

# Supporting Significant Learning Experiences Grants for Student-Initiated Courses (SICs)

Funded by the Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs  
and Student Senate

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### Overview of objectives

The Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs has established as one of its highest priorities the support of initiatives which encourage mentorship of students and opportunities for innovation in intellectual development and exchange, including broadening the ways teacher and learner roles are experienced. To this end, a fund of seed money has been established for the development and/or implementation of learning activities and experiences which are initiated by students themselves.

Grants for Student-Initiated Courses (SICs) are intended to empower students to directly address the content and context of their learning experiences and to explore subjects and/or ways of learning that might not be possible through existing, “conventional” curricular experiences. Students may design and deliver their own courses in subject areas that have not been considered a part of the Truman curriculum, but are nonetheless appropriate to an education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. A SIC should address a theme or themes in which the student initiators have experience or expertise. For example, the course could pursue in depth some topic which grows out of an existing course, it might link perspectives of two or more disciplines in the investigation of some problem, or it might satisfy students’ intellectual interests in other ways. SICs embrace peer-mediated learning and bring together dedicated and knowledgeable students who hold a wide range of interests. They are intended as experiments – that is, SICs will be enhancements to the regular Truman curriculum, not substitutes for existing University courses.

SICs encourage leadership, activism, and responsibility in student initiators. They are avenues via which these students can explore topics to advance their interests in academia and in how teaching and learning work. Desired outcomes of a SIC initiative include fostering close faculty/student interaction and providing student initiators with experiences in the design of instructional pedagogies, assembly of syllabi, and delivery of instruction. It is anticipated that student initiators will be significant players, illustrating a wide spectrum of potential imaginable roles, in the delivery of the courses they create. Moreover, SICs represent laboratories for exploring the well documented benefits to students taking such courses, when student-assisted teaching is implemented well.

### Overview of the proposal submission process

To initiate a course, a group of up to three students must develop a short **prospectus** (500-750 words) which contains statements about the subject matter, format of the course, resource list, formal requirements (i.e., papers, reports, exams, and other assignments), pertinent qualifications of the team members, and a provisional course budget. Student initiators may develop the prospectus on their own, but are more likely to do so in partnership with a faculty sponsor/mentor of their choosing. In any event, a faculty member must have agreed to serve as the **primary sponsor/mentor and advisor**, and must have reviewed the prospectus as a committed team member. Additional personnel – other faculty member(s), or staff member(s) – may be part of the team.

Having received the faculty member's commitment and approval, the team can submit the **prospectus** to the appropriate department chair (i.e., that of the faculty sponsor/mentor) or Associate Dean (for faculty in the School of Business) for his/her review. The intention here is to provide a preliminary evaluation of the proposed SIC with appropriate feedback to authors; to determine whether the course will be a departmental offering or an interdisciplinary one (because this distinction determines the subsequent administrative pathway of the course approval process); and, should the proposed SIC be funded, to ensure the commitment of the department chair to delivering the course, given the staffing implications of the proposed SIC. The University encourages early applications so that the team of student initiators and sponsoring faculty member will have an opportunity to adjust their proposal to account for any of the concerns and criticisms voiced by the department chair after completion of the preliminary review.

**For guidance, especially during the prospectus development process, interested students and faculty may contact the department chair or Associate Dean within their major area, as well as Adam Davis (Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences) and Michael Kelrick (Director of Interdisciplinary Studies).**

In reviewing a **prospectus** for a SIC, the department chair will pay particular attention to each of the following:

1. evidence of competence and expertise in the students and/or faculty advisor, sufficient to assure adequate guidance and leadership in the course;
2. evidence of careful forethought and planning of a course of study which can be accomplished realistically within the time span of the proposed semester of activity; and
3. justification that the course fits appropriately within the framework both of a liberal arts and sciences education and the existing curricular structures at Truman.

Interdisciplinary SIC projects (i.e., those that, upon consideration of the team and appropriate department chair, do not "sit comfortably" within a department; or those involving faculty members from more than one department) should be reviewed and approved by all chairs of the involved faculty before they are submitted as formal proposals to the Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Approval of the prospectus includes student initiator(s), faculty sponsor, and appropriate department chair(s) signing their respective contracts (found at the end of this Request for Proposal document). Once the prospectus has been approved by the appropriate department chair(s), the team will prepare the **formal proposal** (see details below) for submission to the Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs. **At this "approved prospectus" stage, please notify the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies (<ois@truman.edu>) of the team's intention to submit a formal proposal.** Without the explicit agreement of the appropriate department chairs, the team cannot go forward with the preparation of the formal proposal.

**Workshops addressing how to involve students in course delivery, including resources for how to assess learning outcomes for student-teachers as well as for student "course takers" in student-assisted courses, will be offered for teams preparing proposals. These are currently being developed and will be sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning.**

Normally, formal proposals will be due by September 21 (for intended course delivery in the subsequent spring semester) and March 1 (for intended delivery in the subsequent fall semester). For this first round of proposal submissions subsequent to this initial Request for Proposals of SICs, formal proposals will be due no later than January 20, 2009 (for intended course delivery in the fall, 2009 semester). However, earlier proposal submissions will be considered on a rolling basis, if the authors believe it is feasible, and they intend, to offer the proposed SIC in the upcoming spring, 2009 semester.

## Overview of guidelines

- Student initiators must have already completed at least one semester at Truman. Both graduate and undergraduate students may be initiators.
- If the lead student initiator is a senior, then at least one other student initiator must be included, so that at least one student team member will still be enrolled at the university when the course is to be delivered.
- The SIC must be sponsored by an identifiable faculty member.
- A SIC must be designed for at least one hour of academic credit and not more than four.
- The course may be offered for a letter grade, or as pass/fail. The grading rubric must be explicit and must be part of the formal proposal. Course grades are assigned by the sponsoring faculty member.
- Students who are enrolled in the SIC must have already completed at least one semester at Truman.
- Both student initiators and students enrolled in the SIC must be in academic good standing (i.e., not on academic probation).
- A “service learning” or practicum component is strongly encouraged for any SIC.
- A SIC must enroll at least five students in order to be offered during the proposed semester.
- SICs may be planned for delivery in any of the university’s “terms” – i.e., fall, spring or summer, as well as recognized interims.
- Students’, and faculty member sponsors’, and department chairs’ responsibilities are outlined respectively in the Student Initiator, Faculty Sponsor, and Departmental Administrator Contracts. These documents must be reviewed, understood, and signed at the **prospectus stage**; they are part of the **formal proposal**.

## Formal Proposal Description

### **Content and Format Instructions**

The student initiator(s) is (are) the primary author(s) of the formal proposal!

Please use the SIC Cover Sheet found at the end of this Request for Proposals document. You must remit both this form and your proposal TOGETHER as your submission to the Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs. Forms for all three contracts (see components IX, X, and XI of the formal proposal below) can also be found at the end of this Request for Proposals document.

Use the following format and organizational headings to prepare your proposal. Complete each section carefully; incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Use 10-point or larger font and number the pages.

#### **I. Project Summary/Abstract (maximum one page, double-spaced)**

The summary or abstract should briefly describe:

1. the goals or objectives of the course;
2. why the course is important and what will be learned from it;
3. the specific methodologies which will be used to achieve the goals or objectives;
4. how the success of the course will be determined;
5. how the results of the course will be shared; and
6. the anticipated/desired number of students who will be involved.

#### **II. Faculty Sponsor Letter of Support**

The letter from the primary faculty sponsor should describe the class briefly and explain the educational benefits for both the student initiator(s) and the “course takers”. In addition, the qualifications and capacities of the student initiator(s) for performing the required elements of the SIC project should be addressed. The envisioned development process for the SIC syllabus should be addressed and, if the course grows out of a larger program – particularly one of the primary faculty sponsor/mentor – the distinctiveness of the SIC and how it relates to the faculty member’s regular activity should be clarified in the mentor’s letter. The faculty sponsor should state his/her willingness to collaborate with the student initiator(s) in all phases of the course, including planning, structuring, delivery, and reportage. An indication of specific ways in which the sponsor plans to guide the students is important. The sponsor should agree to help the students prepare the written report which is required at completion of the course.

#### **III. Student Initiator(s) Qualifications (maximum one page, double-spaced, per initiator)**

1. Briefly describe your qualifications to pursue the SIC (e.g., describe staff positions held, leadership/presentational/instructional skills developed, a skill set unique to the subject which you wish to teach, and so forth). Include your major(s), number of completed credit hours, and the expected date(s) of graduation for each student initiator.
2. Explain why you (and your fellow initiators, if relevant) are interested in putting this course forward. For example, what related experience you have had?; what background reading you have done?; what discussions have you enjoyed with a faculty member?; what has inspired you to make this effort?
3. If you have co-initiators, explain the role of each within the class and how you plan to share the responsibilities of the course among yourselves. If you are the sole initiator of a course, explain what you see as your role and responsibilities within the course.

**Note: If the course has more than one initiator, items 1 and 2 of the above must be completed separately by *each* student initiator.**

#### **IV. Goals/Objectives (maximum one page, double-spaced)**

Specify the goals and objectives of the course. This might be accomplished as a bulleted list, though other portrayals can be equally effective.

#### **V. Methodology or Procedures (maximum three pages, double-spaced)**

Identify the time period (weeks, months) during which the student(s) plan(s) to work on the development of the course, as well as the projected semester when the SIC is intended for its implementation. (Make certain to provide sufficient time for the appropriate governance process required to gain course approval.) Describe the activities and/or procedures that will take place during the grant period, including both the course development phase and the implementation phase. Provide an overview of the structural and pedagogical considerations of the course (e.g., does it involve lectures, discussions, a studio, directed readings, a service-learning component?). Identify what you will do and what other individuals who will be involved in the course will do. Describe the extent of the involvement of the faculty sponsor, and other faculty or staff members in the course. Explain how you plan to structure and evaluate the students' learning in your course (e.g., student participation, service learning, group projects, written assignments, presentations, and so forth). Explain how you plan to structure and evaluate your own (i.e., student initiators') and sponsoring faculty's learning from the experience. List any special equipment which your course might require.

Please attach a copy of your provisional course syllabus. It should include a description of the sequence of course meetings (though not necessarily accounting for each daily meeting in individual detail) throughout the semester, along with the associated, coordinated course activities. All Truman syllabi must contain components addressing the attendance policy; SIC syllabi must also describe procedures for addressing student (i.e., "course takers") grievances.

#### **VI. Timeline (maximum one page)**

Include a timeline which outlines sequentially the progression of activities which will take place during the entire grant period. The timeline may be presented graphically or in outline form.

#### **VII. Budget Summary (maximum one-half page)**

Funds are available for both student and faculty stipends to support the planning of the course. The maximum request for stipends may not exceed \$3,000 (see details below). State the amount you are requesting.

The SIC itself may have expenses, and thus will require a budget for its implementation. If this is the case, the course team must include a budget proposal with the application and must delineate the nature of the anticipated expenses and the rationale for them. Once the budget has been approved, any changes in declared expenditures must receive prior approval from the appropriate department chair/dean.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Only expenses relevant to the subject matter of the course will be approved. Funding for meals and other expenses that do not relate to the course topic will not be approved.

### **VIII. Evaluation/Dissemination (maximum one-half page)**

Briefly explain how you will determine whether the course has accomplished the goals or objectives which were established. Describe ways by which you might share the results of this course with the University community and with a larger audience, if appropriate, in addition to the required written report to the Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs.

### **IX. Signed Student Initiator(s) Contract**

### **X. Signed Faculty Sponsor Contract**

### **XI. Signed Departmental Administrator Contract**

The chair of the home department (or Associate Dean, in the case of the School of Business) of your faculty sponsor must sign a Departmental Administrator Contract.

### **Regarding awards, course expenses support, and accountability**

No more than \$1,500 in student stipend(s) will be awarded for each funded project. A single student initiator will receive \$1,000; two or three student initiators will receive jointly \$1,500 to share among them. Faculty member **sponsors**, whether involved singly or as a group, may earn no more than \$1,500 total per course; if more than one faculty member, or staff member(s), is (are) involved in the sponsorship, this \$1,500 amount can be shared among them. An individual faculty member is limited to \$3,000 total for all SIC mentorship activity per semester.

Normally, the maximum amount for course-implementation-related expenses will be \$2,000 per course. This amount is meant to provide support for “expendable items” – like invited speakers, expendable supplies or sanctioned course-related travel expenses for all course participants. (**PLEASE NOTE:** Only expenses relevant to the subject matter of the course will be approved, and must be part of the submitted course budget. Funding for meals and other expenses not related to the course topic will not be approved.) Should the delivery of the course, as most desirably envisioned, involve the purchase of non-expendable items (i.e., capital expenditures; for example, cameras), please distinguish such requests within the required budget summary (component VII of the proposal). These capital expenditure requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

SIC proposals will be reviewed by a committee appointed by the Provost. The Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs will notify all applicants whether they will or will not receive an award.

Requisitions for payment of student and faculty stipends will be initiated by the College or School of the primary faculty mentor. Stipends will be paid in two equal portions – the first when the course has obtained the approval (either within the department or from Faculty Senate, for departmental or interdisciplinary offerings, respectively) and is scheduled for implementation, and the second at the end of the grant period, after the course has been delivered and **the written follow-up report is submitted**. The first payment date for each funded proposal will depend on the nature of the SIC (whether departmental or interdisciplinary), and thus will be determined by the fate of each proposal team’s pace of course development; for tracking purposes, the name of the SIC and the paperwork documenting the course’s approval should accompany the requisition for payment. The course team must work with the appropriate department chair or Associate Dean to insure that this occurs. The appropriate department chair or Associate Dean will notify the Payroll Office to issue the final installment, once the report has been received.

Awardees are required to prepare a final written report no longer than five double-spaced pages. SIC team members should include in this report:

- the name and catalog description of the SIC which was proposed;
- specifically what was accomplished during the grant period;
- what worked well in the course and what difficulties were experienced;
- what was used to assess participants' (faculty, student initiators, and student "course takers") experiences in the course; and
- what participants (again, all three kinds, as immediately above) learned from the course.

The report should be submitted to the Office of the Provost / Vice President of Academic Affairs no later than six weeks after the course has ended. This submission is required in order to receive final stipend payments of the award. The Office of the Provost / Vice President of Academic Affairs will ensure that a copy of the report is forwarded to the appropriate department(s) of the faculty sponsor(s).

## General Guidelines

The Office of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs has issued some general working guidelines for those interested in obtaining funding for their proposals. Each request received by the funding deadline is considered on its own merit in a competitive process.

1. Mere attendance and vapid participation are not sufficient criteria for evaluation of class members. Your SIC should include a written component, presentation, project, or some other tangible form of assignment to ensure that students are engaged actively with the course material.
2. SICs must be capped at 20 students and must be open to the entire undergraduate and graduate student population. Enrollment cannot be limited to members of favored organizations or participants in only certain extracurricular activities.
3. Proposals and requests for funding are expected to be typed neatly (word processed).
4. Budgets which include student or faculty remuneration should include the Truman share of FICA and Medicare expenses (20% of gross salary). The recipient's FICA and Medicare expenses will be deducted from the gross salary.
5. Ordinarily, funding for international experiences will be available only for projects which include a specific, well defined, distinctive, appropriate, and worthwhile SIC. Enrollment in a foreign language or study program, in and of itself, will not merit funding.

Likewise, normally, funding will not be awarded for

- tuition at other colleges or universities;
- paid internships; or
- ordinary expenses to travel abroad (e.g., items such as passports, visas, and immunizations).

6. Student researchers should be aware of the University regulations and compliance issues which apply to all investigators. Information about projects involving human subjects, proper animal care, and use of hazardous materials can be obtained from the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs, Center for Teaching and Learning, Pickler Memorial Library 204.
7. Travel Advisory Countries  
The US Department of State issues travel advisories about dangerous conditions in certain countries. The government recommends that US citizens and holders of "green cards" avoid those areas. Before you propose a course which involves overseas travel, verify that your destination does not appear on the travel advisory list. <[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html)>  
The University respects the opinion of the U.S. Department of State regarding this issue. Neither credit nor funding will be available for courses to travel to advisory-listed countries.

### Student Educational Files

Please note that by submitting a proposal, funding request, or application to participate in a funded SIC, you will acknowledge that all information therein provided is accurate, and you will give permission to review all educational files which are pertinent to the evaluative process.



# Student-Initiated Course Proposal Cover Sheet

Student ID# (lead initiator) \_\_\_\_\_

Funding Cycle:      September 21 (for Spring semester)  
                           March 1 (for Fall semester)

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

(If applicable, please provide other student team members' names and information on an attached sheet.)

Title of Student Initiated Course:

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Have you applied to other sources for funding?     \_\_\_\_\_ Yes     \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If yes, please give details.

Have you received University funding previously?     \_\_\_\_\_ Yes     \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If yes, please give time frame and category.

Total Funding Request: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Provide a brief budget outlining your course's funding needs; include items such as travel, lodging, supplies, and printing. Attach an additional sheet as needed.

Proposer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Faculty Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that by submitting a proposal, funding request, or application to participate in a funded experience, you will acknowledge that all information therein provided is accurate, and you will give permission to review all educational files which are pertinent to the evaluative process.

**For Office Use:**

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent to Provost/VPAA: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Approved: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Status Notification Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student-Initiated Courses**  
Student Initiator(s) Contract

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Sponsor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

During the semester prior to the prospective class offering, as named student leader I agree to:

1. Work with the faculty sponsor to develop course materials (*e.g.*, syllabus, reading lists), course format, (*e.g.*, discussion, lecture, lecture series), assignments (*e.g.*, exams, papers), and grading criteria.
  - a. Meet as often as needed to solidify these course components.
  - b. Cooperate with the faculty sponsor on development and implementation of a grading policy. The faculty sponsor will be responsible for assignment of final grades.
2. Attend all mandatory training sessions from which I have not been explicitly excused by the coordinator(s) of Student-Initiated Courses. I understand that unapproved absences from training sessions are cause for revocation of my course's approval.

During the semester in which the class is offered, as named student leader I agree to:

1. Communicate frequently with the faculty sponsor.
  - a. Meet with the faculty sponsor on a regular basis and keep him/her informed about the class.
  - b. Ensure that participating students complete mid-semester and final evaluations.
  - c. Confer with the faculty sponsor for the assignment of grades.
2. Ensure that any changes in class location, class time, syllabus, reading list, class structure, or any other components of the class receive prior explicit approval from the faculty sponsor.

I have read and agree to fulfill all of the responsibilities described in this contract.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature(s):                      Student Initiator(s)                      Date:

**Student Initiated Courses**  
Faculty Sponsor Contract

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Sponsor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not sign this contract without thoroughly discussing the course idea, content, and design with the student initiator(s). If you have any questions, please contact your department chair.

During the semester prior to the prospective class offering, as named faculty sponsor I agree to:

1. Work with the students to develop course materials (*e.g.*, syllabus, reading lists), course format, (*e.g.*, discussion, lecture, lecture series), assignments (*e.g.*, exams, papers), and grading criteria.
  - c. Meet as often as needed to solidify these course components.
  - d. Cooperate on developing and implementing a grading policy. I will be responsible for assigning final grades.
2. Assist the student leader(s) in logistical issues.
  - a. Help the student in finding a room for the class.
  - b. Get the course numbered and listed under my department.
3. Provide a letter of recommendation vouching for the academic merit and rigor of the proposed course and for the qualification and preparedness of the student(s) who propose the course.

During the semester in which the class is offered, as named faculty sponsor I agree to:

1. Communicate frequently with the students.
  - a. Meet with the students on a regular basis and attend all class meetings.
  - b. Confer with the students for assignment of grades.
2. Endorse the intellectual integrity of the course material and the ability of the students.
3. Attest that the academic quality and rigor of the course meets the standards of Truman State University.
4. Report immediately to the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies if the course quality is unsatisfactory or if any changes to the course (*e.g.*, location, syllabus) are made without my prior approval.

I have read and agree to fulfill all the responsibilities described in this contract.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Sponsor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

*Aspects of the material in this Request for Proposals have been gleaned, adapted, modified, and edited from the Stanford University Student-Initiated Course program and Lawrence University Student-Initiated Programs.*

**Student-Initiated Courses**  
Department Chair Contract

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Chair's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

During the semester prior to the prospective class offering, as the named department chair I agree to:

- a. assist the student leader(s) in logistical issues *according to* my department's policies pertaining to Student-Initiated Courses (*i.e.*, if policies permit Student-Initiated Courses to be registered under my department).
- b. assist the student in finding a room for the class.
- c. assist the student in acquiring a catalog course number under my department.

I have read and agree to fulfill all the responsibilities described in this contract.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: Department Chair Date: \_\_\_\_\_