

## 2026 PLC Themes

The Morgan Teaching and Learning Center, Educational Development Council (EDC) and Academic Technology Center (ATC) are excited to announce the next round of Teaching Innovation Grants for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). We are deeply appreciative of the enthusiastic response and innovative ideas submitted during our initial call for statements of interest. We are now ready to solicit formal applications for two distinct PLC themes, both of which can accommodate approaches that utilize artificial intelligence and/or other educational technologies.

### Exploring Project-Based Learning (PBL)--Reimagining PBL for the Next Generation of WPI Education

- Project-based learning has shaped WPI's identity for over five decades—but how might we reimagine its possibilities to meet the needs of today's learners and tomorrow's disciplines? This peer learning community invites faculty and staff to collectively explore innovative approaches to PBL that expand our understanding of what project-based education can achieve in a modern educational context
- Members will have opportunities to pilot new approaches in their courses, share findings with colleagues, and contribute to WPI's continued leadership in project-based education. Whether you're looking to refine existing PBL practices or completely reimagine your approach, this community offers a supportive space for innovation and scholarly exploration.

### Applying Learning Science to Course Design - From Research to Practice: Evidence-Based Teaching at WPI

- How can insights from cognitive science and educational research transform the way we structure our courses and engage students? This professional learning community brings together educators interested in grounding their pedagogical decisions in empirical evidence about how people learn, retain, and transfer knowledge.
- Topics may include optimizing homework and assessment design, structuring effective peer learning opportunities, leveraging principles of multimedia learning, and building student self-regulation and metacognitive skills, among other topics. Participants will develop evidence-based course innovations that can inform departmental and institutional conversations about best practices in pedagogy and instructional design.

In a PLC, each member pursues their own project while meeting monthly with the multidisciplinary community for peer feedback and support. **Please submit your application to participate in a PLC or serve as a facilitator by February 9, 2026.**

Having responded to the survey in November is neither necessary nor sufficient to apply to a PLC. If you submitted a statement of interest for a theme that is *not* supported, or if you would rather work independently on a project, we encourage you to submit a Course and Program Project (CPP) proposal instead. CPP proposals are also welcome in any area related to innovation in undergraduate and graduate education. *Proposals, whether for a PLC or CPP grant, will merit funding only if they go beyond normal expectations for renewal and improvement of curricula and pedagogical strategies.*

Details about expectations and funding, along with application procedures and criteria for selection for both types of grants and for PLC facilitators, can be found in the [Call for Proposals and Program Guidelines](#). Application forms are found on the same webpage. Please feel free to contact any of us with questions.

Please note that all proposals, whether for a PLC or CPP grant, must demonstrate innovation beyond standard curriculum and pedagogy improvements to merit funding. We are looking for projects that push the boundaries of traditional teaching methods and contribute significantly to the advancement of education at WPI, particularly those that include individuals who have not participated in these funding mechanisms previously.

We look forward to your creative and impactful proposals as we continue to enhance the educational experience at our institution. Your participation in these PLCs will not only benefit your own teaching practice but also contribute to the broader academic community at WPI.

On behalf of EDC members: Jessi Hill (MTLC), Mike Buckholt (BBT), Geoff Pfeifer (DiGS), Stacy Shaw (SS&PS), Brooke Adams (Student, PH '26), David Kohorn (Student, CS, '27), Kate Beverage (ATC-TTL), Caitlin Neer (ATC), and Mary Courtemanche (MTLC)

*P.S. Securing PLC/CPP funding demonstrates a proactive commitment to evidence-based pedagogical innovation, which is valued in the tenure and promotion process.*