

**THE TEAGLE FOUNDATION  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

**THE DISCIPLINES AND UNDERGRADUATE LIBERAL EDUCATION**

*The Teagle Foundation has budgeted up to \$500,000 for grants to enable disciplinary associations concerned with the liberal arts and sciences to reassess the relationship between the goals and objectives of undergraduate concentrations in their discipline and those of liberal education. We expect to make a half dozen grants of approximately \$75,000 in the humanities, the social and natural sciences, and mathematics. Each grant will result in a White Paper designed to help departments reassess the structure of their majors. Publishable texts of the White Paper should be available for wide dissemination by September 1, 2008.*

**BACKGROUND**

In recent years a lively discussion based on changing views about undergraduate education and on new research concerning student learning has been reshaping liberal education. The scholarly disciplines, however, have not always been included in this discussion and the undergraduate major is frequently left out of the picture. The Teagle Foundation is convinced that it is time to invite the scholarly disciplines to join this discussion and to take a fresh look at the relationship between the undergraduate major and liberal education.

In his recent book *Our Underachieving Colleges* (Princeton 2006), Derek Bok points out that the original aim of requiring undergraduates to do concentrated work in a field was to develop capacities for thinking and problem-solving and “other habits of thought that almost any student could use with profit in later life” ( p. 137). Majoring in a discipline, then, was originally conceived as an essential part of a liberal education. Bok goes on, however, to cite research indicating that many majors as currently designed do not significantly advance widely acknowledged goals of undergraduate education, and in fact in some cases “are linked to declines in writing...and other important aims of a rounded liberal education” (p. 143).

At the same time faculty members in many disciplines sometimes note that students seeking to enter their departments lack the requisite background and skills, and a clear understanding of the expectations and goals of the major. They may well ask if the relationship between “general education” and departmental requirements has been fully thought out and is as coherent as possible. Departments, moreover, often struggle with the question of how many courses are needed for concentration in their field, and of what type, and the role of undergraduate research, off campus study, “capstone courses,” comprehensive exams, etc. in a well-designed major.

For these and other reasons, the Teagle Foundation believes that there is need to rethink the relationship between undergraduate majors in the liberal arts and sciences and the habits of thought and mind widely recognized as goals of a liberal education.

## STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

### Goals:

1. To encourage fresh thinking and clarity about the goals and objectives of majors in disciplines of the arts and sciences.
2. To strengthen undergraduate liberal education by developing more systemic relationships between the undergraduate major and liberal education.
3. To invigorate student learning in the fields in which they concentrate.
4. To provide models that may be of use to other disciplinary and interdisciplinary groups that may wish to rethink their relationship to undergraduate liberal education.

**Means:** The Foundation believes that disciplinary associations and similar groups can provide crucial leadership in reaching these goals by developing inclusive processes for reflecting on the relationship between the undergraduate major in their field and the goals colleges and universities are now seeking to achieve when they speak of “liberal education.”

The careful collection and weighing of data are, in our view, essential first steps, as is the assessment of trends affecting the field, etc.

Grant recipients will name a broadly based working group of thoughtful “stakeholders” in the field—not only leading scholars in the field, but teachers drawn from several sectors of higher education, including undergraduate colleges devoted to the liberal arts and sciences, and, when appropriate, colleagues from related fields, graduates whose vocations lie outside academia, researchers in higher education, and others concerned with the field.

The process should be an open one, with the Working Group inviting stakeholders in the field to submit suggestions, position papers, and other forms of advice.

The Working Group will produce a White Paper or similar document suitable for wide circulation, designed to help individual departments reassess the relationship between the patterns of concentration they provide and the goals of liberal education.

**Eligibility:** The grants are intended for learned societies, associations, academies, and similar organizations in the core disciplines of the liberal arts and sciences, including the humanities, social and natural sciences, and mathematics. While we have in mind established fields with significant numbers of majors, emerging disciplines and ad hoc collaborations among inter-institutional groups of scholars may be considered under exceptional circumstances. The Foundation recognizes that some of the most important learning supported by individual departments and disciplinary associations involves connections with other disciplines and sometimes emerging fields. Although we expect that these connections will inform the projects we support, grants in this round are restricted to core disciplines of the arts and sciences, excluding the creative and performing arts.

**Hypothetical Example:** A disciplinary association constitutes a working group of a dozen members, drawn from research universities, liberal arts colleges, and other sectors of higher education. Since many graduates in this field go on to medical school, the former dean of a major medical school is included, as is a well-known researcher in higher education. The disciplinary association itself provides logistical support, helps identify and collect data concerning enrollment trends, post-graduation career patterns, etc. It also provides a summary of research and other study opportunities and of concentration requirements in various departments in the field. After an initial meeting, the Working Group realizes that some additional information is

needed and hires a part-time research assistant to collect it. As the information is analyzed, it becomes clear that students concentrating in the field typically take an adequate, perhaps even excessive number of courses in the field, but often have surprisingly weak writing and presentation skills, and have devoted little attention to the social and ethical implications of what they have learned. Suggestions in several position papers submitted to the committee address these problems. After discussions that are sometimes contentious, the Working Group reaches consensus, and in its White Paper makes ten recommendations concerning advising, “capstone” seminars, senior comprehensive exams, and the establishment of a new series of conferences where undergraduates can present their research and discuss its implications. The sponsoring disciplinary association helps disseminate the White Paper, arranges for it to be discussed at the next annual meeting, and a year later sponsors the first of the new student research conferences. Over time the recommendations in the White Paper come to serve as the “gold standard” for excellence in the field.

**Co-ordination of Projects:** The Foundation intends to convene (at its expense) the leaders of the various projects funded under this initiative so they can compare issues and procedures and learn from one another. We expect this meeting will take place in spring 2007.

**Parallel Initiative:** The Foundation expects to announce, in approximately one year’s time, an RFP for grants to individual departments that wish to examine the patterns of concentration they provide in relation to the liberal education goals of their institutions. We expect that departments applying for these grants will be especially interested in the progress of the Working Groups envisioned in the current RFP.

**Evaluation:** The Foundation will work closely with grant recipients to develop good ways of assessing the effectiveness of programs developed under this grant. We expect, however, that recipients will define in their proposal the criteria they believe will best assess the success of their work.

**White Papers:** In addition to the usual financial and narrative reports at the end of the grant, each Working Group will produce a White Paper with recommendations and suggestions for the closer co-ordination of departmental concentration and the goals of institutions committed to the liberal arts. Applicants should explain how they believe the White Paper can best be disseminated and its recommendations widely considered. The Teagle Foundation will also assist in its dissemination through our website and perhaps through conferences or publications.

#### **APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

**Preliminary approach:** An email of not more than 300 words should be sent before Friday, August 11, 2006 to [proposals@teaglefoundation.org](mailto:proposals@teaglefoundation.org). The preliminary e-mail should provide a brief description of the project, identify the Principal Investigator and the “stakeholders” likely to be involved, and outline plans for seeing that the recommendations of the resulting White Paper are widely considered. If this brief sketch of the project is of interest, the Foundation will invite a more detailed proposal.

**Final Proposal:** In four to five pages, the proposal should define the procedure to be used, identify the participants in the Working Group and the principal issues it is likely to find of greatest significance. The proposal should indicate what metric will best be used to determine the effectiveness of the project. (By “metric” we do not mean an elaborate evaluation but one or more straightforward indicators, preferably quantitative, that point to the success of the project.)

Supporting material should include:

- A cover sheet with the project title and abstract, contact information of the principal investigator, project start and end dates, amount requested, and total project cost.
- The abbreviated c.v. of the principal investigator.
- A statement of the kinds of logistical and research support the sponsoring association is able to supply to the Working Group.
- A budget as described below.

**Budget:** The maximum grant is \$75,000 payable over twenty months. The grant will normally be paid in full at the time the grant is made. The budget should be based on a July 1 - June 30 operating year and should model, to the extent possible, the attached sample budget.

The grant may be used for all direct, but no indirect, costs of the project. Appropriate expenses include travel expenses, office and research materials and assistance, meals for working dinners or similar occasions, reasonable honoraria or fees for consultants. Honoraria for members of the working group are permitted if necessary, but should not exceed \$1,000 per person, and \$5,000 for the principal investigator. A modest charge may be included for staff time at the association's office when it is devoted to support of this project.

Institutional cost sharing should be shown whenever possible.

#### **REPORTS / DELIVERABLES**

- A financial report following the format of the budget described above.
- A narrative describing how the Working Group functioned and what has been learned about collaboration and institutional organization from it.
- A publishable text of the White paper (see above), submitted to the Foundation by Monday, September 1, 2008. The Foundation will hold the copyright to these texts and intends to make them widely available over its website and perhaps through publication in book or journal form. Permission will regularly be granted to authors and sponsoring associations, however, to publish the text in any additional place they choose on whatever terms they negotiate.
- A statement about how the sponsoring association plans to disseminate the White Paper and suggestions to the Teagle Foundation about its dissemination efforts. (We will want addresses of 50 - 100 individuals and institutions outside the association whose attention to the report seems especially vital.)

## **TIMELINE**

August 11, 2006: 300 word pre-proposal due by e-mail.  
October 6, 2006: Final proposals due.  
Late November, 2006: Teagle Board action; Award letters to successful applicants.  
Spring, 2007: Meeting of leaders of funded projects.  
September 1, 2008: Final date for submission of publishable texts of White Papers and final reports.

## **WHERE TO SEND PROPOSALS**

**Preliminary proposal:** [proposals@teaglefoundation.org](mailto:proposals@teaglefoundation.org)

**Final Proposal:** The proposal plus three copies should be sent to:

The Teagle Foundation  
10 Rockefeller Plaza, Room 920  
New York, NY 10020-1903

**SAMPLE BUDGET**

*\*\*Teagle Funds may only be used for direct costs.*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Request from Teagle Foundation</b>	<b>Institution 1 cost sharing</b>	<b>Institution 2 cost sharing</b>	<b>Total (per line item)</b>
<b>2006 - 2007</b>				
Describe item and state how the cost was calculated.				
<i>Subtotal (2006 – 2007)</i>				
<b>2007 - 2008</b>				
<i>Subtotal (2007 – 2008)</i>				
<b>Total (2006 – 2008)</b>				