepared to use technology in the classroom and need training to show them how to adapt their teaching style to include technology. A professional development program is necessary to train faculty to use technology and to integrate it into their courses.

Professional development training will result in more confident employees, which will enhance student achievement. A professional development program for faculty will provide benefits for the university. Benefits identified by Bland, Taylor, Shollen, Weber-Main & Mulcahy (2009) included increased employee retention, elimination of problems earlier in the school year, increased faculty attendance at professional development training workshops, and increased collegiality and sharing among teaching faculty. A mentoring program will improve the university's ability to recruit talented faculty and decrease faculty turnover.

Approach to Establishing a Professional Development Center

JSU's mission statement clearly indicates the desire to produce academically prepared graduates for global engagement in leadership. This effort is demonstrated by fostering a learning environment with relevant programs of study supported by educational technologies. The PDC will be a comprehensive program of excellence promoting faculty success and assist the university in achieving the established

mission and goals. Students will benefit when faculty succeed. The PDC is directly linked to the University's strategic goals and objectives.

The PDC will have an administrative structure and be staffed with a newly-hired full-time Instructional Designer for this project. The designer will be dedicated to research, implementation, and faculty support for learning-centered course design and for the university community at large. The instructional designer for the FDC will be in addition to the two being hired and Carey Smouse, currently working in that position. The instructional designer will meet regularly and maintain faculty contact to provide systematic instruction via workshops, seminars, and individual training along with troubleshooting, providing assistance and monitoring progress to faculty across campus. The Colleges of Nursing & Health Sciences, Education & Professional Studies, and Arts & Sciences will pilot a total of three courses (1 per college) during the first two years of implementation. After piloting the courses, the PDC will provide services to all colleges campus-wide. It is recommended at the end of the five-year plan that a Director of the PDC be hired by the university to oversee the facility. At that time, the name of the facility will be called Faculty Commons.

During the first year's planning, the team leader, instructional designer, and other faculty partners will travel to visit other successfully established units with similar goals at other regional universities. Consulting services may be utilized as a strategy to successfully implement the PDC. Travel, attendance at appropriate conferences or professional organization meetings, and participation in webinars or other related training will be pursued. After the first year of training, participating faculty members will be identified to conduct additional research, mentor other faculty, provide orientations and training sessions, build and lead learning communities, and pilot learning-centered instructional strategies in traditional, online, and hybrid classrooms for others in their colleges.

Communication and cultural diversity will be fostered in all areas of the PDC. Currently predictions are that the United States will become 50% more diverse by 2020 (Gardner, 2005). Faculty must learn to communicate with peers and students of diverse cultural backgrounds more effectively.. Additionally, faculty must learn to communicate with students in ways other than face-to-face.

According to Kolowich (2011), "Faculty have to realize that if they do not reach out in some way, there is going to be a gap in their ability to deliver messages in a way that students are comfortable receiving" (p. 3). Most students communicate via text messaging, email, and through social media sites such as Facebook. More faculty need to use varied approaches in order to build bridges to the alternate avenues of communication students are using. Workshops will be offered on communication, cultural competence and diversity for faculty. These workshops will bridge the communication gap between faculty and students.

The Importance of Instructional Design in Promoting Excellence at JSU.

The PDC will focus on providing enhanced course design for faculty as they work toward improving teaching strategies, developing mentoring structures to support change, and establishing professional development workshops to train faculty to provide exemplary instruction. A congruent curriculum template for consistency to facilitate student success will be implemented. The use of current educational technologies will be stressed.

Consistency is critical to facilitating student success; therefore, instructional designers will work with faculty to ensure consistency within all courses by developing curriculum templates, orientation modules, outcome-based evaluations and interdisciplinary content as an instructional foundation for exemplary courses (AAAS, 2011). The ability to offer interdisciplinary courses (such as bioinformatics) will open new perspectives for JSU students. The sciences of biology, chemistry, and physics are seen as separate disciplines. Interdisciplinary courses will blur the lines between sciences to the benefit of students.

Additionally, all colleges within the PDC will create consistent templates for course syllabi, calendars, and curriculum maps. According to Diamond (2008), "A learning-centered syllabus can improve learning and, at the same time, avoid many of the frustrations caused by poor communication…your syllabus will demonstrate the interplay of your understanding of students' needs and interest, your beliefs and assumptions about the nature of learning and education, and your values and

interest concerning course content and structure" (p. 285). Consistency within a college will result in the communication of clearer expectations for students.

Instructional designers will work closely with faculty to ensure course content is reflective of course outcomes, goals, and objectives. Teaching and learning using instructional design principles along with a learning-centered approach will be emphasized. Educational technologies will be fostered in the PDC as they are important in the facilitation of successful student learning. Diamond (2008) cited the following reasons to use technology in instruction including: enhanced learning, increased enjoyment and engagement, strengthened job relevance, improved quality of teaching, increased quantity of technological innovations, and improved access.

The Importance of Faculty Mentoring in Promoting Excellence at JSU.

The goal of the PDC and the mentoring system component is to increase student success by linking new faculty with senior colleagues, providing the new faculty member with an opportunity for career success. The goal for experienced faculty is to encourage and enrich their understanding and ability to mentor each other. A mentoring effort benefits the faculty member (mentee), the mentor, and the university. The mentee gains: (a) assistance in understanding the structure and culture of the university and individual departments, b) individual encouragement, (c) constructive criticism and feedback, (d) advice on responsibilities/professional priorities, (e) professional networking, and (f) opportunities for collaborative projects. The mentors gain: (a) satisfaction of helping the professional growth and development of faculty members, (b) collaboration, feedback and interaction with a junior faculty member, (c) a network of former mentee's, and (d) expanded networks of colleagues and collaborators (WSU, 2012).

Successful mentors are generally influential and experienced faculty members who are familiar with the university system. Mentors are mature or recognized teachers/scholars in their field. Mentors will be interested in the mentee's professional growth and development, be willing to commit time and attention to the relationship, be willing to give honest feedback, and be willing to act on behalf of the

mentee. Tenured faculty members are encouraged to volunteer to be mentors and to serve on mentor committees (WSU, 2012).

The University gains: a) increased productivity and commitment among the faculty, b) decreased attrition among faculty, c) increased collaboration among colleagues, d) increased understanding and respect among faculty, and e) an enhanced university environment that promotes collegiality. The mentoring effort at JSU will assume a variety of forms and serve a number of specific objectives. These objectives are defined as the following: (a) assistance with setting long-term goals (b) advice for setting priorities and developing a professional profile; (c) identifying strategies for avoiding pitfalls; (d) assistance in identifying sources of external support; (e) development of professional networks; (f) feedback on progress toward professional independence; (g) increased communication and prevention of isolation of new faculty (WSU, 2012).

The Importance of Professional Development in Promoting Excellence at JSU

JSU is experiencing an increased demand for faculty to be receptive and flexible to the teaching/learning environment for online, hybrid and traditional classrooms. Promotion of a culture of academic excellence is believed to be a necessary component in achieving positive student outcomes. Institutions of higher education are faced with the challenge of engaging students in active learning experiences and promoting an atmosphere that fosters a learning-centered environment. Engagement in lifelong learning opportunities and professional development of faculty members are a priority for institutions of higher education that value a culture of academic excellence (Fielden, 1998).

Academic excellence is considered to be a key factor in improving the public's perception of graduates. This atmosphere facilitates effective problem solving abilities and successful decision-making. The local community's perception of graduates is vital for continued respect and market growth. Therefore, curriculum content must reflect societal demands, be relevant from employer perspectives, and successfully prepare graduates to be productive members of society. The challenges to meet the growing demands and need for a PDC will be immense for the administration at JSU.. There must be a shift from conservatory approaches to one of embracing change and innovation (Fielden, 1998).

Promoting Academic Excellence in the Teaching and Learning Environment

Professional development training for faculty can significantly impact a learning-centered environment. Involvement in continuing education workshops, collaborative learning experiences and sharing of ideas are approaches that institutions of higher education can consider to embrace a culture of academic excellence. According to World Bank (1994), effective teachers who are highly motivated are essential to building a culture of academic excellence. Knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) within specific professions constantly change. As KSA increase in the professional community, it becomes imperative for faculty members to remain engaged in lifelong learning activities that foster competency in the discipline they teach. Diversity in learning styles supports the need for continued professional development in teaching/learning strategies, educational technology, and andragogical/pedagogical learning theories. Instructional design principles and teaching methodologies play a key role in assuring that courses are exemplary and thorough. Faculty members play a crucial role in assisting students to achieve educational goals and in facilitating a culture of academic excellence (Fielden, 1998).

The teaching and learning environment is an ever-changing landscape as technology, the wants and needs of society, and the influence of various cultures impact the student and faculty on our campus. No longer can silent classrooms, with rows of desks in straight lines, and a two hour lecture by the professor meet the growing needs of our student population. How can JSU create a teaching and learning environment that will promote academic excellence? How do we develop and use professional practices that enhance the success of the students we serve? According to Dufour and Marzano (2011), "the answer lies within effective professional development that focuses improvement efforts on building collective capacity of educators to meet the challenges they face" (p.19). This process creates the conditions for educators to become the solutions to those challenges. Professional development must become not just an event that we attend, but it must become a process. Teachers must continually grow and learn about the practice of teaching (Harwell, 2003).

Professional development can have a positive impact on faculty teaching practice whether it is teaching on-line, hybrid, or traditional courses. It introduces new knowledge in the areas of educational

technology, promoting active engagement strategies, problem based learning, and adult learning theory. Additionally, it influences participants to engage in reflection of current teaching practices and the student learning that has or has not occurred in their classes. According to Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline (2004), "a competent system serves the end of enhanced achievement for all students" (p.1). Effective professional development can lead teachers to transform their individual classrooms and impact the campus to create a culture of continuous improvement.

Promoting Excellence through an Outcome-Based Approach to Curriculum Development

Professional development should also lead the faculty to examine the curriculum and standards being taught. Reflective professional development is the catalysts for outcome-based change in curriculum. Marzano (2003) reveals characteristics of a viable and guaranteed curriculum as opportunities of the teacher to reflect upon the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the attained curriculum. Professional development assists with the task of assessment of curriculum, development of action steps for change and provides instruction with a more definite purpose in mind.

Promoting Professional Excellence through Professional Learning Communities

According to Schlechty (2009), "a learning community is a group of people who personally interact, face to face or electronically, and are bound together by the pursuit of common questions, problems or issues. They are joined together with the purpose of sharing what they have learned or sharing a common learning experience" (p. 114). The PDC has the potential for creating a professional learning community culture and an innovative way of thinking about teaching and learning. It breaks down the barrier of isolation that many teachers feel in their classroom and promotes the community of learners into a collaborative spirit with relationships built on trust and mutual respect.

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Key Personnel

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Key Personnel for this proposal will allow the planning, designing of instruction, mentoring and professional development of faculty members :

One Instructional Designer, (other than the two currently to be hired Fall 2012 and Carey Smouse) will be employed and assigned to this QEP project. The designer will develop and oversee the implementation of three pilot courses to gather data for the PDC. Gathering of research data from the pilot courses will be used to determine the best practices to use in the design and implementation of the proposed faculty learning commons. Dissemination of research results will be the responsibility of the instructional designer to build support for the project. This proposal was written under the assumption that JSU would hire five instructional designers over the next three to five years. Ideally, two additional instructional designers will be employed each year for the duration of the five year project for a total of eight new instructional designers. Research widely indicates that a one-to-one relationship between an instructional designer and a faculty member during the course design and development process is good practice; however, as many as ten faculty members to one designer is considered a heavy load. Although the ratio of faculty to designer is not ideal, a designer that works with faculty is a way of improving instruction at Jacksonville State University.

Two Graduate Assistants. University graduate assistants will be employed throughout the project to assist the instructional designer and the Leadership Team members to do clerical activities related to research and other activities of the project.

Instructional Design Consultant. Dr. Gary Anglin, University of Kentucky, is recommended to serve as consultant. Should he be unable to serve in this capacity, another consultant will be employed when the Leadership Team as the need for his services is determined. The consultant will guide the leadership team for this project to plan the implementation of the Faculty Learning Commons. Dr. Anglin is a well-known professor of Instructional Design who has written several books on the subject. His responsibilities will include planning with the leadership committee in the design and implementation of the PDC. He will work closely with Dr. Gary Morrison's doctoral students as they research learning commons and effective designs for the faculty facility. He will develop a report with his recommendations for the Faculty Commons. (See curriculum vita for Gary Anglin in Appendix A)

Instructional Design Professor. Dr. Gary Morrison, Professor, Old Dominion University, is a renowned author of books on Instructional Design. (See curriculum vita in Appendix B). He is unable to serve as our consultant as we plan the campus-wide faculty learning facility and is willing to act as our liaison to work between his instructional design doctoral students and Dr. Anglin. Two-three doctoral students will design a functional faculty learning commons based on a class project at his university. This project will include planning instructional design learning strategies, designing facilities for the learning commons, mentoring faculty as online teachers, and determining needed professional development workshops to acquaint faculty members with new online teaching methodologies, working within the online learning environment, and assisting faculty in designing their own online/hybrid/traditional courses to improve student achievement.

Two-three Doctoral students, Dominion University, will be responsible for researching a faculty learning commons to determine effective instructional design strategies, to decide faculty development topics, to develop a plan for a mentoring program where faculty members can mentor each other in developing online classes using technology to enhance student learning. Professional development of faculty members will be a major component of the plans the three students will determine based on the needs of the university. Team leaders will assist the doctoral students in determining workshops to be given.

Leadership Team, composed of ten members, will be responsible for doing a literature search exemplifying how the facility will operate, where the PDC will be located, and the teaching components used including instructional design, mentoring, and professional development. The Leadership Team will serve as project leaders. They will determine the scope of the research to be conducted and oversee best practices in instructional design, mentoring and professional development while piloting university courses. Three faculty leaders, who participated in the development of this proposal, will receive release time, on a rotating basis, every semester for the five year period of the project. It is the responsibility of the Leadership team members to keep the program on track as written in this proposal. The Leadership

Team will assess and determine the content of the professional development workshops. To better understand how a PDC or Faculty Commons work at other universities, the Team Leaders will make a trip to Old Dominion University or University of Kentucky to observe first-hand examples of an existing Faculty Learning Commons. (Consult Appendix B)

Professional Development Consultants Each year of the project, two well-known professional development consultants will be contacted to provide faculty training. Other workshops on campus will be conducted by faculty members who have expertise in the topics to be presented. One member of the Leadership Team will consult with other team members and make arrangements for the workshops for the duration of the project. Release time of three hours will be provided for the Leadership Team member for the duration of the project.

Pilot Course Instructors. It is recommended that three pilot courses be implemented during the first year of the project. The course instructors will be given at least three hours of release time to develop, design and prepare their courses for implementation. These pilot courses will serve as one research component of the project. The pilot instructors will augment the low instructional designer to faculty ratio by serving as mentors to other faculty members as they begin to design their own courses. The instructional designer will prepare the instructors for teaching the pilot courses.

Evaluation of Professional Learning Center Outcomes

The PDC will strive for continuous improvement and serve as an avenue for scholarly activities related to research. Data will be collected and analyzed related to job satisfaction, faculty retention, teacher effectiveness and other data related to the socialization role of faculty members. The IDEA evaluation will be used as a method to assess teaching effectiveness. Because retaining and developing effective faculty members is a priority for JSU, we have to evaluate how faculty's work is recognized, appraised and rewarded and how well their professional development needs are being addressed. Finally, The PDC will allow faculty to gain insights into the beliefs and

attitudes about teaching that they bring to the classroom based on the pedagogical practices they adopt. The IDEA evaluation will be used to assess teaching effectiveness. Table 1 summarizes assessment methods, measures, rationale, and implementation strategies in the evaluation plan.

Table 1 Tentative Assessment Methods

Evaluation Mechanism	Measure	Support	Implementation
Exemplary Online Course Rubric	Measures quality of courses based on design components	The rubric is already available from Distance Education.	Data will be collected and evaluated by the instructional designer to determine effectiveness of course design and faculty training.
Evaluation of Instructional Design Process	Measures quality of courses based on steps in instructional design process.	This inclusive evaluation measures success of whole instructional design process.	Data will be gathered from the three pilot course designed by the instructional designer.
The IDEA System	Teaching Effectiveness	The IDEA instrument assesses twenty different instructional strategies and teaching methods and twelve student learning outcomes. This is a valid and reliable instrument used by hundreds of colleges and universities around to assess the quality of learning and instruction.	Baseline data will be collected prior to implementation of QEP strategies and at the end of each semester during the QEP implementation. In addition, because the IDEA instrument is used nationally by hundreds of universities, IDEA responses will be compared with national averages in specific program areas.

Data provided by JSU's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment	Student Graduation Rates	Higher scores on certification tests.	Baseline data will be collected prior to implementation of QEP strategies and at the end of every year during the QEP implementation.
Work with OIRA to select or develop an appropriate measurement tool ;	Job Satisfaction		Depending on the tool being selected

Budget

As previously described in this proposal, the PDC will be staffed with a full-time Instructional Designer dedicated to research, implementation, and faculty and student support for learning centered course design and delivery. This expenditure will be an annual cost of $60,253.32 (salary plus estimated benefits cost) over the five-year implementation period, with a 3% increase each year included. The purchase of a computer, printer, and mobile tablet device for this employee, along with necessary software and office expenses, adds an additional $6,130.10 to the proposed costs.

The PDC will also be supported by faculty partners (Leadership Team), who will conduct additional research, mentor other faculty, build and lead learning communities, pilot learning centered instructional strategies in traditional, online, and hybrid classrooms, and assume other responsibilities outlined in this proposal. It is proposed that the faculty partners be provided release time from teaching responsibilities in order to devote adequate time and attention to this project. To ensure the continuity of quality instruction, it is further proposed that funding be allocated for the hiring of adjunct instructors at the department level. The annual cost for a total of twenty 3-hour course units (ten at the undergraduate level and ten at the graduate level) at the

currently proposed increased adjunct pay rates ($3,000 per undergraduate course and $3,500 per graduate course) is $65,000.

Funding is also proposed in each year of the project for consulting services from experts in instructional design and technology, faculty mentoring, student success, learning centered instructions, etc. Estimated annual costs for these services are $5,000, which include an honorarium, airfare, lodging, and meals. Furthermore, during the early implementation phase of the Faculty Learning Commons, the team leader, instructional designer, and other faculty partners will travel to visit several established units with similar goals at other regional universities (to be determined at the time of project implementation). Similar travel, as well as attendance at appropriate conferences or professional organization meetings and participation in webinars or other related training, is anticipated in later project years. Estimated annual costs for this type of travel and professional development are $18,000, which include airfare, lodging, meals, and registration fees (where applicable).

Since the Instructional Designer is the only full-time staff member proposed as part of this project, it is anticipated that there will be a need for two graduate assistants to assist with research, office coordination and other clerical tasks, basic assistance to faculty partners, and other similar duties. The total annual cost for these graduate assistants is $12,480. Finally, it is expected that there will be miscellaneous costs, including but not limited to purchase of emerging technology resources, printing or other content distribution mechanisms, upgrade of software licenses, and unexpected repair/replacement of equipment that will arise during each year of this project. Therefore, it is proposed that an additional $2,500 be included on an annual basis.