



Request for Proposals

A Larger Vision for Student Learning: Education for Civic and Moral Responsibility

A college should not be a haven from worldly contention, but a place where young people fight out among and within themselves contending ideas of the meaningful life, and where they discover that self-interest need not be at odds with concern for one another. We owe it to posterity to preserve and protect this institution. Democracy depends on it.

Andrew Delbanco¹

Late adolescence and early adulthood represent a privileged time in our lives for the exploration of new ideas and the formation of personal and social identity; as a result, for many students, the college years become crucial markers for who they are to become. Mark William Roche²

Introduction

The Teagle Foundation is developing an initiative that aims to integrate and further develop several themes on which it has focused for the last decade. While we intend to keep our central focus on the improvement of undergraduate student learning, the Foundation plans to provide grants to model courses and curricular programs that address some of the larger aims of liberal education. In this instance, our concern will be to foster knowledge and capabilities related to personal, civic, and moral responsibility. We hope to find and support representative courses and programs that intend to improve their ability to equip students to deal effectively with some of the large cluster of “great questions” of meaning and value, and of purpose and responsibility that surface throughout life, and are especially pointed in students of traditional college age.

The years in college are a time when students reach new thresholds of self-knowledge, discover where they have talents that might make a mark in the world and begin to take possession of their own lives. They ponder and test their values and beliefs, and consider future employment and ways of life that will bring them the deepest satisfactions, all as they try to gauge their ambitions for status, wealth, achievement, leadership, and service to others. Many students do these things while pursuing grand adventures and exploring intoxicating pleasures, and pondering whether and when they will find love and a partner with whom perhaps to build a family. If we are to believe the mission statements of virtually every college and university, students are expected to develop the capacity for moral reasoning and to learn to exercise their civic responsibilities in a diverse and contentious democratic society that operates in an endlessly complicated global context. To meet the challenges of integrity and citizenship requires civic knowledge, abilities in critical thinking to weigh decisions and policies, and commitments to fundamental democratic values such as freedom and equality. Educating for democracy is difficult and ambitious since it is simultaneously a set of concepts, a series of practices and a pattern of commitment

¹ Andrew Delbanco, *College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) p. 177

²Mark William Roche, *Why Choose the Liberal Arts?*(Notre Dame Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 2010) p. 103

and human agency. As in all forms of responsibility, including personal and professional integrity, education for citizenship takes both knowing and doing to fulfill its demands, and the movement between concepts and actions usually follows a strenuous and bumpy path.

The Curriculum and Moral and Civic Responsibility

As noted in the Foundation's earlier work, the typical programs of study in most colleges and universities leave little place for a coherent, systematic, and rigorous focus on these kinds of personal and civic "big questions," not to mention other forms of them that we might mention relating to other vital contexts of human experience. Vocational and professional preparation takes most of the energy of students on today's campuses, and the large majority of professors are defined by their work in exquisitely specialized fields that create intricate but isolated worlds of professional meaning. Specialized study is important from many points of view, but it does not typically connect easily with the knowledge and capabilities needed to fulfill the responsibilities of personal and civic life. Nor does it help to create coherent and cohesive programs of undergraduate study that have an evident logic in developing student knowledge and capabilities, especially around the questions of moral and social responsibility. Ironically, the most important commitments and decisions that students will ever make about the direction of their lives, and the complex responsibilities they will carry as citizens are left to the play of preferences and the influences of happenstance. Modern disciplines are not comfortable with "big questions," so many students leave college without having had the chance to think deeply about the foundations of democratic citizenship, the centrality of personal and professional integrity, or to develop the methods of thought and the vocabularies to analyze, scrutinize and claim their own responsibilities, values and goals. All the while, stunning moral failures by individuals and organizations from universities to investment houses regularly flood the headlines.

Recently scholars and educational leaders have issued a steady stream of books and studies lamenting the narrowness of education and its loss of a focus on the larger questions of human experience. The Council of Independent Colleges has sponsored a variety of programs that focus on the teaching of the humanities. Organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the Association of State Colleges and Universities, and a number of colleges and universities have proposed and developed ideas, projects and programs to make the larger claims of education for social and moral responsibility a more robust enterprise in the curriculum, within the institution, and in partnerships with communities and groups off campus. Working in collaboration with the AAC&U, the foundation-sponsored Bringing Theory to Practice Program has supported a wide variety of campus initiatives to connect academic learning to the student search for a balanced and civically engaged life. The AAC&U's recent 2012 publication *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* provides an excellent map of the demanding but critical terrain of civic learning.

Nor by any means has the larger vision been lost from view in many courses and programs on campus, though in many cases the interest occurs in piecemeal form through the initiative and interest of individual faculty and staff members in their own scholarly work, teaching and service. Most campuses have some variety of courses and student life programs where issues of personal, civic and moral responsibility are raised, but students may or may not find their way to them. Professional ethics also has become a staple of programs in philosophy, business, medicine, law and other fields, but the concerns are often shaped by legal and regulatory requirements that are of primary interest to those planning to work in

the field. Courses that explore the diversity of human experience by gender, class, race, and culture often offer excellent resources for understanding the force of ethical and democratic commitments, but the wide range of specialized methods they use and the dispersion of the courses throughout a largely optional program of study may reach only students already interested in the topic.

A more promising approach to assure the centrality of work on moral and civic questions is to focus on courses and campus programs directly related to them that represent a commitment of the faculty and of the institution to a coherently organized set of studies. Course work of this kind is typically, but not necessarily, part of a general education sequence focused in the humanities and in related fields in the social sciences that study human behavior both individually and in groups. Typically organized around topics and themes that touch on basic civic and moral questions, they are not standard introductions to a discipline but often draw on materials and methods from several fields. Often called “core courses,” they are required of all or a large percentage of students. The courses are typically part of a set of requirements in the early years of college, but could just as well be offerings that occur at the upper level, such as an interdisciplinary capstone course or series of courses. In many general education programs, the core course or courses are often taught in a series of small sections or seminars by individual faculty members, while in some cases they are offered in various formats by a team of faculty.

Colleges and universities have developed a wide variety of other approaches to the study of the great questions, typically related to requirements or options in general education. Students are sometimes given the option to choose among a small series of courses that have been specially and coherently designed to address issues of civic and moral choice. Or, colleges may link existing courses on issues of democratic citizenship and values into a thematic series of courses that sometimes constitutes a “concentration” or a minor, or connect them in ways to create a learning community--in which a cohort of students takes the same set of offerings simultaneously. Sometimes colleges and universities develop emphases “across the curriculum” on ethics and moral reasoning and flag courses in different fields that have a clear focus on these issues. In some cases, faculty may add a common introductory or concluding seminar to any of these various kinds of thematic offerings to give definition to the topic. In other instances, institutions develop learning experiences in relationship to the courses that give students a chance to work on a community-based problem, undertake a service learning initiative, or work collaboratively with other students in analyzing and presenting case studies.

From the point of view of this Foundation initiative, the most important issues concern the breadth and depth of both the curricular designs and student participation in and faculty commitment to the courses and programs. Courses and programs of this kind are able to establish the critical component of shared goals concerning academic content as well as the expected outcomes in student capabilities and skills. Through shared goals, faculty can develop similar assignments and learning experiences across courses, create common levels of expectations for students, use similar methods of teaching and learning, and create a sense of involvement in a community of inquiry that stretches across campus. The extent to which the courses and programs are taught by full-time and tenured or tenure-eligible faculty members is an important way to demonstrate and gauge commitment to the common goals that are established. The Teagle Foundation seeks to strengthen and disseminate representative programs that broadly fit this outline.

It helps to illustrate the kinds of broad themes and topics that courses and programs of this type often address, though the phrases and themes suggested here are for illustration only and may not be part of the explicit title of a course. Many courses that address themes like those below often draw mainly on several humanities fields such as literature, philosophy, religion, history, art history, classics, and the fine arts, though they also draw on texts from the social sciences and the natural sciences.

Illustrative Topics and Themes

- The Moral Foundations of Democratic Citizenship
- Justice
- Diversity and Community
- The Examined Life
- What Does it Mean to be Human?
- The Good Life
- Knowledge and Meaning in Science and the Humanities
- Moral Reasoning in Controversial Cases
- Grand Strategy and Statecraft in International Affairs
- Values in Policy Making
- The Pursuit of Happiness
- Revolutions
- Leadership in Social and Economic Crises
- Masterworks of Literature: The Intricacies of Human Moral Experience

In offering these illustrations, one of our aims is to call to mind some of the distinctive topics and methods that the humanities use in studying texts, records, and artifacts of human creation to analyze narratives and develop arguments about human moral and social experience. In line with the Foundation's mission, one of the primary concerns of this new initiative is to focus on how the study of the humanities and related fields deepens and enables powerful forms of student learning, both in mastering content and in cognitive and personal development. In this initiative, however, the goal is not to center on the study of the humanities as an end in itself. Nor is it an effort focused on rescuing the humanities from an alleged decline--in which it is often said that the humanities have either been abandoned for their impracticality, or have become their own worst enemies by narrowing their focus on the technical interests of specialists.

Interesting lines of exploration have opened up on the ways that the humanities contribute to the development of self-knowledge and moral imagination through the study of narratives, to the enlargement of critical thinking about choice and decision-making, and to the deepening of the capacity for empathy and respect. Humanities fields use evidence and argumentation that is often based on the study of historical texts and works of the imagination, rather than on the empirical and statistical findings of a set of experiments or generalizations based on data sets. The evidence is different than in quantifiable fields, and the argumentation follows its own conventions, but there is a focus on evidence nonetheless. The methods of analysis and generalization in the humanities become especially important in understanding values, and in making and supporting moral decisions. All of these issues relate closely to the development of human capabilities and to student learning and become a central part of setting goals for courses that can then be evaluated in a variety of ways as to their effectiveness.

Criteria and Goals for Model Programs

Substantial Intellectual Content: For curricular programs to be effective and influential, much more is required than simply having an interesting or relevant topic. The program must have substantial intellectual content that, especially in the humanities, typically involves influential texts and complex masterworks from across times and places. Key concepts, methods of interpretation, and frameworks of thought define a necessary dimension of what is to be learned and understood by students.

Attention to Forms of Teaching and Learning: Inescapably joined to questions of content are the forms of teaching and learning through which students are motivated to learn and connect with the great questions. The past several decades have seen a slow revolution in college learning with an increasing emphasis on direct forms of student involvement in learning through participation in research, active discussion and debate, extensive writing, collaborative learning, problem-solving, immersion in other cultures and languages, internships, service learning, and active uses of technology. To be a successful model, a curricular program has to use forms of learning that engage student interest, set high standards and connect with the ability of students to make meaning out of the content. So, what students learn has to be successfully connected to how students learn, and the ways in which they come to internalize moral and civic responsibilities.

Attention to Outcomes of Learning: Another critical dimension of learning focuses on its consequences, on what have come often to be called outcomes of learning. In recent work on the assessment of learning, these have been named “higher order thinking” skills or forms of complex reasoning. From the point of view of liberal education, it is better to think of these as enduring cognitive and personal capabilities that include written and oral communication, analytical and critical reasoning, integrative thinking, quantitative reasoning, moral reasoning, problem-solving, and creative thinking. Often referred to as “powers of the mind” in the tradition of liberal education, they suggest the development of fundamental human possibilities. Due to both their intrinsic and practical value, the development of these capabilities suggests why liberal education in some form is important for all citizens. The humanities and related fields that focus on human experience can engage great questions in ways that shape learning in direct and active forms and that can deepen student awareness and sharpen personal judgment in coming to terms with moral issues. The work of the Foundation over the past decade has featured the support of faculty and institutional efforts to use evidence to improve student learning. This initiative will build on our prior work to assist institutions to continue and expand their focus on the improvement of student learning. There now exist multiple ways for courses and programs to craft a formative evaluation and improvement process, and this expectation will be part of the Foundation’s process for strengthening and renewing education for moral and civic responsibility. Support for research and consultation to develop and implement new or enlarged programs of evaluation will be available to grantees.

Innovation: Equally important is the Foundation’s interest in supporting innovation in teaching and learning in programs in the humanities and related fields addressing the concerns of civic and moral responsibility. Colleges and universities have developed a wide array of methods, as suggested earlier, to engage students in learning both on and off the campus, and in using simulations, games, negotiations, case-studies, teams, collaborations, experiential learning, field studies and problem-solving in

communities and in real life settings to connect theory and practice. Inventive uses of technology that can bring vitality to some issues and problems represent another possibility for innovation.

Collaboration and Dissemination: As in most of the Foundation’s work, we foresee that both collaboration and dissemination of knowledge and best practices will be a critical part of an eventual project. We imagine that collaboration among colleges with representative programs will be a feature of the work. It will assist institutions to get a better sense of the special dimensions of their own goals and programs by sharing them with others in conversations and other exchanges, including a consideration of their texts, assignments, classroom methods, expectations of students and faculty, and methods of evaluation. Much of the work of the assessment of student learning, we have learned, benefits from a sharing of perspectives and approaches among colleagues from two or three different campuses.

In this context, another critical element of collaboration will be the effort to spread the effect of the model program through an active program of collaborative dissemination and communication. We expect that a significant portion of grant funding will be dedicated to the creation of “leagues of collaboration and innovation,” involving institutions with similar goals in face to face meetings and other forms of interaction to share approaches and to consider ongoing partnerships. In some cases, institutions that are considering the development of a new approach to general education, or to civic or moral education, will be invited to learn what others have already developed, or how they have responded to various challenges and opportunities from improving student learning, to crafting interesting assignments, to addressing faculty concerns and enlisting commitment to the program. The meetings of regional and national education associations offer one venue for exploring all these questions, as do special sessions that might occur on one of the participants’ campuses with invitations to both neighboring and more distant institutions to be involved in the work. Publications arising from the work will be expected, either in reports or on websites that will be broadly available to the public.

The Teagle Foundation will invite select institutions and organizations to apply for grants in varying amounts up to \$250,000 for each collaborative. Smaller awards of up to \$25,000 will be considered to support planning and research grants to assist in the development of a promising idea or an emerging collaborative.

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. After review of the concept papers, a limited number of institutions or consortia 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 costs/overhead. Please show cost-sharing where 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 Barlatt (desireev@teaglefoundation.org) if you have questions about this initiative