Request for Proposals
Liberal Arts in the Professions

This initiative supports efforts to fully embed liberal education throughout the curriculum, from the first year to the senior year, in professional undergraduate programs. It aims to bring about robust curricular change by forging strong linkages between faculty from the liberal arts and the professions so that undergraduate students continue to benefit from liberal education as they pursue their professional interests in life after college. Grants of varying amounts, ranging from $200,000-$300,000 over a 24-36 month period, will be made for each funded project participating in this initiative.

Rationale

A liberal arts education provides the intellectual scaffolding for students to learn “how to learn” in order to be successful in a variety of capacities; its relevance today remains as vibrant as ever. But in an era when students are increasingly turning to professional preparation at the undergraduate level, the ways in which students access liberal learning needs to change. A liberal arts education has never been static, and it has endured in part because it responds to the new realities that we confront from one generation to the next. Exposure to the liberal arts in professional programs for undergraduates today often occurs in the form of general education, but the typical structure through which is offered – distribution requirements – does not fully integrate the liberal arts into students’ professional preparation. This is a loss for students as the critical thinking skills that liberal education fosters are relevant to any professional practice. This initiative challenges the prevailing mode of professional preparation for undergraduates by asking, How can institutions fully integrate and embed the liberal arts into undergraduate preparation for the professions?

Ultimately, this initiative aims to dispel the pernicious myth that liberal education carries minimal economic value, and demonstrate that it is in fact integral to professional practice. 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 nineteenth-century counterparts, who were concerned that universities were not facilitating industrialization due to a misplaced focus on the liberal arts. This initiative underlines liberal education’s enduring importance for the world of work.

Goals

This grant program aims to:

1. infuse new disciplinary content and perspectives from the humanities, sciences, and social sciences into undergraduate education for the professions, with the initial focus on STEM education, teacher education, and business education;
2. foster robust collaborative relationships with faculty from the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and the professions to design and deliver curricula, including new co-design and co-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;
encourage institutions to develop revenue/cost-sharing structures as needed to support collaborative participation by faculty from the disciplines as well as the professions.

The three targets areas are as follows: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education; teacher education; and business education. This effort will take different forms relevant for each target area. For STEM education, the emphasis is on integrating scientific and humanistic inquiry in generative and productive ways. For teacher education, the dominant concern is deepening educators’ subject matter expertise and capacity to teach within their chosen disciplinary contexts, leveraging the training that they already receive in pedagogy and associated skills. For business education, we stress developing in students the values and skills they need for effective leadership and responsible decision-making.

For all three target areas, 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 of their professional work, regardless of whether they become public school teachers, laboratory scientists, or business analysts. 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 successfully navigate the world of work.

Criteria for Project Proposals

The Teagle Foundation will invite selected institutions offering undergraduate programs in the initial target areas of STEM education, teacher education, or business education, and working collaboratively as part of formal or informal consortia, to participate in the grant initiative. Consideration will also be given to selected membership associations, accreditation agencies, or other relevant organizations.

Grants of varying amounts, ranging from $200,000-$300,000 over a 24-36 month period, will be made for 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; larger awards may be considered in exceptional circumstances. Smaller awards of up to $25,000 will be considered to support planning grants to assist in the development of emerging projects.

- 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. While efforts to enrich 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 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 centered 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 their 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 and governance 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.

• **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 unifying 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 articulate metrics for success related to student learning and engagement, institutional capacity-building in curriculum design and reform, and employer perceptions to inform future improvement. 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 open instructional materials; action-oriented tool-kits or other publications; webinars; websites and blogs; and conference presentations and workshops.

**Submission Process**

**Invited proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis following the two-stage process outlined below.**

*Concept paper*

Interested institutions, organizations, or consortia may submit a 1-3 page concept paper after conferring with program staff on whether their proposed project meets the general criteria for this initiative. The concept papers should sketch the project description, with an eye towards meeting the criteria discussed above for faculty-led curricular reform and collaborative learning through a community of practice. The concept paper should also provide a brief discussion of how the work will be sustained beyond the life of the grant. After review of the concept papers, a limited number of applicants will then be invited to submit the full proposal, as outlined below.

*Full proposals*

Proposals should include the following components:

• A 5-10 page narrative that outlines the project as specifically as possible and includes a discussion of: background and context for the project, purpose and goals, plans for future sustainability, criteria (both short- and long-term) for judging the project's success, and a dissemination plan.
• 1-2 page work plan and timeline.
• 1-2 page budget, based on July 1-June 30 operating years, and an accompanying budget narrative. Appropriate expenses include stipends for project leader(s), travel and meeting expenses, meals for working dinners or similar occasions, reasonable honoraria or fees for visiting experts or consultants, office and research materials and assistance, and the costs of support staff. The Foundation does not cover indirect or overhead costs. Please show cost-sharing wherever possible. Cost-sharing should be for those direct costs borne by the institutions.
• A one-paragraph abstract of the project, suitable for posting on the web.
• The contact information and CV of the person(s) in charge of the project.
• Letters of support from the presidents or provosts of institutions involved in the project.

All final submissions should be submitted electronically as a single PDF to proposals@teaglefoundation.org.

FOUNDATION CONTACTS: Please feel free to contact Loni Bordoloi (bordoloi@teagle.org) or Desiree Vazquez (desireev@teagle.org) if you have questions about this initiative.