

Plan for assessment/evaluation

We will work with the newly-established CEDER (Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research) in the School of Education to provide independent evaluation of the project. Because we are also conducting our own program of research on gameful learning and GradeCraft design, the evaluation goals for CEDER focus on the overall goals of the proposed Third Century project. CEDER will help to measure our progress and success in building learning communities and building campus awareness of and practice in gameful instruction. The results of evaluation will be used to set direction across years of the project, to ensure that effort is being expended as specified and for greatest effect. We expect CEDER to focus on goals related to students, faculty, and national visibility:

1. Student-related Evaluation Goals: Evaluation of student goals will focus on levels of campus awareness about gameful instruction, the role and perspective of students working as “Gameful Ambassadors,” and levels and types of participation in gameful learning communities. This evaluation work might also examine campus surveys such as the College Student Senior Survey, which contains items such as “In the past year, how often have you... taken a risk because you felt you had more to gain...,” and “...explored topics on your own even though it was not required for class...,” and “...accept mistakes as part of the learning process.” Evaluation data can be combined with in-class surveys conducted by the GradeCraft team to examine the impact of gameful instruction more directly in comparison with matched students in the university. The project will work with faculty members to develop course-specific plans to measure student learning, with a focus on documenting changes that can be attribute to the change in assessment approach. These assessments may include: using test questions from previous iterations to compare learning outcomes; a qualitative analysis of written work across course styles; and documenting faculty member’s own reflections regarding their perception of student learning and engagement in comparison to previous years.
2. Faculty-related Evaluation Goals: Evaluation of faculty goals will monitor the number and range of instructors at U-M using GradeCraft and elements of gameful instruction. How widespread is up-take for gameful instruction? How does gameful instruction fit with different units/disciplines? Is the support provided by the learning communities sufficient? What other help resources would be valued by instructors? Are the products of this effort becoming successfully integrated with campus teaching and learning resources?
3. National Visibility Evaluation Goals: Finally, CEDER will help the project monitor external visibility. Are the resources developed at U-M being used beyond campus? Is the project team presenting its work in appropriate venues? What should the project team consider to expand the impact of the work and further establish U-M as a national leader in this area?

Project Plan

Three-year project, starting in the Summer of 2015.

Year 1 - June 2015 to May 2016

Year 1 focuses on establishing learning communities, recruiting new faculty to use GradeCraft in the upcoming fall, and engaging faculty in adapting courses for gameful instruction. We will also work to add capabilities to GradeCraft to make it easier for instructors to create courses. The first summer will also involve close coordination with Information and Technology Services to improve GradeCraft resources for exchanging information with campus Learning Management Systems Canvas and CTools. In Year 1, we will also begin to explore making GradeCraft available to users outside of U-M, as a mechanism to underwrite and sustain future growth. We may allow limited outside pilot users during this year.

We will recruit an initial wave of students to serve as gameful learning ambassadors, most likely from the population of students who used GradeCraft during the 2014-15 pilot year. These students will receive training in how to support GradeCraft, and be used to communicate with students in gameful courses about strategies for success, as well as creating greater awareness of gameful instruction across campus. The team will work with community members throughout this year to develop materials for future support of gameful instruction.

We will work with our evaluators (CEDER) throughout this year to receive feedback about the effectiveness of our outreach/recruitment strategies, to evolve them for Year 2. Ongoing research into the effectiveness of various GradeCraft features and gameful strategies will inform changes to GradeCraft and support materials as well.

Year 2 - June 2016 to May 2017

Year 2 focuses on growing and strengthening the learning communities, and refining the materials based on feedback and testing as well as adding additional functionality to GradeCraft in response to ideas that emerge from Year 1 students and instructors. We will continue the expansion of GradeCraft outside of U-M, and begin the transition to ITS support for GradeCraft. Work with CEDER will continue to refine our approaches.

Year 3 - June 2017 to May 2018

During the final year of the project, we will continue to expand the use of gameful instruction and solidify support networks for both GradeCraft and for instructors practicing gameful teaching. The overall goal for this year is sustainability beyond Third Century funding, including plans for continued campus use of GradeCraft as a regular part of the instructional technology budget.