Curriculum Innovation Grants – 2015

“Virtually all innovations in society are made by those doing the daily work. Put another way, they can be supported from the top, but they are developed from the bottom up. In our case, that means by the faculty.”
President Bill Powers, Technology-Enhanced Education: A Report to the University Community

Provost Gregory L. Fenves invites proposals from UT Austin faculty to develop and nurture promising innovations in undergraduate and graduate education and to investigate their potential for larger implementation. In 2015, $500,000 will be awarded through the Center for Teaching and Learning in Curriculum Innovation Grants of up to $50,000.

Any project with substantial potential to enhance teaching and learning at the University will be considered. For example, larger grants might be awarded to develop a framework for a new interdisciplinary degree program, to adapt existing digital courseware to create new blended or online learning experiences, or to scale projects that have already experienced some success and hold significant promise of university-level generalizability. Smaller grants might be used to develop new ideas for curriculum innovations into prototypes or pilots, to develop competitive proposals for external funding, to establish new cross-disciplinary collaborations, or to support departmental reviews of online course materials developed by peer institutions for potential incorporation into UT Austin courses or degree programs.

Priority will be given to projects that streamline degree pathways and have the potential to reduce students’ time to degree.

Focus Areas
Proposals should identify at least one area of focus among these options and will be evaluated, in part, based on the incorporation of effective, evidence-based practices within the selected area.

1. Teaching Excellence
Promotes excellent teaching by infusing sound principles into course design or instructional implementation, or by developing good practice among instructors. Excellent proposals will provide evidence for the need of the proposed innovation as well as the pedagogical research base for the potential solution itself.

2. Online Learning
Offers flexibility to students and incorporates a variety of technology tools in a primarily online learning environment. Incorporates best practices in online learning to provide students authentic experiences, engaging content, ongoing assessment and feedback, opportunities for practice and application, and continuous contextualization of new knowledge.

3. Hybrid/Blended Learning
Includes a range of technology applications to deliver content to students in innovative ways, connect students to their instructor and to each other both inside and outside of class, promote active learning (e.g. interactive simulations), and provide timely feedback to learners.
4. **Social Learning**
   Facilitates interactions with 1) other learners, 2) the instructor along with the entire instructional team (TAs, peer assistants, etc.), and 3) the extended network of local/global practitioners and experts, as well as the community of stakeholders at large. Social learning emphasizes the exchange of ideas, critical evaluation, and creative collaboration, often via discussions, debates, comparison of perspectives, group decision-making, collaborative projects, consensus-seeking, and teamwork.

5. **Experiential Learning**
   Involves making sense of one’s lived experiences. From direct, firsthand encounters with real world phenomena, students make observations, reflect, construct abstract concepts, and make generalizations based on those observations. These concepts and generalizations can then be tested in novel situations. In many cases, experiential learning will leverage community partnerships to enable authentic learning experiences within the context of an industry or field.

6. **Learning Analytics**
   Incorporates analytic tools to measure how students are learning and progressing through particular learning sequences and programmatic tracks, all of which enables informed decision-making about individual interventions and broad course-corrections. May incorporate innovative methods to evaluate, report, and track student progress and make iterative improvements to curriculum or program design.

**Selection Criteria**
Proposals will be evaluated by a committee of Provost’s Teaching Fellows, who will score proposals on the following factors.

1. **Best practices within selected focus area**
   The proposed project incorporates effective, evidence-based practices in its area of primary focus. Areas include teaching excellence, online learning, blended or hybrid learning, social learning, experiential learning, or learning analytics.

2. **Streamlines degree pathways**
   UT Austin seeks to improve student success by improving the proportion who complete their degree within four years. Proposals addressing this goal may include student advising, targeted interventions, programs or scheduling that enable credit accumulation, or flexible delivery modalities. High-scoring proposals are highly likely to improve students’ timely graduation.

3. **Strong rationale for the project**
   A rationale describes the problem to be solved or improvement to be made and is grounded in relevant research or learning science. High-scoring proposals should make a clear and evidence-based case for their work.
4. **Quality of design – goals, scope, plan**
   Just like a high-quality course, proposals should identify goals, describe a plan that will meet them, and include measurements of success. High-scoring proposals tailor the scope to address stated goals and include some type of evaluation plan.

5. **Innovative and/or Strategic use of digital content**
   A primary focus of these grants is efficiently reusing digital assets that faculty have already created. High-scoring proposals mention specific assets and how they will be innovatively used and/or strategically adapted into the current project and/or strategically adapted into the current project.

6. **Enables activities that would not otherwise occur**
   A primary purpose of these particular grants is to catalyze innovation rather than subsidize ongoing processes. High-scoring proposals should offer evidence that the innovation would not be implemented without this support.

7. **Viable plan for continued support and sustainability over time**
   Implementing long-term change often requires improved infrastructure, policy changes, or sustained funding sources. High-scoring proposals outline implications and strategies for sustaining the projects’ innovations.

8. **Reasonableness of budget**
   Budgets should typically account for more than faculty time; they should include realistic allocations for all assets that will be built and the infrastructure considerations for maintaining them. High-scoring proposals closely tie deliverables with budgeted labor and resources.

9. **Strong potential for curricular impact**
   Ideal proposals have a reach beyond an individual course, influencing the curriculum and practice of a department, college, or field. High-scoring proposals might involve evidence-based rewrites of curriculum, restructuring of programs, or development and support of communities of practice, all in service of good teaching and learning.

**How to Apply**

Any UT Austin faculty, individually or in teams, whose project is endorsed by his or her dean may submit a proposal. Proposals should follow the template available on the CTL website, at [http://ctl.utexas.edu/innovators/curriculum-innovation-grants/how-to-apply](http://ctl.utexas.edu/innovators/curriculum-innovation-grants/how-to-apply). In addition, a letter of support from the dean must be included with the proposal submission that specifically describes how the proposed project aligns with the College’s or School’s strategic academic and budget priorities. **Proposals must be submitted by the dean’s office no later than 5pm on November 14**. They should be emailed to Vice Provost Harrison Keller (harrison.keller@austin.utexas.edu) AND ctl-grants@austin.utexas.edu.

Applicants interested in learning more about the proposal process and program requirements are invited to attend an information session in October. Questions may be directed to ctl-grants@austin.utexas.edu.
Please note that awardees will be required to submit a final report to the Provost within ninety days of the conclusion of projects developed under this initiative. Final reports will include descriptions of project development and delivery processes, evaluations of the effectiveness and success of the project, and plans for supporting and improving the project in the future.

**Awards**

Awardees may receive grants of up to $50,000. Grant funds *may* be used for faculty salary (summer or supplement), research assistants, materials or supplies, or other necessary costs including publications, meeting costs, or conference participation consistent with relevant departmental, college, or University policy, Regents’ rules, and Texas state law. Budgets for salaries should build in fringe benefits, typically 30%. Grant funds *may not* be used for teaching relief, administrative or secretarial support, or salary supplements that exceed $10,000 per faculty member. Beyond the grant award, consultation for awardees will be available from the Center for Teaching and Learning. The number of grants awarded will depend on available resources and the design and quality of proposals received.

**Awards will be announced on Wednesday, December 17, 2014.**