Teaching Innovation Grants
Call for Proposals and Program Guidelines
2021

I. Overview

Grant opportunities for 2021 have expanded! Three types of grants are available.

The Morgan Teaching and Learning Center, the Educational Development Council (EDC), and the Academic Technology Center (ATC) will award up to $75,000 in teaching innovation grants. The goal is to enrich learning experiences for WPI students and foster a climate of teaching innovation by supporting faculty to seed bold new initiatives in undergraduate and graduate education. Proposals in any area are welcome. Possible topics include but are not limited to: issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the curriculum and teaching practices; development and assessment of global and intercultural competency; ethics across the curriculum; significant redesign of courses for active learning classrooms; interdisciplinary initiatives; innovative graduate education; and leveraging new technologies for pedagogical purposes. Two types of grants are available from this group: **Faculty Learning Community (FLC) grants** and **Independent Project (IP) grants**. See section IV and V, respectively, for details about each. *Proposals, whether for a FLC or IP grant, will merit funding only if they go beyond normal expectations for renewal and improvement of curricula and pedagogical strategies.* The proposal deadline is February 15, 2021 and awards will be announced in D-term. All questions about these grants should be directed to morgan-center@wpi.edu.

Undergraduate Studies is dedicating up to $50,000 for **Summer Sandbox Grants** to support faculty who will design and test new approaches to teaching and advising in an undergraduate summer course or project. This is an opportunity to use summer as a learning laboratory for the academic year. Support is available for faculty who wish to develop online and hybrid teaching skills, groups of faculty in a department or program who are developing new approaches for core and large-enrollment courses, and for any faculty exploring fundamentally new approaches to teaching and learning. See Section III for more details. Faculty who wish to offer a summer course or project to test their ideas are encouraged to use this grant mechanism. The proposal deadline is February 15, 2021. All questions about these grants should be directed to Debra Boucher (dlboucher@wpi.edu), Director of Special Academic Programs in Undergraduate Studies.

II. Eligibility

All tenured and tenure-track faculty and full-time teaching-track faculty are eligible to apply for all three types of Teaching Innovation Grants. Full-time professional staff with significant educational roles are eligible for FLCs and may be part of an Independent Project group if the group also includes one or more full-time faculty members. Part-time adjunct faculty are also eligible for FLC and IP grants, but full-time faculty will be given priority. The PI of Independent Projects must be a full-time faculty member. There are no restrictions or limits on the number of

proposals that an individual may submit.

III. Summer Sandbox Grants

At its best, E Term functions as a sandbox where faculty have the space and resources to develop new skills and experiment with new ideas. Undergraduate Studies (UGS) has set aside $50,000 for faculty development in the summer budget. There are a few areas we are most interested in supporting:

Individual courses: Faculty redesigning an undergraduate course (or courses) for online or hybrid modes can receive a development stipend of $3000. As in previous summers, UGS would also ensure faculty that these new courses would be paid at the full course rate (even if enrollment is low). The goal is to support innovation and experimentation, and to prioritize courses that will also be taught again in the regular academic year.

Department initiatives: In the past, UGS has worked with academic departments to develop projects focused on undergraduate large-enrollment and core courses regularly delivered by a large number of faculty. We seek to support strategic initiatives that will have a broad impact on a sequence of courses. For example, we would support the development of high-quality videos for online courses. This project has involved multiple faculty, support from the ATC, and a creative compensation model. We would like to offer the opportunity for these kinds of projects moving forward.

Expanded impact initiatives: Many faculty have experimented with new technologies and new approaches during the current crisis and we seek to support faculty who wish to continue to develop these approaches and also help other faculty use and adapt these methods. We also seek to support faculty groups who are interested in researching the impact of emergency remote learning, online teaching, and tech flex during the pandemic. The goal would be to learn from this season of innovation, to continue to develop the innovations already started, and consider how it will impact the future of learning at WPI.

*Other options***:** We have identified areas of potential innovation and exploration but leave open the likelihood that individual faculty or teams of faculty are best able to articulate opportunities for fruitful collaborations, problem solving, and innovation we have not imagined. If you have such an idea, please reach to dlboucher@wpi.edu for a conversation about how we might work together to reach your goals.

Application Process for Summer Sandbox Grants

Individual course grants

1. Send an email to Dlboucher@wpi.edu describing the course, including the term (E1 or E2), that you wish to teach. Departmental decisions regarding course assignments will be respected, so be sure to confer with your department head or program director before submitting your plan.

2. Please include a short paragraph describing what you hope to gain from this experience.

Department-centered projects & expanded impact initiatives

1. **Cover Page and Budget with Justification** (see template on Morgan Center website)

    Applicants are encouraged to contact Debra Boucher in advance of submission to discuss budget needs and funding levels.

2. **Project Description:** This narrative should not exceed two pages. The narrative should discuss:

    i.   ***Need for the project:*** Describe the course to be taught or projects to be advised, including a discussion of how the course meets a need during the academic year;

    ii. ***Approach***: Describe what new approaches to teaching and advising you will be learning or developing;

    iii. ***Outcomes:*** Describe how you will measure the impact of the work and, if appropriate, how you will share the results within and outside WPI;

    iv. ***Project timeline***

IV. Faculty Learning Community Grants

A Faculty Learning Community (FLC) is a group of faculty (or a mix of faculty and staff) from multiple disciplines engaging in collegial inquiry, action, and collective learning around a central theme. Each participant in a FLC plans, implements, and assesses their own project, with regular peer review, feedback, and support from the group. FLCs may also work together to develop and test teaching and learning resources for the campus community.

A. Potential Themes and FLC Formation Mechanisms

FLC themes emerge from collective faculty interests. A [virtual wine & cheese mixer](#) will be held on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 from 3-4pm to facilitate networking and identification of themes with broad interest. In addition, beginning on December 7, a [discussion board](#) will be open on the Morgan Center Canvas site for faculty and staff to share ideas and interests. Two FLC formation mechanisms may be used:

1) ***Self-formed:*** Applications are encouraged from self-identified groups of 4-10 people working around a common theme. Strong preference will be given to teams that include members across multiple disciplines.

2) ***EDC-formed:*** Based on emerging faculty interests, the EDC-ATC selection committee may announce interest in a particular theme and invite individuals to apply. In this case, the review committee would review proposals from individual applicants and select a diverse group of FLC members. Any EDC-initiated FLC themes will be announced by early January.

Following are examples of recent FLC themes:

*   ***STEM for Justice.*** Each person in this self-formed group of 10 faculty from 9 departments revised or created course activities or assignments to infuse social justice content into STEM curricula or to bring a STEM focus to non-STEM social justice-based courses.

*   ***Reflections, Connections, and ePortfolios.*** Each person in this EDC-formed group redesigned a course or co-curricular experience using ePortfolio pedagogy, in an effort to increase reflective practice among students, to help students make intentional choices about their education, and to connect and transfer their learning across contexts.

*   ***Project-Based Courses.*** Each faculty member in this EDC-formed group transformed one of their current courses to move away from exam-based assessments to include a significant component of project-based learning.

B. Commitment, Expectations, and Funding of FLC Members

FLCs require a 9-month or 12-month commitment during the range of May 15, 2021 to May 15,

2022, depending on whether summer planning for projects is needed. (The time period should be stated in proposals from self-formed groups. The EDC will communicate the time period for any EDC-formed groups.) Each FLC member will be expected to:

- prepare for, attend, and actively participate in monthly meetings over the FLC period
- conduct a project that is aligned with the FLC theme and assess or evaluate the outcomes
- submit a summary of the outcomes of their FLC project by June 1, 2022 or contribute to a group report of outcomes
- share their work with a larger audience, by giving a presentation on their work, by providing resource materials on the topic of the FLC for the larger teaching community, by publishing the findings of their work, or through some other means

Each application for a self-formed FLC should propose its own budget. Faculty stipends are typical and generally range between $1,000 - $3,000 depending on project scope. Following are some guidelines for faculty stipends:

- Estimate the time commitment for the projects in your FLC and propose a stipend accordingly
- Stipends on the order of $3,000 should generally signal that each awardee will undertake significant course redesign, resource development and testing, or assessment/research projects. Lower stipends would be appropriate for smaller scale projects such as development of innovative modules or assignments.
- Other stipends recently offered for significant faculty professional development activities may serve as a point of reference: summer course redesign ($3,000), KEEN ICE workshop and module development ($1,500), Great Problems Seminar Summer Institute ($1,500), Faculty Institute for Online Teaching ($1,500), Summer Institute on Teaching with Writing ($1,000).
- The EDC typically funds 1-2 FLCs each year at levels ranging between $15K - $20K each. Proposals with a balance of quality, impact, and cost effectiveness are more likely to be funded.

Stipends will be awarded when the work of the FLC is complete. Stipends will be awarded as salary, in a lump-sum payment such that benefits will not be charged. (However, those payments will still be taxed.) In addition to stipends, funds may be proposed to facilitate the work of the FLC. Examples include external speakers or consultants, books, food for meetings (in anticipation of pandemic restrictions being eased), and wages for student assistants or student members of FLCs. Justification must be included in the application.

In the event that the EDC invites individual applications to join an EDC-formed FLC, the time period and stipend will be specified in the announcement.

Exempt professional staff with 12 month appointments may not receive additional compensation, per HR/labor guidelines. Staff who wish to be part of an FLC should discuss with their supervisor how their work activities will be adjusted during the grant period. The budget may include funds for staff members to utilize toward specific professional development such as a conference, workshop, publications, or other resource or activity that will enable or enrich their project.

C. Commitment, Expectations, and Funding of FLC Facilitators

FLCs are facilitated by a faculty or staff member with experience or interest in the FLC theme. The Morgan Center can assist with identification of facilitators if need be. The facilitator should

be clearly identified in the proposal.

The facilitator's general responsibilities are to foster a collegial environment among the FLC participants and support them in achieving their individual and collective goals. Faculty who will be in residence at off-campus project centers are not eligible to apply. Specific responsibilities include:

- Scheduling monthly meetings
- Setting the agenda for each meeting with input from the group
- Arranging meeting space and catering (post-pandemic) with the assistance of the Program Coordinator in the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center
- Selecting some common reading for the group at the start of the FLC (encouraged)
- Facilitating discussion and dialogue that helps each person refine their ideas using constructive feedback during the planning and implementation stages
- Conducting some informal formative evaluation throughout the year about how the FLC is going and making adjustments
- Arranging for resource sharing through a Canvas site or other mechanism
- Budget oversight
- Encouraging internal and external dissemination of the group's work

Facilitators will receive a stipend of $1,000 for their facilitation role. If the facilitator also conducts their own project within the group, they will receive $1,000 on top of the stipend budgeted for FLC members.

D.   Application Process for Faculty Learning Communities

Applications for both self-formed and EDC-formed FLCs are due by February 15. The application form (linked on the Morgan Center website) requests a 1-2 page narrative response to three questions from each individual member, with additional information provided by the facilitator. Applications for self-formed FLCs should be a single compiled document that includes all individual information as well as budget information provided by the facilitator. Proposals should be sent as an email attachment to morgan-center@wpi.edu.

All FLC applicants are asked to discuss their proposal with their department head so that department heads are aware of their teaching innovation goals and interests and potential time commitment. Department heads are then asked to submit a very brief statement of support to morgan-center@wpi.edu by February 20, 2021.

The review committee will use the following criteria when evaluating FLC proposals: 1) group composition, thematic coherence among members, and commitment to collaboration; 2) potential scope of impact; 3) presence of strategic, innovative or distinctive elements; and 4) cost effectiveness. Applicants will be notified in D term whether or not their proposal has been accepted.

E.   Reporting Requirements and Grant Conditions

- Grantees are responsible for consulting with WPI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine if the project involves human subjects and constitutes exempt or non-exempt activity.
- Each FLC member is expected to submit a brief summary of the outcomes of their FLC

project by June 1, 2022 or contribute to a group report of outcomes.

- The facilitator is responsible for budget oversight and must approve any disbursement of funds. All funds unexpended by the end of the FLC period will be returned to the EDC or IT Division for redistribution the following year. Extensions must be requested in writing.

V.   Independent Project Grants

This grant mechanism is intended for applicants, either individuals or small groups, whose project does not draw faculty from multiple disciplines, does not fit with a FLC theme, and for those who cannot or do not wish to commit to the scope or regular interaction of a FLC. In general, these grants aim to promote innovative, evidence-based pedagogy and curricula that enhance student learning, provide seed money for pilot projects that will strengthen proposals for external funding, support evaluation of ongoing or proposed innovations aimed at publication, and support professional development or external partnerships related to teaching and learning. In addition, grants may assist faculty in designing their instructional approaches using technology to achieve enhanced learning, take advantage of efficiencies that can be realized through the use of emerging technologies for teaching, and evaluate the impact of new instructional approaches.

This program does *not* fund routine updating or renewal of courses, curricula, or teaching methods.

A.   Funding Levels, Allowable Costs, and Instructions for Budget Justification

Applicants propose their own budget. Awards have usually ranged from $3,000 to $10,000 in recent years. Evidence of cost-sharing from the program or department, or from other sources, often strengthens a proposal but is not essential. Following are instructions about allowable costs and budget justification:

Faculty compensation. Faculty compensation is appropriate only for those who have less than 12 month appointments and for activity that extends beyond normal expectations for teaching renewal and improvement; applicants are advised to address this latter point in their budget justification. Faculty compensation may be used either for summer support or academic year release time (pending approval of department head). Compensation is granted as lump-sum payment in monthly payroll such that benefits will not be charged.

Exempt professional staff with 12 month appointments may not receive additional compensation. Staff who wish to participate in a grant-supported project should discuss with their supervisor how their work activities will be adjusted during the grant period.

Student wages. Applicants are encouraged to hire undergraduate or graduate students for project activities whenever appropriate. The budget justification must describe the student(s)' responsibilities, specify the hourly wage, and estimate the number of hours. Wages typically range from $12.50 (minimum) to $15 for undergraduate students, and $15-20 for graduate students, depending on required skill set and time of year. Student tuition cannot be supported by this grant program.

Fees for an assessment or evaluation consultant. Working with an evaluation consultant is encouraged, as early as the proposal development stage. The quality of evaluation plans is considered during review. To inquire about the availability of in-house evaluation or to ask further questions, please contact the Morgan Center's Research and Evaluation Associate, Kimberly LeChasseur, by completing this form.

Supplies, software, and equipment. Software or equipment necessary for enabling a pedagogical experiment that will be assessed is suitable for funding. *This grants program does not provide funding for software and equipment for routine education of WPI students or to bolster relatively new interdisciplinary programs, since that type of support normally should come from department capital or IT budgets.*

Travel and professional development related to the project. General transfer of funds to Professional Development Accounts, for either professional staff or faculty, is not allowed, but specific professional development activity will be supported. Explain how a specific conference, workshop, or other type of professional development experience will enable or enrich the proposed work, and estimate expenses including registration, travel, lodging, and food.

Other types of costs may well be appropriate to a particular project. Please consult with Chrys Demetry if you have questions.

B. Application Procedures

Proposals must contain the following:

1. **Cover Page and Budget with Justification** (see [Morgan Center website](#))

2. **Project Description:** This narrative should not exceed three single-spaced typewritten pages with 11 point or larger font. Use of headings is recommended. The narrative should discuss:

   (a) ***Need for the project:*** scope of the problem or opportunity to be addressed, relevant background (e.g., current literature, current practices and resources);

   (b) ***Approach:*** project objectives, methods or procedures to be used, a plan for assessing and evaluating project results, innovative elements;

   (c) ***Outcomes:*** anticipated impacts on WPI students and the institution; further directions that the project might take; a plan for dissemination and/or future funding.

   (d) ***Project timeline***

The proposal deadline is February 15, 2021. Proposals should be sent as an email attachment to morgan-center@wpi.edu and should consist of a single pdf document (title page, budget with justification, and project description).

Department head endorsement: The PI for IP proposals should discuss their proposal with their department head so that department heads are aware of their teaching innovation goals and interests and potential time commitment. Department heads are then asked to submit a very brief statement of support to morgan-center@wpi.edu by February 20, 2021.

Review criteria: The review committee will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria: 1) educational soundness of the approach (including plans for assessment or evaluation) and likelihood of success; 2) potential scope of impact; 3) presence of innovative and distinctive elements; and 4) cost effectiveness. Applicants will be notified in D term whether or not their proposal has been accepted.

C. Reporting Requirements and Grant Conditions

- Grantees are responsible for consulting with WPI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine if the project involves human subjects and constitutes exempt or non-exempt activity.

- The PI is responsible for budget oversight and must approve any disbursement of funds. All funds unexpended by the deadline reporting date will be returned to the EDC or IT Division for redistribution the following year. Extensions must be requested in writing.

- At the conclusion of the funded project, the PI must submit a brief written report that documents the outcomes of the project.

VI. Contacts

All questions about Summer Sandbox Grants should be directed to Debra Boucher (dlboucher@wpi.edu) in Undergraduate Studies.

Prospective applicants for Faculty Learning Communities and Independent Projects are invited to contact any faculty member of the EDC (Esther Boucher, Marja Bakermans, Jill Rulfs, Chrys Demetry) or ATC staff (Kate Beverage, Mary Beth Harrity) with questions prior to submission. With sufficient advance notice, Chrys Demetry (cdemetry@wpi.edu) and Kate Beverage (kwrigley@wpi.edu) may be able to provide feedback on proposal drafts. To inquire about the availability of our in-house evaluator, please contact the Morgan Center's Research and Evaluation Associate, Kimberly LeChasseur, by completing this form.