



## Innovative Learning-Centered Grants: Support for Faculty Creativity in Teaching

Deadline for Submitting Proposals to your Dean:  
**Friday, January 23, 2009**

The University of South Florida is pleased to announce the Innovative Learning-Centered Grants Program. The following campuses in Tampa Academic Affairs are eligible for funding: Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Behavioral and Community Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Honors, Marine Science, and Visual and Performing Arts.

Awards are designed to encourage instructional innovation and efforts to enhance student learning through new approaches, both at the level of the individual course and at the level of the department when more than one course is involved. Resources requested may include faculty preparation time, skill-development activities, and technical support assistance. Examples of appropriate areas are course enrichment, course-related travel, curriculum development and evaluation, new approaches to assessment of student learning outcomes, use of active learning strategies, incorporation of multicultural perspectives, and development of new teaching expertise.

**Please read carefully both the application information below and the Frequently Asked Questions found later in this announcement.**

**PROGRAM GOALS:** This initiative addresses three interrelated goals:

- To support faculty efforts to improve learning-centered teaching through innovation
- To encourage faculty efforts to assess and document the effectiveness of their instructional improvement efforts
- To provide professional growth opportunities for, and collaboration among, USF faculty

**PROPOSER ELIGIBILITY:** Tenured or tenure-earning faculty, librarians, and full-time instructors on continuing instructional appointments are eligible to submit one grant

application per year. Applications from teams of collaborating proposers are also invited; however, an individual cannot be named on two grant applications. To maximize program resources, faculty are not eligible for grant funding in two consecutive years.

**PROPOSAL GUIDELINES:** First and foremost, grant proposals should describe projects that clearly go beyond the normal level of course preparation expected of all faculty and should describe the specific ways in which the project will enhance student learning.

**The maximum grant award will be \$4,000 for single-course projects or \$10,000 for collaboration at the department or program level.** Proposals for over \$4,000 must include a letter of support from the department chair explaining how the project will benefit the department or unit as a whole. Proposals requiring less than the award limit are encouraged while those requiring greater levels of support should specify the source (with evidence) of additional funding that will be used to complete the project.

Proposals for activities, assistance, or equipment normally supported at the department or college level are not eligible for funding. Funding can be requested for:

- Significantly improving courses through innovative approaches to learning-centered teaching.
- Purchase of instructional materials and/or equipment
- Summer stipends for faculty (up to \$2,500)
- Student assistants for instructional projects
- Participation in training programs or conferences on teaching to enhance instruction
- Travel costs and/or honoraria for consultants to address instructional issues

With regard to the purchase or upgrading of computer equipment, computers are recognized as a necessary tool for all faculty and should be requested from the department or college. Funds can only be requested to purchase specialized computer resources that will be devoted specifically to instructional purposes in innovative projects designed to improve student learning. Funds similarly cannot be requested for routine purchases of computer projection devices; funds to purchase such devices or to access existing devices on campus are available from other sources. **A grant proposal that requests funds for a computer purchase for instructional uses should also describe the plan for obtaining access to computer projection resources for the classroom. Please comply with the technology purchasing procedures on the university's technology standards site: <http://www.it.usf.edu/purchasing/purchasing-information>.**

**SELECTION CRITERIA:** The Proposal Review Committee will carefully review all proposals based on the following five criteria:

- Project impact – the potential to enhance student learning in ways that can be demonstrated. This will be the primary selection criterion. Other types of impact may include the proposed project’s ability to serve as a model that is generalizable to other settings on campus or to affect a large number of students. Proposals for over \$4,000 should clearly demonstrate impact at the department or unit level.
- Project uniqueness – the attempt to transform the teaching/learning enterprise by employing innovative, learning-centered teaching alternatives to traditional classroom instruction.
- Project feasibility – the proposer’s likelihood of completing the project on schedule and with the resources provided.
- Proposer’s qualifications – the demonstrated commitment to teaching improvements and/or technology-enhanced learning. Other qualifications can include documented record of excellence in the course for which funds have been sought.
- Project evaluation plan – the proposal must include a substantial plan to judge the project’s effect on teaching and learning.

Proposers should remember that the clarity and completeness of the proposal will have a significant impact on the reviewers’ ability to assess project potential. A faculty committee will review the proposals.

**PROCEDURE:** Submit five copies of the application. Project applications should contain three items as described below – (I) an Application Cover Sheet, (II) a brief narrative description, and (III) a letter of support from your department chairperson (five copies).

#### **I. APPLICATION COVER SHEET**

Include your name, department, academic rank, mail point, phone, fax, email address, project title, and a project abstract (a clear 100-150 word description).

#### **II. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

Include a brief narrative description of the project (maximum length is five single-spaced pages) addressing each of the following eight questions:

1. What course will this project benefit? How often do you teach this course, and how many students annually enroll in your sections? Please attach the syllabus from the last time you taught this class.

2. What specific pedagogic or technology-based instructional innovation would grant funds enable you to make in this course?
3. Will this project produce any instructional materials, products, or generalizable ideas that can be shared with other instructors? If yes, please describe what and how.
4. What is the proposed project budget? Be specific about the salary rate and expected workload of student/staff assistants and/or the amount of time you will devote to the project if you are seeking a summer stipend.
5. What specific types of (a) pedagogic or instructional design assistance, (b) computer training, (c) technical assistance, and/or (d) non-technical support will you need to complete the proposed project?
6. What is the project time line?
7. How will you assess the impact of this project? Please explain steps you will take to determine the results of the project in terms of (a) enhanced student learning and (b) your own ongoing teaching improvement.
8. What prior evidence of your demonstrated commitment to creative teaching pedagogies or technology-enhanced learning can you provide?

### **III. LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM YOUR DEPARTMENT CHAIR**

While all proposals are required to have a letter of support from the department chair, letters of support for proposals over \$4,000 should explain how the proposal will benefit the department or unit.

**DEADLINES:** The date for submitting applications to your College or Campus Dean is **Friday, January 23, 2009**. Deans are asked to review the proposals and, if desired, suggest a ranking of the proposals. Each Dean's office should forward proposals to the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching Excellence by **Friday, January 30, 2009**.

Awards will be announced no later than Friday, March 9, 2009.

### **PROJECT COMPLETION AND RESULTS:**

Funded projects should be completed by June 1, 2010. A final project report, describing in detail project activities and accomplishments, should be completed and submitted to the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching Excellence by this date.

Participants will also be asked to share their projects with colleagues during the spring of 2009 (e.g., by presenting a "session/demonstration" in some USF forum).

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

To help faculty prepare the highest quality and most competitive proposals possible, the following **Frequently Asked Questions** have been developed based upon lessons learned in previous years:

- **Can a grant be requested to create a new course?**

These funds cannot be requested to support activities that are considered part of a faculty member's annual teaching or research assignment or which are normally funded by a department or college. Therefore, explain why the creation of a new course or revision of an existing course is not part of your normally assigned duties, for example, conversion of a course to online delivery.

- **What does the committee look for when reading proposals?**

In addition to strict adherence to the guidelines, the committee expects well conceived and carefully written proposals. With respect to the budget, items should be detailed and explicitly connected to project goals. Proposers should pay careful attention to the selection criteria to ensure that proposals persuasively address selection criteria, including the plan to evaluate the project's impact.

- **How specific should the proposed project budget be?**

The budget should provide sufficient details for the selection committee to determine the reasonableness and efficacy of the request. For example:

If requesting a \$2500 summer stipend for faculty, indicate the amount of time per week that will be devoted to completing the project.

If requesting funds to hire an assistant, describe the tasks she/he will perform, the numbers of hours worked weekly, and the anticipated hourly wage.

If requesting travel funds, a description of why this travel could not be supported through usual funding channels should be provided along with an itemized estimate of project related travel expenses.

If requesting funds to purchase materials or equipment, an itemized description of all materials to be purchased should be provided (e.g. not simply indicating, "\$1,000 to purchase films, books, and software").

- **What kinds of equipment purchase requests are discouraged?**

Requests for items that primarily benefit the effectiveness or efficiency of one's department (e.g., a photocopy machine, a computer server, standard laboratory equipment), rather than a thoughtfully described and detailed plan to enhance student learning in the context of one or more courses, are discouraged. For technology purchases, please comply with the technology purchasing procedures

on the university's technology standards site:  
<http://www.it.usf.edu/purchasing/purchasing-information>.

- **What will the committee look for with regard to the hiring of student assistants?**

Funding for graduate assistants can be requested for innovative tasks that enrich the graduate experience in ways not supported through other means. Funding cannot be requested for graduate assistants to perform duties traditionally supported at the department level, whether or not your department has had graduate assistants in the past. Proposals should also include a rationale for the level of student assistance requested (e.g., Graduate student or undergraduate student).

- **Can the funds be requested to support domestic or international travel?**

Requests for funds for both domestic and international travel will be considered if the proposal clearly demonstrates that the travel is directly related to the enrichment of the teaching and learning in a specific course and also that funds are not routinely available from other sources (e.g., Faculty International Travel Grant Program).

- **Can these funds be used to design and conduct student-learning outcomes assessment activities?**

These funds can be used for activities that relate to the design and conduct of student-learning outcomes assessment, both at the department/program level and at the individual course level.

- **Can the funds be requested to support production of instructional videotapes?**

Producing high quality videos or DVDs for instructional purposes is typically both time consuming and expensive. Proposals for such productions should describe how a quality project can be completed within the funding and time limits of this grant program. The proposed budget should contain thoughtfully detailed and itemized proposed expenditures (e.g., not simply "\$250 for professional film editing and duplication").

- **What if a project requires more than the maximum funding available to complete?**

Funding requests are limited to \$4,000 for single-course projects or \$10,000 for collaborations at the department or program level. If your proposed project requires greater funding, you must describe where the additional funding will come from and provide with your proposal evidence that these additional funds are available.

- **Can funds be requested by a faculty member who has previously completed a workshop on the use of such technology tools as PowerPoint or Blackboard?**

Proposals to simply create PowerPoint slides or a Web site for a course are discouraged as are projects that can be completed simply by participating in workshops on technology-enhanced learning offered to faculty. Funds for specific courses, however, can be requested to support in-depth, innovative applications of technology that go well above and beyond what can be accomplished in available workshops. The Project Selection Committee will want to see a clear and specific plan that demonstrates the innovative nature and potential instructional impact of the proposed project.

Participants will also be asked to share their projects with colleagues during the process or upon completion (e.g., by presenting a “session/demonstration” in some USF forum).

For additional information about the Innovative Teaching Grant program:

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