

ENGAGING EVIDENCE: PROGRAMS FOR IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING

A Teagle Foundation Initiative

Request for Full Proposals

What does student learning mean for your campus? Can you develop an evidence-based program that would strengthen student learning on your campus and in so doing move your campus to a fuller achievement of its mission? Through this initiative, the Foundation aims to support institutions whose projects model a process that integrates data analysis, decision-making, and action to improve student learning. Ad hoc collaboratives of 2-4 institutions are invited to submit proposals. The total award will depend on the number of institutions in the collaborative, but in general, the collaborative can request up to \$100,000 per institution over two years. Thus, for example, the maximum award for a two-institution collaborative is \$200,000 over two years.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT FOR THIS INITIATIVE: The central goal of the Teagle Foundation's work over the last several years has been to strengthen liberal education. We have focused especially on bringing undergraduate student learning to the highest possible level, and have been particularly interested in approaches that develop on the basis of evidence of what students are already achieving.

Over the years we have done this work, we have become increasingly aware of that it is done most effectively:

- when institutions consciously frame efforts to improve student learning in terms of institutional priorities;
- when institutions find good ways of translating evidence about student learning into action, developing policies and programs focused on student learning in ways that tie into the processes by which colleges and universities govern themselves, make decisions, set priorities, allocate resources and reward performance;
- when institutions make use of information about student learning that they already have on hand, rather than beginning every initiative focused on student learning with yet another round of data gathering (important information too often sits unused in an office, or even in several offices around campus).

This initiative is designed to assist institutions in linking institutional priorities and decision-making processes to projects that aim to improve student learning outcomes, with an emphasis on helping them make effective use of existing data as they enact their projects. While we expect that each campus will identify its own assessment and improvement project, we are calling for the formation of *ad hoc* collaboratives that will serve as communities of practice for its members, who will meet regularly to provide mutual support through such activities as sharing data, discussing their interpretations of the data, giving and getting feedback on each institution's projects, and planning for dissemination of project results.

AMONG THE FACTORS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR PROPOSAL SUCCESSFUL: Successful proposals will include:

- a clear articulation of the place of student learning in each institution’s overall priorities;
- a focus on issue(s) and learning outcome(s) that are of high importance on campus.
- a plan to address the issue—and strengthen the related outcome (or outcomes)—in ways that make sense in terms of the institution’s culture, that are tied to (or can be tied to) the institution’s decision-making processes, and promise to resonate for the whole campus (or much of it).
- a plan to assess the effectiveness of the proposed work along the following lines: demonstrable improvement in student learning and teaching practices; impact on campus priorities, decision-making processes, and culture; and utility of the collaboration.
- a plan to disseminate the results and/or findings of the proposed work.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. A cover sheet which includes:
 - The name of the institution that will administer the grant (what this means is that all payments will be sent to that institution, and that that institution is responsible for assembling and submitting reports to the Foundation on behalf of the collaborative);
 - The name of the primary contact person at that institution, his or her mailing address, e-mail address and phone number;
 - The project title and a one-paragraph project summary that we can post on our website if the project is funded;
 - The project’s start and end dates;
 - The amount requested and total project cost (see budget guidelines below).
2. An narrative which includes:
 - A statement that identifies the institutions in the collaborative, articulates why the institutions have chosen to work together, and describes how the collaborative expects to function (2-3 pages);
 - Proposed project descriptions from each institution that articulate (3-4 pages each):
 - the project’s overall objectives and goals and how they speak to campus priorities
 - the specific student learning outcome(s) the campus wishes to strengthen, and why;
 - relevant preparation for this project: what data you’ve identified as useful; what analysis you’ve already done (if any) and what campus conversations you’ve already had (if any) about the data;
 - the plan for improving the learning outcomes on which you’ll focus; this should include a proposed intervention, as well as a description of how it will be implemented and how its effectiveness will be assessed;
 - how you will engage various campus constituencies (faculty, staff, dept. chairs, academic leadership, students, president, trustees, alums) in the project (either directly or as supporters / “critical friends” of the work)

- how the project—and its results—will be woven into the campus’ decision-making process (whether through formal governance structures, more informal means, or both);
 - how the project results will be disseminated on campus and to a wider higher education community
3. A timeline of project activities.
 4. A budget and budget narrative as described below.
 5. Indicators of faculty participation:
 - The names and contact information of the primary contact person for each campus in the collaborative (as well as that of the principal contact for the collaborative);
 - A list of faculty and staff at each institution who are committing themselves to work on the grant;
 - Abbreviated CVs (4 pages maximum) and brief letters of commitment from the contact person at each campus, as well as from the participating faculty members.
 6. Letters of endorsement from the presidents and senior academic officers of each institution in the collaborative.

Budget: The total award will depend on the number of institutions in the collaborative. The collaborative can request up to \$100,000 over two years per institution.

Funds may be used for all direct, but no indirect, costs of the program. Appropriate expenses include salary and fringe benefits for project leaders and support staff, stipends for participating faculty and staff, reasonable honoraria or fees for visiting experts or consultants, travel and meeting expenses, meals for working dinners or similar occasions, office and research materials, expenses related to the preparation and dissemination of reports on the project and results achieved, etc. Modest charges may be included for the development of necessary assessment instruments or the collection of data that are crucial to meeting project objectives.

The budget should be based on a July 1 – June 30 operating year. A one to two page sheet budget from each institution should suffice.

Institutional cost sharing should be shown whenever possible, including both direct (what the institutions are contributing to the project) and indirect costs (ie. overhead) borne by the participating campuses.

Budget Narrative: Please include with your budget a narrative that explains the proposed procedures for administering this grant (which will be paid to one campus but used by all in the collaborative) and that articulates the rationale behind your proposed expenditures.

DRAFTS AND DEADLINES: The Foundation is committed to working with applicants to develop successful projects, as well as to accepting proposals for consideration at any of its three Board meetings

this academic year. Foundation staff are available to answer questions by phone or email, as well as to read drafts of proposals provided that they are submitted at least two weeks ahead of the deadlines.

Deadlines are as follows:

- October 12, 2010 for funding consideration in November, 2010.
- December 15, 2010 for funding consideration in February, 2011.
- March 31, 2011 for funding consideration in May, 2011.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: An electronic copy of the final proposal (as a single PDF if possible) should be sent to proposals@teaglefoundation.org. In addition, one hard copy of the final proposal should be sent to:

The Teagle Foundation
570 Lexington Avenue, 38th Floor
New York, NY 10022

FOUNDATION CONTACTS: Please feel free to contact Donna Heiland (dheiland@teaglefoundation.org) or Cheryl Ching (cdching@teaglefoundation.org) if you have questions about this initiative.