

Supporting Significant Learning Experiences Grants for Student-Initiated Learning Opportunities (SILO)

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

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

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. Toward this end, a fund of seed money has been established for the development *and/or* implementation of significant learning activities and experiences which are initiated by students themselves.

Grants for Student-Initiated Learning Opportunities (SILOs) are intended to empower students to directly address the content and context of their learning experiences and to explore areas which might not be made possible through traditional curricular experiences. It is improbable that any one curriculum can address all topics and areas. SILOs allow students to identify gaps in their curricular pathway and to fill them in a systematic manner either through experiences which complement class activities during a given semester or to create opportunities for co-curricular or experiential learning. Thus, SILOs are anticipated to be inventive means by which to extend, deepen, or connect learning.

The pace of change is fleet. SILOs can provide students with avenues by which to respond to and understand recent events. With regular semester-long courses, the quick creation and implementation of a new course is often not feasible due to departmental restrictions and administratively necessary timelines. SILOs, however, operate on an abbreviated time schedule, enabling learners to seize an available opportunity. For instance, funds can be used to organize experiences or to schedule tutorials in which guest speakers who exercise steerage of current events are invited to present. Project teams can be assembled readily and put into action more quickly to respond to the needs of the client or sponsoring organization.

Similar to other student-initiated groups, SILOs encourage peer learning and bring together dedicated and knowledgeable students who hold a wide range of interests. Because it is the students' interests which are the drivers, SILOs afford students a more democratic method by which to enhance their educational experience and to receive funding for activities which in the past may have been supported only with great difficulty.

SILOs encourage leadership and initiative. They are routes which students can explore to advance their interests in academia and teaching. One desired outcome of the SILO initiative is to foster close faculty-student interaction and to provide students with experiences in the design of instructional pedagogies, assembly of syllabi, and delivery of instruction.

Projects which are eligible for funding include, but are not limited to: curricular experiences; experiential learning and field projects; subject tutorials. Illustrative examples of the different types of initiatives can be found below. *Proposals which seek funding for the creation of new academic for-credit courses are not eligible for support under this RFP.*

Illustrative Funding Examples

At minimum, all SILOs should create significant learning experiences in unique ways. Some dimensions to consider when developing a proposal include:

- Projects and experiences which apply different ways of knowing (*e.g.*, oral, verbal, tactile, imaginative, rational, intuitive, artistic, scientific);
- Projects and experiences which bring together methods, insights, concerns, or subject matters of different disciplines;
- Projects and experiences which entail non-traditional ways of approaching a topic;
- Projects and experiences which meet the spirit of “engaged learning”.

Regardless of type of experience, all projects must incorporate a component in which students reflect in writing and conversation on their experiences. Proposals must indicate the form in which this reflective component will take place.

Curricular Experiences

SILO funds are available to support teams consisting of students and faculty members who engage in the execution of intellectual projects which are related to formal curricular experiences and centered in academic content. Funds can be used to support travel, equipment, and supplies.

Examples

- Student/faculty travel to implement a micro-loan program in a rural district as a result of classroom study of micro-venturing
- Student/faculty travel to study wind energy implementations
- Materials and promotion of a student-based artistic performance or gallery showing
- Purchase of specialized equipment or materials to carry out examination in an experimental setting

Stipends typically will range from \$500-\$2,000 for student- and student/faculty-teams who propose to develop or modify an activity which has a significant experiential learning dimension.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

Experiential learning opportunities are those which offer to the learner an occasion to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in an immediate and relevant setting. Priority is given to experiential learning experiences which address the foundations, connections, and infusion themes of the Truman curriculum. The experiential learning experience is intentionally a non-traditional classroom/laboratory activity for learning and can be developed in collaboration with campus or community partners. A wide range of experiential activities is eligible. Examples include but are not limited to: student-organized musical, theatrical, or public-speaking groups whose activities culminate in an approved public presentation; collaborative projects between an agency or business and project team; campus-based projects which are mentored by a faculty member.

Tutorials

A tutorial is an abbreviated course of study undertaken by a small group of students under the close supervision of a faculty member. Students who undertake a tutorial explore in depth subjects of particular interest. Each tutorial is conducted according to arrangements specifically aligned with individual departments or interdisciplinary areas.

Tutorial studies can feature wide reading, individual experimentation, oral and written reports, and regular conferences with the supervising faculty member(s). Tutorials, which must be titled, can be an exciting supplement to regular course offerings, especially during the years of advanced study. The number of students in a tutorial is limited. As a result, these learning opportunities offer ideal settings for peer learning. Some examples of possible tutorials in various subject areas are listed below:

Possible tutorial topics in economics

East Asian Economic Development
Topics in Health Care Policy
The Economics of Information
Trade and Development
Economics of Sports
Economics of Advertising

Possible tutorial topics in music

Beethoven
Pulcinella
Music of Ghana and Brazil
Study of Objibwe Music
Blues History
Perspectives on Comic Opera
Shaping Time in Performance

Possible tutorial topics in government

The Patriot Act
Political Advertising and Voter Opinion
Representation, Voting Rights, and the Law
Global Islamic Terrorism
Structural Realism and Alliance Management:
Urban Politics

Possible tutorial topics in chemistry

Electron Transfer Processes in Materials Synthesis
Polymer Chemistry
Fractals in Chemistry
Geochemical Techniques
Forensic Chemistry
Mechanisms of Antibiotic Resistance

Possible tutorial topics in business

The Ethics of Advertising to Children
Sustainability and Corporate Strategy
Risk Analysis in Mergers and Acquisitions
Sarbanes-Oxley and Reporting Regulations
Technology Driven Business Models
Digital Copyright and Intellectual Property

The SILO Proposal Funding Process

Undergraduate and graduate students are invited to submit proposals. Proposal teams must be comprised of *at least* one faculty member/- or administrator/mentor and three undergraduate students. RFPs should follow the required outline of procedure. Students must be in academic good standing (*e.g.*, not on probation) in order to apply for a grant. Proposals may focus solely on development or address both development and implementation. Multiple submissions for the same project will not be considered. Projects or experiences may be pursued in the students' ('s) free time during the academic year and/or the summer. Funding may be requested for the period of one year beginning in Spring, 2009.

Grant Period: Proposal projects, project deliverables, and/or experiences must be completed during the semester for which the grant is applied. The period of time in which the students and/or student leader will be working on the project must be specifically defined (*e.g.*, May 12 through August 15, 2009) in the methodology/procedures section of the proposal. The activities or work which will be undertaken during this period must be clearly described. The appropriateness of the anticipated time frame for the proposed project should be discussed between the student(s) and the faculty mentor. (See the Proposal Format Instructions for details.)

Faculty Mentors: Each student group should select a faculty mentor who will be supportive of the project or experience. The faculty mentor and the student(s) should discuss and plan the project together. The mentor is expected to guide and instruct the student(s) throughout the project. The faculty mentor's commitment to the student(s) is critical to ensure the successful completion of the project or experience. A letter of support from the faculty mentor must accompany the proposal. The information that should be included in this letter is described in the Proposal Format Instructions.

How To Submit: Under ordinary circumstances the schedule of deadlines for funding applications is the following:

- October 15 for spring semester projects;
- February 15 for summer projects;
- April 15 for fall semester projects.

Steps:

1. Complete a SILO Funding Request Form and submit it to the chair of your faculty mentor's department.
2. Your proposal will be reviewed at the departmental level and be forwarded to the Truman SILO Committee (TSC) for its consideration and evaluation.

3. The TSC completes its review and advises the Office of the Provost/VPAA of any recommendations it has. The TSC will notify you of the outcome.
4. If you receive funding, you will be expected to work with the home department of your faculty mentor to track expenses and to return receipts.

Interdisciplinary Projects (with faculty members from more than one department):

Interdisciplinary projects should be reviewed by all chairs of the involved faculty mentor before it is submitted to TSC.

Awards: No more than \$1,000 in student stipend(s) will be awarded for each funded project. Faculty members may earn no more than \$2,000 per project, limited at \$4,000 total for all SILO mentorship activity per semester. There is no maximum award amount.

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 at the mid-point of the semester of experience or project offering and the second at the end of the grant period **once the written report is submitted**. The department chair will notify the Payroll Office to pay the final installment once the report has been received. The first payment date for each grant will be established by the College or School based on the grant proposal and included on the requisition for payment.

Notification of Awards: The TSC will notify all applicants whether they will/will not receive an award.

Awardee's Written Report: Awardees are required to prepare a final written report no longer in length than five double-spaced pages in which is described briefly:

- the project or experience which was proposed,
- specifically what was accomplished during the grant period, and
- what the student learned from the project.

The report should be submitted to the TSC no later than the last day of classes . This submission is required in order to receive final payment of the grant award. The TSC will ensure that a copy of the report is forwarded to the appropriate department of the faculty mentor.

Proposal Format Instructions

Please use the attached SILO Proposal Cover Sheet. You must remit both this form and your proposal TOGETHER when you submit your proposal.

Use the following format and organizational headings to prepare your proposal for submission. Complete each section carefully. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Use 10-point or larger type font.

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

The summary or abstract should briefly describe:

1. the goals or objectives of the project or experience;
2. why the project or experience is important or what will be learned from it;
3. the specific procedures or work methods which will be used to achieve the

- goals or objectives;
- 4. how the success of the project will be determined;
- 5. how the results of the project will be shared; and
- 6. the anticipated number of students who will be involved.

II. Faculty Mentor Letter of Support

The letter from the primary faculty mentor should describe briefly the project or experience and explain the educational benefits for the student. In addition, the qualifications and capacity of the students for performing the required elements of the project should be addressed. The project development process should be addressed and, if the project grows out of a larger program – particularly one of the faculty mentor, the distinctiveness of the project and how it fits in with the faculty member’s regular activity should be clarified in the mentor’s letter. The mentor should state his/her willingness to assist the students in all phases of the project, including planning, structuring, completion, and reportage. A description of specific ways in which the mentor plans to guide the students is important. The mentor should agree to help the students to prepare the written report which is required at completion of the project.

III. The Students Qualifications (maximum one page, double spaced)

Briefly describe your (and fellow students’) qualifications to pursue the project or experience. Include your major(s), number of completed credit hours, and the expected date(s) of graduation. Explain why you and your fellow students are interested in this project or experience - what laboratory experience you have had, what background reading you have done, discussions you have had with a faculty member, *etc.*

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

Explain specifically what the project will accomplish during the grant period.

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

Identify the time period (weeks, months, *etc.*) during which the student(s) plan(s) to work on the project, giving the dates when one expects the project to begin and end and approximately how many hours each week will be focused on the project. Describe exactly which activities or procedures will take place during the grant period. Specifically explain how the project will be carried out. Identify what you will do and what other individuals who will be involved in the project or experience will do. Describe the extent of the involvement of the faculty mentor in the project.

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. State the amount you are requesting and briefly describe any budgetary requirements that will not be covered by the stipend.

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

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

General Guidelines

The Office of the Provost 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. Proposals and requests for funding are expected to be typed neatly (word processed).
2. While excessively lengthy proposals are not encouraged or required, most successful proposals should provide more details than can be accommodated by the small allotted space on the proposal form. Continuations should be carried over to an extra sheet of paper, or two. It is important to provide sufficient detail to allow a thorough understanding and review of the proposal without being so long as to be cumbersome or tedious. In most cases, one or two pages would be more appropriate than one or two sentences.
3. Budgets that include faculty remuneration should include the Truman share of FICA and Medicare expenses (7.65% of gross salary). The recipient's FICA and Medicare expenses will be deducted from the gross salary.
4. Ordinarily, funding for international experiences will be available only for projects which include a specific, well-defined, distinctive, appropriate, and worthwhile project. Enrollment in a foreign language or study program will not merit funding.

Normally, funding will not be awarded for:

- tuition at other colleges or universities;
 - paid internships;
 - projects by seniors which take place predominantly or exclusively after their graduations;
 - ordinary expenses to travel abroad (items such as passports, visas, immunizations, *etc.*).
5. 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.
 6. **Travel Advisory Countries**
The U.S Department of State issues travel advisories about dangerous conditions in certain countries. The government recommends that U.S. citizens and holders of "green

cards” avoid those areas. Before you propose a project 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). The University respects the opinion of the U.S. Department of State regarding this issue. Neither credit nor funding will be available for projects to travel advisory-listed countries.

7. Student Educational Files

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.

The above material has been gleaned, adapted, modified, and edited from the Stanford University Student-Initiated Course program and Lawrence University Student-Initiated Programs.