Faculty Work and Student Learning in the 21st Century

Request for Implementation Proposals

What does the changing nature of liberal education—increasingly defined as the development of intellectual and personal capacities through the use of engaged forms of learning, and increasingly shaped by the constrained economic climate in which we live—mean for our how colleges and universities and their faculties in the arts and sciences educate undergraduate students? More specifically, what does it mean for faculty work and professional responsibilities in the twenty-first century—at the level of faculty-student interaction, in programs and departments, and in institution-wide offerings like general education? What knowledge, skills and capacities will faculty need to have to perform effectively in the future and to be confident that their students are learning at the highest possible levels?

The Foundation invites proposals for projects that put into action the plans developed during a prior planning phase. We plan to fund up to 10 projects, each of which will be funded at a maximum of $150,000 over a period of two years.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THIS RFP:

This RFP represents the culmination of a series of steps the Foundation has taken since 2009 to think through and address the challenges and opportunities (academic, economic and others) facing colleges and universities in the 21st century. In Fall 2009, the Foundation ran a “listening” that asked how colleges and universities might re-imagine the paths to liberal education—that is, education focused on the demonstrable development of students’ cognitive capacities and personal competencies, especially through engaged learning of various forms— in ways that would speak to some of the fundamental pressures that are currently shaping faculty work and student learning.

Among the pressures making such a liberal education difficult for institutions to offer and students to attain were: over-specialization in the disciplines, the fragmentation of the curriculum, the focus on research as the marker of success for full-time faculty, the heavy reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty for teaching, the underperformance and low attainment of many students, the economic stratification of educational opportunity, and an overly narrow understanding of education as preparation for particular jobs rather than the long arc of a life and career(s). Of particular importance to the Foundation was the visible pressure that we are all seeing on the professional identity, work, and autonomy of the faculty in the arts and sciences.

We therefore invited proposals for planning projects that addressed the question: how can and should faculty work change in response to the changing conditions—indeed, the changing nature—of undergraduate liberal education?

We were open to a wide variety of project foci and approaches to this work, but asked that the project be ambitious, have strategic significance for those involved, grow out of evidence, and have the promise of sustainability through its integration into the priorities, collegial decision-making processes, and ideally into...
the policies of the institutions involved. We have funded ten planning projects and now invite proposals for implementation of the plans developed in that first phase of work.

**PROGRAM GOAL:** Building on the accomplishments of the planning process, proposals will focus on action and implementation: consortial projects will enact plans for re-shaping faculty work in light of institutional goals for student learning and the realities of the institutional contexts in which faculty work is accomplished, and will evaluate the success of those actions.

**ELIGIBILITY:** College consortia and organizations that have successfully completed planning projects under the auspices of this initiative are eligible for implementation grants.

**FUNDING:** Applicants may apply for a maximum of $150,000 for use over two years.

**PROPOSALS** should include:

- A project narrative that articulates:

  The general topic for the project and the rationale for it. The proposal should describe the topic, show how it grows out of the planning process, aligns with the current strategic priorities of the consortium and its members, and responds to evidence showing a need for the work.

  The specific objectives of the consortial or organizational project, with attention to the goals of the consortium/organization as a whole and of the individual institutions participating in the project.

  How these ends will be accomplished, with attention to the specific commitments of the consortium as a whole and the actions it will take, as well as to the commitments and actions of individual campuses.

  Work plan and timeline for the project, including identification of key participants and their roles in the project.

  A statement of what success in this project would look like, along with a specific plan for assessment of project results, and plans for project sustainability if the work is successful.

- A one-paragraph abstract of the project, suitable for posting on the web

- Budget and budget narrative. Institutional cost-sharing should be shown whenever possible, including both direct and indirect costs.

- Letters of support from consortial heads and key academic leaders for the project.

Proposals should be submitted by Monday, April 2, 2012 for consideration in May 2012 and by Monday October 2, 2012 for consideration in November 2012.

Proposals (as a single PDF, if possible) should be submitted electronically to proposals@teaglefoundation.org.