A Brief History

November 2013 – Student Growth Task Force (SGTF) Final Report

December 11, 2014 – Report of The Student Growth Task Force Oversight Committee (SGTFOC)

March 9, 2015 – Report of the Provost’s Research Design Team (PRDT) for Assessing Student Growth

April 1, 2015 – SGTFOC Project Proposal
In a December 2014 report of the Student Growth Task Force Oversight Committee (following an earlier [November 2013] recommendation by the Student Growth Task Force) it was recommended that a “... Research Design Team composed of a small group of experts in social science research design...” be assembled for the purpose of developing a research plan for assessing student growth at Purdue University. Pursuant to that end, in February 2015, Provost Debasish Duta invited three faculty members to serve in that capacity and charged the group with developing a “research problem” centered on longitudinal assessment of student growth and informed by the work of previous faculty committees that had studied the issue.
Matthew W. Ohland, Professor, School of Engineering Education
John O. Greene, Professor, Brian Lamb School of Communication
Ala Samarapungavan, Professor & Head, Department of Educational Studies, College of Education
1. What is critical thinking (CT)?
   a. Does the Purdue community agree on the definition of critical thinking? Is there a definition that the President, Board of Trustees, alumni, and faculty in diverse academic disciplines can agree upon?
   b. Where there are already commercial standardized CT instruments, which instruments have evidence that they consistently measure CT in a way that is aligned with Purdue’s definition?
   c. How do commercial standardized CT instruments correlate with disciplinary measures of CT embedded in course work (e.g., student performance on engineering problem solving or clinical reasoning in counselling disciplines)?

2. What purposes does or should a measure of CT growth serve?
   a. What does it tell us that is distinct from the vast array of academic achievement information we already have or can easily gather from our students?
   b. What does it uniquely predict about their readiness/performance in the post-graduate world?
(1) Develop a clear conceptual definition of CT and the questions we wish to answer about CT.
(2) Identify or develop suitable (i.e., reliable and valid) measures of CT.
(3) Identify variables that mediate or moderate CT.
(4) Identify the best feasible research design for studying CT and acknowledge its limitations.
(5) Measure differences in individuals rather than individual differences.
(6) Conduct stratified random sampling of the group under study.
(7) Motivational factors must be taken into account.
Two Scopes of Work

Scope #1: PRDT, SGTFOC
   a. The development and execution of a survey to gather input from Purdue stakeholders to build a consensus definition of critical thinking.
   b. The identification of an instrument to measure critical thinking
   c. The design of an experimental plan for a longitudinal study of student growth at Purdue using instrument.

Scope #2: President’s Office, OIRAE
   a. The selection of the specific standardized test to administer to 360 incoming Freshpersons Fall 2015.
   b. The acquisition and administration of testing materials to be delivered to the sample of 360 incoming freshpersons.
   c. The delivery of complete Fall 2015 test results no later than December 1, 2015.
As the creation of the SGTF, SGTFOC and PRDT were ad hoc and were mutually formed with input from both the University Senate leadership and the Office of the Provost, and not specifically with advice or consent of the full Senate or its standing committees, the Senate as a body has neither deliberated, endorsed or ratified any action by any of the aforementioned entities. Regardless, it clearly seems within the purview of the Office of the Provost to proceed with the work as outlined in April 1, 2015 proposal, and the Senate will continue to reserve the right to consider, debate, and ratify or reject the endorsement of any experimental plan for a longitudinal study of student cognitive growth at Purdue at a later date.

**Specific Exclusions from Scope**

This proposal specifically excludes the endorsement of any testing instrument by the Purdue University faculty.
The implementation plan identified below is subject to the approval date of the proposals. The approval date of both proposals will trigger the schedule. The implementation and timing of Scope #2 will be completely under the purview of the Office of the President and the OIRAE.

Approval of both scopes - April 30, 2015
Commissioning of RDT to perform Scope #1 - May 1, 2015
Administration of Testing F15 - To be determined and communicated by OIRAE
Transmission of F15 Testing results from OIRAE to RDT - December 1, 2015
Final Report of RDT & Delivery of Completed Scope of Work May 1, 2016