



Faculty Work and Student Learning in the 21st Century

Request for Planning 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 the planning stage of projects that propose—and implement—answers to these questions. We plan to fund up to 10 planning projects, at a maximum of \$15,000 each, each of up to 6-12 months duration. At the end of the planning period, we will invite proposals for implementation projects, each of which will be eligible for up to \$150,000 over two years. We anticipate funding approximately 8 implementation projects.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THIS INITIATIVE: This initiative grows out of a Listening that the Foundation held last fall, at which participants considered fundamental challenges and opportunities that bear on the nature and sustainability of liberal education. It has become clear that over-specialization in the disciplines, the fragmentation of the curriculum, the dominance of research in marking faculty professional achievement, the underperformance and low attainment of many students, the economic stratification of educational opportunity, the displacement of liberal education by career studies, the wide expectation for assessment of outcomes, and the heavy reliance on part-time and adjunct faculty have created intense challenges for many campuses and their faculties. In sum, the professional autonomy and identity of the faculty in arts and sciences is under increasing pressure.

These huge and bracing questions suggest that liberal education has never been needed more. In the re-conceptualized form of liberal education that is now dominant—that focuses on the development of key capacities (intellectual and personal), “engaged learning” of various forms, and the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of such pedagogies and the achievement of overall learning goals—we see particularly helpful approaches to the above questions (and others). The questions that drove our Listening were:

- When we understand liberal education in terms of a well-defined range of significant student learning outcomes (understood as cognitive capacities and personal competencies), then we are free to imagine any number of paths to those goals: classes and seminars, to be sure, but also engaged learning practices such as internships, service learning, research with faculty, collaborative learning, study abroad, new uses of technology, and more.
- We also realize that the new economic realities are demanding different ways of doing our work. Can the kind of re-thinking of liberal education described above help us develop ways to use our increasingly scarce resources for higher education more effectively to sustain educational quality and organizational resilience?

(For discussion of these and related issues, see the attached paper, “Re-imagining Liberal Education,” which was originally circulated in advance of the Foundation’s Listening.)

From the range of concerns and ideas expressed at our meeting, we have targeted a subset that we wish to engage in this initiative: those related to faculty work and student learning.¹

THE FOCUS OF THIS RFP: The above discussion opens into many specific questions about the work and professional identity of the faculty. We seek to fund projects that engage with some aspect of these concerns, or those identified as important for work related to the general question of how faculty work is / can / should change in response to the changing conditions—indeed, the changing nature—of undergraduate liberal education.

We are open to a wide variety of project foci and approaches to this work. As you develop your pre-proposal, keep in mind that *the project is yours to define*. Our concern is that the project be ambitious, have strategic significance for your members, grow out of evidence, and have the promise of sustainability through its integration into your members’ priorities and collegial decision-making processes, including the ongoing evaluation of its effectiveness.

Specific possibilities include:

New approaches to pedagogy, student learning and assessment built on the knowledge available to us through the “learning sciences” (cognitive science and neuroscience); creating new programs in faculty development on student learning outcomes, cognitive science, and assessment.

New ways of delivering courses: innovative use of complementary technology; designing and adapting software programs, courses or modules that can be delivered online; new forms of community-based learning; intense engagement with high impact practices (on these, see George Kuh’s *High Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* [AAC&U, 2008] and Jayne E. Brownell and Lynn E. Swaner, *Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality* [AAC&U, 2010]).

New ways of defining courses and faculty workload: What is a course when much of a student’s academic work is done online or off-campus and throughout the calendar year? Does this lead to a re-definition of faculty work in terms of time spent interacting directly with students, preparing for classes and lectures? Are the typical “credit hour” or “course load” definitions of faculty responsibilities adequate for the future? If the campus increasingly functions as a learning network (a hub of learning), how do we define faculty roles and responsibilities and student learning opportunities and goals in an era of de-localized learning?

New ways of defining departmental and institutional goals: Can a focus on student learning outcomes and their assessment lead to greater coherence in both general education and departmental majors? Can it lead to new integrations of liberal arts and professional studies?

Re-thinking of hiring, tenure and promotion criteria and practices: How should expectations for faculty work in teaching, research, and service be defined and rewarded? How can the

¹This focus is informed in part by the work of colleagues at the Midwest Alliance for Learning in the Liberal Arts, which has done some pioneering work in this area.

professional responsibilities of the faculty be more closely aligned with institutional mission and vision?

Academic Collaboration: How can colleges and universities share faculty appointments and expertise among campuses to address emerging interdisciplinary fields, and to provide offerings and opportunities for small programs?

ELIGIBILITY: The Foundation will invite a number of consortia and membership organizations to submit proposals. We expect that each consortia or organization will assure that participants in the program will work collaboratively with one or more other institutions in carrying out the planning and implementation phases of the grant.

FUNDING: Teagle support will take the form of a 6-12 month planning grant of \$15,000 followed by the possibility for funds for implementation of the project of a maximum of \$150,000 over two years.

THE PLANNING PROPOSAL: Planning proposals should be directed toward the development of innovative designs for the project that will bring together inquiry, evidence, action, and evaluation. The implementation grant should be used to develop, to pilot test, to enact as appropriate, and to evaluate an approach that is intended to be widely adopted within or across institutions, and that has been designed in the planning phase.

Before you begin planning your project, please contact Jennifer Dale (jdale@teagle.org; 212-373-1972) to set up an appointment with a member of the Foundation's program staff. This will be an *essential* first step of the work.

Planning proposals should include:

- Project Narrative:
 - General topic for the project and the rationale for it. The proposal should describe the topic, show how it grows out of current strategic priorities, and provide evidence for the need of the work.
 - Objectives for the planning process. This will certainly include the goal of developing a full proposal, but should also set an agenda for the tasks of planning, such as organizing meetings, consulting with experts, reviewing the literature, convening working groups, conducting any necessary first steps (surveys, inventories of relevant work, etc.).
 - Work plan and time line for the planning process, including identification of key participants and their roles in the project.
 - Gauge for success of this phase of the work.
- Budget and budget narrative.
- Letters of support from consortial heads and key academic leaders for the project.

We will accept planning proposals on either of two deadlines: April 15, 2011 (for consideration in May, 2011) or October 1, 2011 (for consideration in November, 2011).

Proposals should be submitted electronically to proposals@teaglefoundation.org.