Teaching Innovation Grants
Call for Proposals and Program Guidelines
2019

I. Overview and Program Description

The Morgan Teaching and Learning Center, the Educational Development Council (EDC), and the Academic Technology Center (ATC) aim 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. A total of $75,000 in funds from the Morgan endowment, Information Technology division, and the Educational Development Council is available for distribution. The proposal deadline is February 1, 2019, and awards will be announced in D-term.

Proposals in any area are welcome. Possible topics include but are not limited to: development and assessment of global and intercultural competency; issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the curriculum and teaching practices; ethics across the curriculum; significant redesign of courses for active learning classrooms; innovative graduate education; and leveraging new technologies for pedagogical purposes.

Two types of grants are available: Faculty Learning Community (FLC) grants and Independent Project (IP) grants. See sections III and IV for details about each type. 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. We also seek applications from faculty or staff members wishing to serve as FLC facilitators (see Section III.C).

II. Eligibility

All tenured and tenure-track faculty and full-time non-tenure track faculty are eligible to apply for 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 both types of 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. 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. (More information about FLCs can be found here.) Faculty and staff members apply as individuals, and the awardees become members of the FLC. Each participant in a FLC plans, implements, and assesses their own project, with regular peer review, feedback, and support from the group. FLCs are facilitated by a faculty or staff member with experience or interest in
A. Potential Themes

FLC themes emerge from faculty interests. Possible themes include, but are not limited to, the FLC themes from recent years that are listed below. Proposals for additional FLC themes are encouraged and will be elicited during the faculty/staff social hosted by the Educational Development Council on Thursday, November 29 (4-6pm, Higgins House). Alternatively, send a brief description of the theme to Prof. Chrys Demetry, Director of the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center, by November 30 (cdemetry@wpi.edu).

Themes of recent Faculty Learning Communities may be included among the pool of possibilities:

- **Reflections, Connections, and ePortfolios.** Investigating how WPI’s new ePortfolio platform can be used to enhance integrative learning and reflective practice, helping students make intentional choices and connect and transfer their learning across contexts.

- **Project-Based Courses.** Transforming current courses, at the undergraduate or graduate level, to include a significant component of project-based learning.

- **Global and Intercultural Competency.** Experimenting with ways of developing and assessing students’ global or intercultural competency and incorporating issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity more explicitly across the curriculum.

- **Visual Communication.** Developing and testing teaching and learning resources in courses or projects to help students, instructors, and advisors across disciplines to critically view, use, and produce visual content such as images, illustrations, models, graphs and charts, and other data visualizations.

After the November 29 social, the EDC will select one or more FLC themes based on online statements of interest submitted by December 10. (See details in Section D below.)

B. Commitment, Expectations, and Funding of FLC Members

A FLC requires a one year commitment, from May 15, 2019 to May 15, 2020. FLC members will be expected to:

- prepare for, attend, and actively participate in monthly meetings beginning in May 2019 (those at off-campus project centers will be asked to participate virtually)
- 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, 2020
- 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 faculty member in a FLC will receive a fixed stipend of $6,000 in two stages. The first half will be awarded at the end of August 2019 and the remainder will be awarded at the end of May 2020 when the collective work of the FLC is complete. Funds will be awarded as faculty compensation, in a lump-sum payment such that benefits will not be charged. In special circumstances, some of the award funds may be directed to equipment or specific professional development activities necessary for the project.

The $6,000 stipend for FLC grants means that each awardee should undertake significant course redesign, resource development and testing, or assessment/research projects. Anyone wishing to gather together a group of faculty to experiment with smaller projects or
interventions (e.g., integration of modules or assignments) should formulate an Independent Project proposal instead, with smaller amounts of faculty compensation.

Exempt professional staff with 12 month appointments may not receive additional compensation. Staff who wish to apply to a FLC should discuss with their supervisor how their work activities will be adjusted during the grant period. Up to $2,000 will be available for staff members to utilize toward publications, a conference, workshop, or other type of professional development experience that will enable or enrich their project. General transfer of funds to Professional Development Accounts is not allowed for either faculty or staff members of FLCs.

C. Commitment, Expectations, and Funding of FLC Facilitators

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, 2-hour meetings (from May through April)
- Arranging meeting space and catering with the assistance of the Academic Events Planner
- Selecting some common reading for the group at the start of the FLC
- Setting the agenda for each meeting with input from the group
- 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 partway through the year about how the FLC is going
- Arranging for resource sharing through a Canvas site or other mechanism
- Encouraging internal and external dissemination of the group’s work

Facilitators of a FLC who are faculty members will receive a $6,000 stipend in two stages. The first half will be awarded at the end of August 2019 and the remainder will be awarded at the end of May 2020 when the collective work of the FLC is complete. Funds will be awarded as faculty compensation, in a lump-sum payment such that benefits will not be charged.

If the facilitator is a staff member with a 12-month salary, up to $6,000 will be made available to utilize toward publications, a conference, workshop, or other type of professional development experience that will enable or enrich their facilitation efforts.

D. Two-Stage Application Process for Faculty Learning Communities

Since only one or two FLCs can be funded and since a critical mass of participants is necessary, a two stage process will be used to first identify FLC themes and then select participants and facilitators:

1. **Statement of interest**: Potential applicants should indicate their interest in a particular FLC theme using a brief online form. A statement consists of just a few sentences or a short paragraph and should be submitted by December 10. Submitting a statement does not constitute a commitment to submit a full proposal, but we hope that you will. The review committee will review statements to assess the level and substance of interest in each theme. Therefore, we recommend that faculty who are excited about a particular theme recruit colleagues, particularly those in other departments, to submit statements.
of interest. **By December 20 the selection committee will announce one or more themes for which full FLC applications will be accepted. Anyone who wishes to apply to a particular FLC should then submit an application by the deadline of February 1.**

People who have strong interest in a theme that is not selected for a FLC will be encouraged to submit an Independent Project proposal instead.

2. **Application:** Applications to FLCs are due by February 1 and will be open to all, regardless of whether they submitted an initial statement of interest. The application form (linked on the Morgan Center website) requests a 1-2 page narrative response to three questions. Applicants must also solicit and submit a brief letter of support from their department head or supervisor.

Applications to be a facilitator of a FLC are also due by February 1. The application form can be found on the Morgan Center website.

The review committee will use the following criteria to select FLC participants: level of interest and insight into the FLC theme; originality of initial ideas; commitment and potential contributions to the collaborative nature of the FLC; and the desires for a diverse, multidisciplinary group and for a collection of projects with thematic coherence.

Facilitators will be selected based on: evidence of interpersonal communication skills, organizational skills, and experience with the FLC theme.

**IV. Independent Project Grants**

This grant mechanism is intended for applicants, either individuals or small groups, whose project 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. Grants 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 rather than as summer salary, 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. 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 our new in-house evaluator 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 1, 2019. Proposals should be sent as an email attachment to
and should consist of a single pdf document (title page with signatures, budget with justification, and project description).

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.

**V. Contacts**

Prospective applicants are invited to contact any faculty member of the EDC (Marja Bakermans, Nikhil Karanjgaokar, Balaji Panchapakesan, Chrys Demetry) or the ATC (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 new in-house evaluator, please contact the Morgan Center’s Research and Evaluation Associate, Kimberly LeChasseur, by completing this form.