

## TEAGLE AWARDS FOR COLLEGIA ON STUDENT LEARNING

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FROM RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

*The Teagle Foundation, recognizing the importance of new developments in cognitive psychology, assessment and other fields concerned with student learning wishes to help faculty members and graduate students in a wide variety of fields in the arts and sciences take full advantage of this learning in their teaching and curriculum development. Teagle “Collegia” are intended to explore this knowledge and test its applicability by putting it to use in improving student learning at the undergraduate level. We anticipate making at least a half dozen such grants of up to \$150,000 each, payable over three years. We regard it as especially important that the Collegia be genuinely interdisciplinary, grounded in significant research, and incorporate graduate students as full participants and colleagues.*

**BACKGROUND:** Recent research—reflected in such books as the National Academy’s *How People Learn*, Derek Bok’s *Our Underachieving Colleges*, and in journal articles in several fields—suggests we are understanding more about the maturation of the brain during late adolescence and early adulthood, about memory and retention, and about the development of higher order cognitive capacities. In addition, we are making steady progress in learning how to assess students’ development of these higher order cognitive capacities. Together these gains in knowledge raise the possibility that colleges and universities can develop more effective ways of advancing student learning at the undergraduate level. In any event, it seems important that both current and prospective faculty members have an opportunity to consider this material and, when appropriate, test its applicability in learning situations. Since exploring this knowledge and putting it to work should, in our view, be a collegial activity reaching across departments, divisions and academic statuses, we use the term “Collegia” to cover the wide range of possible programs that we are prepared to fund under this program.

#### **THE FOUNDATION’S GOALS:**

1. To assist faculty, postdocs and graduate students in exploring recent developments affecting student learning and its assessment.
2. To test the applicability of such knowledge by putting it to work and carefully evaluating its effects in individual courses and program design.
3. To develop case studies, bibliographical and web resources to help others interested in this knowledge and its application to student learning.

**ELIGIBILITY:** The program is intended for interdisciplinary groups based in research universities with highly respected programs in the arts and sciences. The Foundation welcomes but does not require inter-institutional collaborations, including those involving faculty from undergraduate colleges.

**MEANS:** We are open to a wide range of designs, provided they draw on the expertise and experience of faculty from a range of disciplines in the arts and sciences, draw on the best available scholarship on cognition, student learning and its assessment, and have in view ways of applying such knowledge to advance undergraduate learning.

**LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE:** While we expect that the conveners of the various Collegia will be highly respected faculty members with a demonstrated interest in undergraduate learning, we recognize that part of the excitement of this work comes from the fact that it is not the bailiwick of any one discipline or approach. We envision true collegial exchanges rather than top-down, master-to-apprentice approaches.

**RESOURCES:** The Teagle Foundation's website ([www.teaglefoundation.org](http://www.teaglefoundation.org)) provides bibliographical and other resources on student learning, assessment etc. Especially valuable may be the annotated bibliography, "Cognition and Brain Development in Students of Traditional College-Going Age," compiled by Jill Jeffery of New York University, which is available at <http://www.teaglefoundation.org/learning/report/CogAB.aspx>.

**HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLES:** In preparing its application, the dean of the graduate school at a research university with highly effective graduate programs (those with significant Ph.D. production in the liberal arts and sciences, and good placement records at research universities and liberal arts colleges) invites a few colleagues to form an ad hoc committee to see if a "Collegium" could be developed that would "add a string to the bow" of promising graduate students in several disciplines of the arts and sciences. The committee, after reviewing some of the literature relating to student learning and its assessment, concludes that the value of such a program would not be restricted to graduate students but could be very stimulating to faculty as well. They caution, however, that to be fully successful it should draw on the university's formidable but scattered expertise in cognitive psychology, education, and neuroscience, as well as a cluster of fields in the arts and sciences. They suggest that "the historical disciplines broadly construed" would provide a useful focal point, identify a suitable "Convener," and conclude that the Collegium should not carry credit either as a formal course for the participating graduate students, or for teaching load calculations for faculty. (The rival institution, characteristically, reaches exactly the opposite conclusion.) They also urge that one or two faculty be invited from a nearby liberal arts college. Since they also agree that the optimal number of participants in the Collegium would be 15, they develop clear and rigorous standards for selecting its members.

Once the grant is awarded, a detailed schedule is drawn up for the following year. Several small sub-groups begin working over the summer, one on recent MRI studies of the brain, another on memory issues, a third on assessment of higher order cognitive capacities. Each of these groups develops a selective reading list and set of issues for discussion. The meetings begin the following September with a lively presentation by Sam Wineburg, author of *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, but the Collegium soon finds that it does not need many outside speakers; its biweekly sessions (typically beginning with dinner at a university residence hall) have much to discuss around the work of its sub-groups and about other issues of wide interest to the group.

The Collegium makes such good progress that it is ready early in the second year to turn to the design of several experimental courses or course components aimed at testing ideas and approaches discussed during the first year. One of those components is incorporated in a course carefully evaluated during the spring semester; several others, both components and full-fledged courses, are offered during the following academic year. It proves particularly interesting to compare the results of similar courses offered at the university and at its partner liberal arts college. The careful evaluation of these courses, and the reactions of the participants themselves to the Collegium are incorporated into a report submitted to the faculty, with recommendations about ways to continue the work in the future. This report provides the basis for a well-attended session at the American Historical Association, and for a website linked to the Teagle Foundation's site and its electronic publications (see below).

**EVALUATION CRITERIA** will include:

- The quality of the Collegium's leadership;
- Indications of support and flexibility on the part of the senior academic leadership of the institution, particularly in regard to the experiments in course and program design. The imagination and effectiveness of program design;
- Effective methods of self-evaluation built into the Collegium.
- Likelihood of continuity after the grant is completed.

**CONVENING:** Not long after the grants are made the Foundation will invite the leaders of funded Collegia to a one- or two-day meeting to share ideas and approaches and meet with leaders of higher education with expertise in this area. Since a parallel RFP has invited applications from a small number of well-established consortia of liberal arts colleges, recipients of these awards may also be included in this meeting.

**SHARING OF RESULTS:** In addition to the usual financial and narrative reports at the end of each year of the grant, each grant recipient is expected to produce a succinct and clearly written Final Report designed to be helpful to other institutions interested in taking greater advantage of knowledge about student learning. The Final Report may take the form of a traditional text document, or may be a website. If desired, funds may be included in the budget to hire a professional writer or web designer. The Foundation, after reviewing Final Reports from various Collegia, will work closely with recipients to disseminate the results of the Collegia as widely as possible, through websites, etc., and perhaps special meetings or conferences convened for such purposes.

**APPLICATION PROCESS:** To respond to this RFP, please send a pre-proposal of 250-500 words describing the general design of your project to [proposals@teaglefoundation.org](mailto:proposals@teaglefoundation.org) no later than **October 31, 2007**. After the Foundation has had the opportunity to review your pre-proposal, we will let you know (by email) whether or not your organization will be invited to submit a full proposal. If the Foundation has suggestions that may be helpful in developing the proposal, we may follow up with further email or phone exchanges.

Full proposals are due on **March 31, 2008** and must include:

- A 3-4 page narrative briefly describing the organization of the Collegium, and the work plan for the group.
- An indication, as specific as possible, of the criteria for judging the success of the project once completed.
- Expected completion date. (Grants will be made in May 2008, and projects may run as long as September 1, 2011).
- A one-paragraph abstract of the project, suitable for posting on the web.
- The contact information and c.v. of the person in charge of the project.
- Letters of endorsement from several academic deans of colleges participating in the consortium. These letters should provide assurance that the experimental work of the Collegium could be facilitated without undue delay on their campuses and that the

findings of the Collegiums will be given every possible consideration and chance for implementation.

- A 1-2 page budget, based on July 1 – June 30 operating years. A one or two page sheet should suffice. The maximum grant is \$150,000 payable over three years, and funds may be used for all direct, but no indirect, costs of the program. Appropriate expenses include travel and meeting expenses, office and research materials and assistance, meals for working dinners or similar occasions, reasonable honoraria or fees for visiting experts or consultants etc. Graduate students participating may receive up to \$5,000 for each year of full participation in the Collegium, provided this grant does not displace any financial aid or teaching stipend that would otherwise be granted them. Modest stipends may be included for the leaders and members of Collegia, as may reasonable charges for the time of support staff. The awards may not be used for released time from regular teaching assignments.

Institutional cost sharing should both for indirect costs and for those direct costs borne by the university.

#### **REPORTS:**

- Interim narrative and financial reports due by July 31 of each of the first two grant years. Financial reports should follow the format of the budget submitted with the original proposal.
- A final narrative report describing how the Working Group functioned and what has been learned about collaboration and institutional organization from it, along with a final financial report, again following the format of the budget submitted with the original proposal. These reports will be due one month after the project's completion date.
- A paper or web presentation useful to other institutions, as described above. Publishable texts must be submitted to the Teagle Foundation by the stated completion date of the project.

#### **SUBMISSION OF FINAL PROPOSALS:**

An electronic copy of the final proposal should be sent to [proposals@teaglefoundation.org](mailto:proposals@teaglefoundation.org) by **March 31, 2008**. In addition, three hard copies of the final proposal (an original plus two copies) should be sent to

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

Funding decisions will be made at the May 2008 meeting of the Foundation's Board of Directors.