



**Request for Proposals**  
**Liberal Arts and the Professions**  
Revised Spring 2019

This initiative has the goal of embedding liberal arts education throughout the curriculum of undergraduate professional programs by forging links between faculty in the liberal arts and professional fields. Such curricular integration will not only have a positive effect on how students in professional fields pursue their future work, but will also enrich the liberal arts curriculum itself with perspectives that merit sharing beyond the community of professional practitioners. Grants of varying amounts, ranging from \$100,000-\$400,000 over a 24-36 month period, will be made to each funded project participating in this initiative. The size of the grant will be based on the number of institutions involved and the scope of the project. We expect this grant program will remain open for approximately two to four years.

**Rationale**

As Michael Roth points out in *Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters*, the tension between liberal education and practical education has a long history in our country. Twenty-first century critics of higher education seem to be echoing their 19th century counterparts, who were concerned that universities were failing to advance the nation's progress toward industrialization due to a misplaced focus on the traditional fields of the liberal arts. Contrary to this view is the belief that the liberal arts, through both their content and the intellectual skills they entail, foster "habits of mind that are relevant to any inquiry, any professional practice" (Roth 2014, p. 106).

As students these days increasingly turn to professional programs, we have seen a marginalization of the liberal arts in a way that is destructive not only to the more general goals of effective citizenship and a rewarding life, but to the practice of the professions themselves. When professional schools do include some liberal arts courses in their programs, these usually take the form of a set of "general education" or "distributional" requirements that are relatively isolated from the professional courses in the program. This leads to their being seen as items to be checked off, the approach toward them being relatively perfunctory. Addressing this unfortunate situation requires not only recognizing what is of enduring value in the liberal arts, but also exploring what kinds of curricular structures and pedagogical strategies are most effective in liberal arts teaching and learning.

## Goals

The driving question for this initiative is: *How can institutions fully integrate and embed the liberal arts into undergraduate preparation for the professions with curricular coherence and in a financially sustainable manner?* This grant program aims to:

1. infuse new disciplinary content and perspectives from the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences into undergraduate education for the professions, most prominently in business, engineering, and nursing;
2. foster robust collaborative relationships with faculty from the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and the professions to design and teach revised curricula, including new teaching arrangements;
3. develop strategies for teaching and assessment within the professions of the critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills traditionally associated with the liberal arts;
4. encourage institutions to develop revenue/cost-sharing structures as needed to support collaborative participation by faculty from the disciplines as well as the professions.

Integrating and embedding the liberal arts within professional education would provide students with the grounding they need so they more fully appreciate the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions their professional work. Such preparation would also better equip students with the critical thinking, problem-solving, and communications skills – hallmarks of the liberal arts – that they need to distinguish themselves in their work.

## Criteria for Project Proposals

The Teagle Foundation welcomes a diverse array of institutions – community colleges, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive and research universities – to participate in the Liberal Arts and the Professions initiative. The professional areas of focus under this initiative are business, engineering, and nursing. Grants of varying amounts, ranging from \$100,000-\$400,000 over a 24-36 month period, will be made to each funded project participating in this initiative. Requests from both single institutions and multiple institutions partnering together will be considered. The size of the grant will be based on the number of institutions involved and the scope of the project. Planning grants in the range of \$25,000 over 6-12 months will also be considered, particularly for projects that involve multiple campus partners.

- **Liberal arts viewed as necessary to and embedded within professional preparation for undergraduates**

We are interested in supporting efforts that move the liberal arts from the periphery to the center, and in the process reimagine professional preparation for undergraduates. Such initiatives may as a result encourage greater bi-directionality between the liberal arts and professional education, with the liberal arts enriched with perspectives from the professions. While efforts to enhance the general education experiences for students in such programs will be considered as an early phase for longer-term change, priority will be given to institutions

interested in ambitious reform in professional education that significantly alters the undergraduate experience throughout the curriculum, from the first year through the senior year.

- **Centrality of faculty**

All Teagle Foundation grant initiatives are based on the belief that faculty leadership is central for bringing about long-lasting change in teaching and learning in higher education. Efforts undertaken under this initiative should be faculty-driven, with appropriate support from administrators, to ensure that faculty expertise informs a redefinition of students' curricular experiences as they prepare to enter the professions. Faculty leadership is also vital to explore new modes of organization that may be called for to deeply integrate the liberal arts within the professions.

- **Collaboration and learning across multiple institutions**

Funded projects in this initiative, as in the Foundation's work more generally, should ideally span multiple institutions as part of a commitment to fostering a community of teachers and practitioners engaged in curricular reform in the professions. We encourage the participation of 4-6 institutions coming together as a community of practice in a funded project.

- **Sustainability**

Consideration will be given to how faculty-led innovations in the curriculum endure beyond the life of the grant, including potential adoption of revised learning objectives uniting the liberal arts and professional preparation throughout the curriculum; ratification of revised curricula by relevant academic review committees; and changes to organizational structures such as budgeting and governance to support collaboration between disciplinary and professional faculty.

- **Assessment**

Funded projects will be expected to include appropriate quantitative or qualitative indicators of success related to student learning and engagement, institutional capacity-building in curriculum design and reform, and employer perceptions to inform improvements. As with our other grant initiatives, the Teagle Foundation may wish to collaborate with grantees in an external evaluation to assess the short- and longer-term outcomes of funded projects, including follow-up studies three to five years after the conclusion of the funded projects.

- **Dissemination efforts**

Active dissemination efforts will be important to spread the knowledge and practices developed by grantees to higher education stakeholders, particularly peer institutions engaged in professional preparation for undergraduates. Dissemination might take the form of publically

available instructional materials; action-oriented tool-kits or other publications; webinars; websites and blogs; and conference presentations and workshops.

### **Submission Process**

Requests for grant support will be considered following our two-stage application process. First, we ask that prospective grantees share brief concept papers. After review of the concept papers, a limited number of applicants will then be invited to submit full proposals. For complete details on the submission process, please refer to information on how we grant here:

<http://www.teaglefoundation.org/Grants-Initiatives/How-We-Grant>

We encourage interested institutions, organizations, or consortia to submit a 3-5 page concept paper that names all the campus partners and sketches the project description, with an eye towards meeting the criteria discussed above for faculty-led curricular reform and how the work will be institutionalized and sustained. The guiding questions to keep in mind while developing your concept paper (and if invited, your proposal) are: In what ways will your curricula be substantively different as a result of a grant? And how will those curricular innovations be sustained beyond the life of a grant?

We consider concept papers on a rolling basis. The Teagle Foundation's Board of Directors reviews all grant requests when it meets in February, May, and November. If a proposal is invited, program staff will confer with applicants to determine the appropriate timeline for submitting a full proposal in line for potential review by the board. All concept papers should be submitted electronically at [proposals@teagle.org](mailto:proposals@teagle.org). If invited, full proposals will be submitted through the Foundation's online application system.

**Foundation Contact:** Please send a message to [proposals@teagle.org](mailto:proposals@teagle.org) if you have questions about the Liberal Arts and the Professions initiative.