1. Project Abstract/Description

(A brief synopsis of reasons you wanted to redesign, what the redesigned format looks like, what the impact is, and how you are going to sustain/expand the new format, etc.

In redesigning AFRS 1100, our goal was to recruit distance learners to the Africana Studies curriculum, promote clearer and earlier evaluation of student understanding of course concepts, and provide greater ability to demonstrate connection between course theories/themes and students’ daily lives.

We designed a 100% online asynchronous course with eight learning modules that addressed foundational material about the continent of Africa (continent demographics and languages); African Migrations and Networks in the Context of Global History; Global African Diasporas, especially in the Western Hemisphere; Cultural material (art, literature, music of Africa); Socio-Political material (politics, economics, family structure); Health and Environment; News and Media; and Contemporary issues in Africana Studies.

The impact has been profound. The course has been full every semester since its offering (even during summer), and we have students who are non-traditional, traditional, and some students who do not live in Charlotte.

We believe that we can sustain this course because it is a regular part of our curriculum. In addition, all department instructors are capable of teaching this course, and two have been especially earmarked to teach it. We offer the course in the Fall, Spring, and Summer.

2. Representative Images of the Project

(Two or three images/screenshots of new course materials or student learning scenes)
3. Impact on Student Learning

1. Improved Learning
(Comparison of student achievement between redesigned format and traditional format, and factors/teaching methods that might have resulted in the difference)

We used a comparison of one traditional course taught by an instructor versus the redesigned format taught the next semester in the online format. In the traditional format, student absences were a factor we believe in retention of course info. With the online format, students are more engaged, turn in assignments according to posted deadlines, and are...
more independent in their studies. In the traditional format, students would miss tests and assignments, yet in the online format less than 5% of students miss tests or assignments.

Students participate in discussion posts more freely than in the traditional in-class discussion format.

2. Improved Retention
(Comparison of DFW between redesigned format and traditional format, and factors/teaching methods that might have resulted in the difference. Please describe your definition of DFW.)

Grades of D, F, and withdrawals from the course are less than in the traditional course. The reason is that absences that may count against a student are non-existent in the redesigned course. In addition, students have been less likely to withdraw from the online course because it matches well with their schedules. There is more of a demand for the online, redesigned course.

We believe that there are less F's because the professor is frequently online on Moodle and can immediately email students who are not performing.

3. Other Impacts on Students
(Student perception on the new format measured through surveys or student evaluations)

4. Impact on Cost Savings
(How much you saved by redesigning, and kinds of cost saving strategies you used such as changes in the overall time spent by the instructors including faculty, GTAs, and undergraduate assistants, use of instructor time to improve student learning, use of classroom space, etc.)

The redesigned AFRS 1100 does not require any classroom space. In addition, instructor time has been reduced because the template for the course is shared between instructors. We use the same learning tools and assignments and the same grading rubrics.

5. Lessons Learned

1. Pedagogical Improvement Techniques
(Issues you faced new to implement teaching methods)

We learned that students needed more detailed notes and reading guides in order to process information more clearly and to determine what elements of the reading assignments to focus upon.

2. Cost Reduction Techniques
(Issues you faced to implement cost saving strategies)

N/A

3. Implementation Issues
(Advice for other people wanting to redesign their course)

Meet regularly with the redesign team and be prepared to make changes to the original iteration of the course. We have changed our course two times and have finally settled upon a format and redesign that is most effective.
Be prepared for large numbers of students to request to take the course. We were very specific about encouraging majors and minors and those who indicated a true interest in the course material as opposed to those who simply needed a course to fulfill their semester hours.

6. Sustainability
(How you are going to sustain/expand the new course format, and the kinds of activities you are doing currently to achieve sustainability)

We believe that we can sustain this course because it is a regular part of our curriculum and a required course for both our majors and minors. All instructors in our department have the expertise to teach this course. Two professors have been especially earmarked to teach the course. We offer the course in the Fall, Spring, and Summer in the redesigned format. We also incorporate some of the redesign activities and assignments into our traditional format class offering.