



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ENGAGED LEARNING, STUDENT WELL-BEING, AND STUDENT CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

Proposals are requested for projects during 2007-2010 that will enable colleges and universities to build capacity for institutionalizing forms of engaged learning and to understand their relation to outcomes affecting the well-being and civic development of students.

Category I Mini-Grants and Student Programming Grants

Up to \$2,500. Matching support is not required. Multiple mini-grants from an institution for separate projects are permitted. Rolling application and award deadlines.

Category II Program or Research Start-up Initiative Grants

Up to \$10,000. Matching support is expected. May be renewable. Rolling application and award deadlines.

Category III Demonstration Site Grants

Up to \$45,000 per year for two years, totaling \$90,000. Matching support is required. May be renewable. Applications due April 1, 2007.

Category IV Intensive Site Grants

Up to \$250,000 total for three years. Matching support is required. Applications due April 15, 2007.

Bringing Theory to Practice Project is an independent project in partnership with the Association for American Colleges and Universities, and funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation, with additional support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, the William and Mary Greve Foundation, the Bank of New York, Brookfield Financial Properties, and individual donors.

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SECTION I: BACKGROUND

The Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BTtoP) is an independent project established in partnership with the Association for American Colleges and Universities, and funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation with additional support from other individuals and institutions.

During its initial years, BTtoP has provided funds for projects that enable colleges and universities to build capacity in ways that can be determined to promote mental health and well-being of students and contribute to their civic development. More than 210 colleges and universities have been associated with BTtoP to date, more than 40 of which have received grant support for programmatic or research work. Seven institutions presently serve as national demonstration sites.

BTtoP develops and evaluates engaged learning strategies - including service-learning and community-based research – which have positive outcomes for the mental health and well-being and civic development of students. The initiative originated out of concern for the rising levels of disengagement by students—academic, emotional, and behavioral.

- Student academic disengagement and resentment at being asked to be intensively involved in their learning are common reports at many institutions.
- More than 40 percent of undergraduates self-report experiences of depression sufficient to interrupt their academic work.
- Nearly 25 percent of full-time undergraduates report self-abusive uses of alcohol and drugs for the purpose of approaching or achieving unconsciousness.
- Civic disengagement among college-aged populations is increasing to levels which are alarming and may jeopardize the scope and quality of a democratic society.

Through its grants for research and program development, its national conferences, workshops, and publications (activities involving students, faculty, professional staff, and institutional leaders), the BTtoP Project promotes recognition of the several interdependent core purposes of liberal education and how achieving those purposes may require changes in educational expectations, delivery, and rewards.

BTtoP assumes that colleges and universities have a level of responsibility for the health and well-being of the student “as a whole person” and not just the academic enterprise. Its initial research and activities indicate that intensive and persisting forms of engaged learning contribute to the health and well-being, in addition to the civic development of students.

The program aims to affect the general student population, and does not assume that engaged learning should substitute for clinical psychological, psychiatric, or medical care needed for students with severe depression or mental illness. Nor does it assume that

brief engaged learning “events” are a substitute for sustainable institutional strategies that affect either learning or behavior over the long haul.

“Engaged learning” includes strategies – such as service-learning and community-based research - that promote active student participation, critical reflection, and encounters by students with their own privileges, presumptions, and priorities. Such learning raises expectations of students, enables them to consider how their learning affects and is affected by its application, and enhances the educational process by increasing their involvement in learning. We understand that such engagement has potential to promote positive mental health and well-being of students, and to strengthen their social and civic development.

Some engaged learning examples and strategies include:

- Faculty and students collaborate with local residents in a long-term project to plan, implement, and evaluate projects in a neighborhood adjacent to campus, and combine this with campus seminars to integrate theory and practice, and reflect on the experience.
- A first-year program requires students who share common housing to enroll in a set of living and learning for-credit courses emphasizing issues identified by local communities.
- At a large public university, faculties adopt a curricular requirement that all first year and second year students enroll in a service-learning course in their area of concentration. Intensive evaluation is built into the project, examining multiple outcomes, including changes in patterns of alcohol abuse, and comparing those to longitudinal data maintained by the university’s institutional research office.
- At a small liberal arts college, the Provost appoints a task force to formulate a comprehensive strategy for engaged learning, including ideas for curricular development and initiatives to reward faculty who connect these approaches with other mental health and prevention programs.
- An Undergraduate Research Program involves students and faculty as close collaborative partners in research projects that address important issues identified with the involvement of local community members and agencies. Students, and their faculty advisors, link their research to the students’ requirement of a “capstone” thesis or research experience.
- A theater department project has students study and offer performances that focus on consideration of depression and mental health issues that are frequently stigmatized and are not normally discussed openly. Following the performances, student-led discussions with the audience authenticate what students are actually experiencing.

We recognize that there are various forms of engaged learning; that well-being, civic development, and other key terms require local clarification; and that the relationship between engaged learning and mental health and well-being outcomes is neither linear nor directly causal.

Our emphasis on evaluation grows from our desire to learn more about strategies that build upon emergent or established efforts and that can gather information to assess the nature and extent of the intellectual, emotional, behavioral, and civic outcomes of engaged learning.

Publications, research reviews, announcements and reports are available on the BTtoP website, www.bringingtheorytopractice.org.

Proposals are sought for funding support during 2007-2010, both from current recipients of grants as well as from institutions that are new to the BTtoP Project.

SECTION II: OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE BTtoP PROJECT

- OBJECTIVE I. BTtoP is committed to supporting the research and programmatic development that will lead to greater understanding of how the practice and encouragement of particular pedagogies, and the educational structures that support engaged learning, affect learning outcomes, as well as outcomes that are aspects of student well-being and student civic development.
- OBJECTIVE II. BTtoP is committed to the objective of demonstrating how colleges and universities use insights and shared practices to build capacity for supporting and rewarding those persons practicing engaged forms of learning and pedagogies, and to thereby institutionalize the means that can be determined to promote the learning, the well-being, and the civic development of students.
- OBJECTIVE III. BTtoP aims to develop a field of practice, subject of study, and learning community exploring the connections among engaged learning, student mental health and well-being, and civic development.
- OBJECTIVE IV. BTtoP aims to encourage the renewal of the purposes of liberal education, including the integration of learning and discovery with deepened self-realization and the recognition of responsibility for active civic engagement.

SECTION III: CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS

I. Does the project intend to determine the linkages among engaged learning, mental health and well-being, and civic development of students?

II. Does the project intend to build institutional capacity? Does it affect the general population? Does it develop models with potential for adaptation?

III. Does the project promote the integration of the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and civic development of the student “as a whole person”?

IV. Does the project have a qualified person and core group with potential to represent key campus constituencies, formulate strategy, and provide leadership over the long haul?

V. Does the project have potential to increase student and faculty involvement in forms of engaged learning, including integration of resources from beyond the classroom?

VI. Does the project promise to evacuate and disseminate findings to individuals and institutions in a systematic fashion, including addressing such concerns as self-identification bias and bias implicit in studies that examine only small numbers of participants or only one approach.

VII. Does the project enable the institution to take emergent or existing work to the next level, or support entirely new initiatives that reflect recognition of what has been learned by applicants on their own campus and elsewhere?

VIII. Does the project demonstrate strong institutional commitment by senior leadership that usually includes the president and vice presidents for academic affairs and student affairs, in addition to faculty and students?

IX. Does the institution, whether large or small, have the capacity for evaluation, including the ability to gather empirical data, assess outcomes, and answer specific evaluative questions.

X. Does the institution have a project team that represents relevant campus constituencies and does it consider the ways it can strengthen the implementation and sustainability of the initiative?

SECTION IV: CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT

CATEGORY I: MINI-GRANTS AND STUDENT PROGRAMMING GRANTS

Mini-Grants

Mini-grants up to \$2,500 are available to institutions initiating, or extending, conversations on their campus that lead to the planning, implementation, or assessment of program or research projects directly related to the objectives of BTtoP.

Mini-grants are available for use during the period 2007-2010. Multiple mini-grant applications from an institution for separate projects are permitted. Applications are received and rewarded on a rolling basis.

Applications should include an indication of how this modest investment could influence initiatives on the campus. No special form is required; however, the proposal should not exceed five pages and should be submitted in hard copy as well as electronically.

Student Programming Grants

Student programming grants are available under the mini-grant category. These grants are available to student-led organizations to develop programs for and by students that are consistent with the objectives of the BTtoP.

While applications for mini-grants or student programming grants may emphasize any of the three major elements of BTtoP – “engaged learning,” “student health and well-being,” and “civic development,” priority will be given to those that attempt to integrate the three elements.

CATEGORY II: PROGRAM OR RESEARCH START-UP INITIATIVE GRANTS

Program or research start-up initiative grants up to \$10,000 are available to institutions proposing to establish or extend a program or research initiative that complements the purposes of BTtoP.

Proposals are invited from current program or research start-up grant recipients that want to take the next steps, as well as from institutions that are new to the BTtoP Project. Grants may be renewable.

While applications for these grants may emphasize any of the three major elements - “engaged learning,” “student health and well-being,” and “civic development” – priority will be given to those that attempt to integrate these three elements.

Applications must include a clear statement of purpose, information on specific activities and key project participants, timeline for implementation, evaluation plan, and budget including matching support. Each grant requires matching support (minimum of 1 to 1) from the institution, part of which might be in-kind.

Successful applications will include a clear assessment strategy, and will be carefully designed so that longitudinal data can be assessed to identify direct or indirect effects on both the student participants and also the campus-at-large.

Proposals for program or research start-up grants will be considered on a rolling basis. Initial proposals should not exceed 5 pages of text (plus minimal support materials), after which applicants might be asked for additional information. Applicants should expect to receive a decision approximately one month following submission of the proposal.

CATEGORY III: DEMONSTRATION SITE GRANTS

Proposals are invited for projects that demonstrate what happens when institutions build capacity for engaged learning in ways that can be determined to promote mental health and well-being of students and contribute to their civic development.

Demonstration sites serve as a unique model for work consistent with BTtoP objectives. Each institution plans, implements, and evaluates its project, participates in cross-site meetings with other institutions, exchanges information and ideas, and builds mutual support as part of an overall learning community.

Present demonstration site recipients are Barnard College, Dickinson College, Emory University, Georgetown University, Morgan State University, St. Lawrence University, and Syracuse University.

Demonstration grants will be awarded for amounts up to \$45,000 per year for each of two years, totaling \$90,000. Current demonstration grant recipients may apply for two-year extensions or for partial support for a shorter time. New demonstration sites may apply for two years of support.

Application Guidelines

Applicants for demonstration grants by present recipients or new institutions should use the following format:

- Project name or title.
- Contact person, including mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address.
- Purpose statement of what will be accomplished as a result of the project (one sentence).
- Project overview (50 word maximum)
- Project goal or impact to be achieved.
- Project objectives or key factors necessary for success.
- Rationale for why the project is important at this time.
- Project activities that will be performed in order to accomplish the objectives.
- Anticipated outcomes that will result from the project.
- Information about the institution's track record in the project area, and why it should be considered a demonstration institution.
- Information about the institution's plans for project evaluation.
- Information about the institution's plans for sustaining the project after the funding period.
- Implementation timetable
- Names and qualifications of the persons who will have responsibility for the project and who are members of the campus "team" leading and guiding the project.
- Total dollar amount requested.

- Estimated project line-item budget, including amounts available and needed (two-page maximum).
- Budget narrative.
- Letters of support (three-page maximum).
- Relevant additional information may be included, but please do not send IRS statements, annual reports, news articles or publications.

Institutional Commitment

Demonstration site institutions will be expected to demonstrate commitment by the president, and vice presidents for academic affairs and student affairs; the institutional commitment will include cash and in-kind matching, sustainability plans, evaluation personnel, and campus stakeholder participation in the planning and implementation of the demonstration site. We cannot overemphasize the importance of senior leadership support in demonstration site selection and institutional sustainability. Letters of support, demonstrating such institutional commitment, are expected.

Evaluation

Evaluation is instrumental to the demonstration site program, as a vehicle to demonstrate what happens when colleges and universities plan and implement strategies of this type. Evaluation will contribute to the knowledge base, and advance this work as both a field of practice and subject of study.

Evaluation will operate at the institutional and cross-site levels. At the institutional level, an evaluator will be a team member who will gather empirical data, assess actual outcomes, and answer specific evaluative questions in each college or university. At the cross-site level, an evaluator assesses the work of each institution and of the overall program.

Evaluation will include information about the campus project's objectives; activities and outcomes; individual and institutional outcomes; facilitating and limiting factors; and cross-site themes and lessons learned from institutional practice. Each institution will address specific evaluative questions such as:

1. What evidence is there that the project has increased capacity for engaged learning?
2. What evidence is there that the campus project has promoted emotive, dispositional, or behavioral aspects of the well-being of the students who participate?
3. What evidence is there that the project has strengthened civic development of the students who participate?
4. What evidence is there that the project has enabled students, faculty, and others to consider the relationship of engaged learning to the well-being and civic development of students?
5. What evidence is there that the project has directly or indirectly affected the whole campus, including students not immediately involved in the project?

Each institution is expected to formulate clear definitions and evaluative criteria for assessing answers to such questions in the proposal. If funded, each institution will be expected to provide interim and final reports.

Budget

Each budget must include both the amount requested and other sources of institutional support. This support must include a total cash and in-kind matching amount that is equal to the funds requested, of which a significant amount should be cash matching.

The Project will not fund endowment or development campaigns, or separate budget line items labeled as “indirect” or “overhead” costs.

The budget narrative should describe and justify the proposed expenditures by category and subcategory, and include information on the relationship of budgeted costs to project activities. A budget narrative is expected.

Demonstration Site Proposal Deadline

Eight (8) hard paper copies of a demonstration site proposal should be sent to:

Demonstration Site Proposals
Bringing Theory to Practice
Association of American Colleges and Universities
1818 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20009-1604

The proposal should not exceed 15 pages. Please do not send plastic bound or expensive-covered documents.

For more information, please contact Barry Checkoway barrych@umich.edu at the University of Michigan (who coordinates the demonstration site program) or Jennifer O'Brien obrien@aacu.org at Bringing Theory to Practice at 202-884-0815.

Applications for demonstration grants by new sites or existing sites are due by April 1, 2007. Decisions will be announced by May 15, 2007.

CATEGORY IV: INTENSIVE SITE GRANTS

Proposals are invited for intensive site grants *up to \$250,000 total over a three-year period, in a new category designed to build upon the demonstration site model but with additional expectations.*

Overview and Rationale

As BTtoP approaches its fourth year, its mission remains the advancement of knowledge and establishment of “best practices” which involve and integrate “engaged learning,” “student mental health and well-being,” and “civic development.”

Since its inception, BTtoP has established an evaluation agenda that complements this mission, with the expectation of evaluation by mini-grants, start-up grants, and demonstration sites. These activities have produced substantial knowledge yielded, but have been limited in their scope. In contrast, Intensive site grants will be made to up to two institutions which propose to involve 100 percent of a targeted population, such as the entire first year class, or the entire population of a particular residence hall.

Intensive site institutions must have the potential of causing transformative effects for both students and the larger campus. They are expected to serve as models for higher education, by providing an opportunity to study the impact of a major initiative across a campus.

Intensive site institutions will have potential to create:

- *A model of institutional transformation.* As BTtoP has learned from its activities with more than 200 colleges and universities, successful implementation of the project’s goals involves changes in the institutions, such as shifts from:
 - More didactic and unidirectional pedagogical approaches, to more engaged and collaborative forms of learning;
 - Isolation of learning within the classroom, to application and deepening learning through engagement with and in community;
 - Separation of students’ experiences inside the classroom from those outside the classroom, to strengthening connections between academic learning and personal growth and development; and
 - Balkanization of accountability for student learning relegated to faculty and accountability for student well-being relegated to counseling and student affairs staff, to integrated efforts reflecting shared responsibility for educating the whole student.

A grant to an intensive site college or university will provide an opportunity to observe how these and other shifts occur across an entire institution. Anticipated loci of change include institutional culture and structure, curricula, communication channels, and institutional expectations, responsibilities, and rewarding of faculty, students, and others. Robust solutions to implementation challenges may provide a “blueprint” for other

institutions as they try to integrate “engaged learning,” “mental health and well-being,” and “civic development.”

- *An ideal research laboratory.* A grant to an intensive site institution will address the limitations of prior research due to “self-selection bias” because engaged learning experiences are often at the periphery of college curricula, students typically self-select to participate; that is, student participants in engaged learning may already be different from students who opt not to participate. A research design in which 100 percent of an identified population is involved in the project allows for evaluation of the effects on students with various predispositions and levels of engagement. Because research suggests that students who are *less engaged* are more prone to mental health concerns, such a project would examine the impact of intervention efforts on these students’ experiences, as well as on more engaged students.
- *A means for strengthening the learning community.* Intensive site institutions will model the goals of a learning community, including the presentation of evidence for reinforcing educational practices that are more effective in knowledge acquisition and intellectual development, as well as outcomes of emotional, behavioral and civic development.
- *A force for field development.* The integration of engaged learning, student mental health and well-being, and civic development, constitutes a new field of research, theory, and practice in higher education. Intensive site institutions will provide leadership in field development, and contribute to the growing learning community through such means as attending and presenting at BTtoP and related conferences, as well through scholarly publications and public venues.

Institutional matching of 100 percent of BTtoP funds is required of Intensive site campuses. While it is reasonable to expect some type of institutional commitment in the form of in-kind support, cash-matching must approach at least one-half of the grant amount.

It is conceivable that the distribution of grant funds may vary by amount over the three-year period. Year 1, which is dedicated to planning and collection of baseline data, may require a smaller disbursement than Years 2 and 3. Year 4 may emphasize in-kind matching support, as BTtoP grant funding will have been expended.

Format

Intensive site proposals should use the format prescribed for demonstration site proposals (see above). Proposals should not exceed 15 pages and should be submitted in 8 multiple copies by the proposal deadline of April 15, 2007.

Institutions should submit separate proposals to be an intensive site grantee, even if they submit a proposal to be either a new demonstration site project or a renewal of a demonstration site project. Separate applications for different categories of support will not adversely affect award decisions.

Intensive Site Structure

An Intensive site proposal will involve at least three years of support, and describe a fourth year to complete evaluation and dissemination of results as follows:

- **YEAR 1:** Planning year and systematic collection of baseline data.
 - **YEAR 2:** Full project implementation, with repetition of data collection conducted during Year 1 and additional measures.
 - **YEAR 3:** Continuation of full project with a new cohort, as well as longitudinal tracking of student outcomes and institutional impact from Year 2. Also, Year 3 begins data analysis and reporting, strengthening sustainability for the project.
 - **YEAR 4:** Completion of analysis, evaluation and dissemination of results.
- The project must involve all members (100 percent) of a targeted population. For example, if the project is a single-year intervention – such as a first-year living-learning community - then 100 percent of all first-year students should be involved in the intervention, with reasonable uniformity across the intervention. If a multiple-year intervention, the project must demonstrate involvement of 100 percent of the targeted population at each intervention level or year.
 - Promotion and publicity of the project on the campus must be carefully crafted, to minimize positive or negative self-selection bias. For example, if the program is for first-year students, care should be taken to ensure that new applicants are not biased to accept or decline admission based on promotion of the program. Likewise, if the program is to be implemented for sophomores, juniors, or seniors, it should be done in such a way that a bias is not created against involvement.

Selection Criteria

- Optimally, institutions selected as intensive sites will have demonstrated facility with the “triangularity” of BTtoP, even if only on a limited basis. While intensive site institutions may likely come from among those already associated with BTtoP, they need not be. What is expected is that the institution is already doing good work, but which has been limited in some way. We want to ensure that there is a core group on campus who are knowledgeable and capable as opposed to “starting from scratch,” and who want to move their work to the next level.
- Institutions selected as intensive sites should be representative of American higher education at large, at least insofar as they are co-educational and diverse, so that the findings and lessons learned could be generalized to the largest number of institutions.
- The institution’s proposal should meet all of the criteria set forth for the selection of demonstration sites, as stated above.

- Intensive site institutions should be amenable to participation in national surveys such as NSSE, the CORE Alcohol Survey, and ACHA-NCHA, and ideally have a track record of participation in some of these surveys, thus providing existing baseline data. Additionally, the institution must be willing to participate in the development and administration of any major survey instrument produced by BTtoP itself.
- Intensive site institutions should agree to stipulations, to be set forth by BTtoP, that guide dissemination of information and findings related to the project, including an institutional public relations strategy coordinated with the sponsors, and co-publication of findings with the BTtoP Project overall.

Deadline

Eight (8) hard paper copies of an Intensive site proposal should be sent to:

Intensive Site Proposals
Bringing Theory to Practice
Association of American Colleges and Universities
1818 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20009-1604

The proposal should not exceed 15 pages, including the budget. Please do not send plastic bound or expensive-covered documents.

For more information, please contact Jennifer O'Brien obrien@aacu.org at Bringing Theory to Practice at 202-884-0815.

All proposals to be Intensive site institutions must be received by April 15, 2007. Awards will be announced by May 15, 2007.