

## **Innovative Interdisciplinary Teaching at RIT: An RFP**

To support key components of the strategic plan and to extend RIT's reputation as an institution deeply invested in educational innovation, the Provost welcomes proposals that facilitate *interdisciplinary* teaching and make full and original use of instructional resources across colleges. This initiative will fund a limited number of high quality proposals that facilitate innovative and sustainable interdisciplinary curriculum delivery and highlight student achievement of signature RIT learning outcomes. By curriculum delivery, we mean paired courses, new course development, the achievement of curricular goals inside and outside traditional individual courses, and distinctive pathways through existing curricula that facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation.

First and foremost, this RFP seeks to stimulate big thinking that brings together diverse (but uniquely complimentary) faculty expertise from across the campus and imagine new forms of knowledge delivery. We are looking for bold proposals that have the ability to change the way we think about "the course" and student pathways to degree. Common barriers include structural impediments to student work off proscribed degree plans, faculty perception that interdisciplinary work is not valued by departments or promotion and tenure committees, and space and other resource limitations that complicate overlapping curricular goals across colleges and departments

The initiative will fund a limited number of proposals at up to \$20,000 contingent upon budget resources; budget cannot fund summer salary but should fund course release when there is a strong description of future sustainability of the innovation in the absence of an ongoing subsidy. Indeed – first and foremost – regardless of pedagogical elegance or institutional novelty – budgets should be about *making interdisciplinary teaching happen*.

Proposals must include participation of faculty and students from at least two colleges, although we will be most interested in proposals that ambitiously imagine participation from three or more colleges and/or research centers or sites. Further key criteria are visibility, dynamism with the strategic plan, sustainability, and a pedagogy that maximizes student participation – and potentially includes students in the delivery and support of content.

Proposals should also include an assessment plan that identifies student achievement of clearly identified learning goals and, furthermore, attentiveness to the sustainability of the project beyond the funding period. Assessment plans, then, should be attentive to both the documentation of learning within the proposed experience, and to the structural conditions that make a special proposal necessary.

Successful budgets may include a departmental stipend of undesignated funds of \$5000 – in exchange for providing innovative administrative support, agreeing to articulate student participation towards degree progress, and identifying the

continued offering of the course/project on a regular basis. In other words, participating department chairs must submit a plan that explains how (a) a student will be able to participate in the proposed innovative experience and remain on a timely path to degree; and (b) the innovative experience will be sustained. Similarly, we require endorsements from department chairs and their deans that highlight enthusiasm for the proposed experiment as a pathway to tenure and/or promotion.

Successful proposals will receive support in communicating, promoting, and evaluating their initiatives.

### **Eligibility**

PIs must be full time instructors, either lecturer, research faculty, tenure track or tenured faculty. Adjunct faculty may be members of a proposal team. *All members of a team must be available for implementation in Spring Semester of 2016.* All team members must have a letter of support from their department chair acknowledging eligibility and including amendments and modifications to a plan of work that indicates the importance of the proposed project to achievement of professional development outcomes.

### **Proposal Format**

Each proposal should include a (a) statement of concept, (b) list of participants, including clear identification of PI or co-PIs, (c) budget, (d) description of student participation pathways (i.e., how will students participate in the project and make progress to degree), (e) an assessment plan, and (f) letters of support from their department head and dean (see below).

Proposals should not exceed 10 double-spaced pages.

### **Letters of Support**

Departmental letters of support should include: (a) enthusiasm for the participation of each member of a unit listed as a team member, (b) the local plan to integrate the project into current degree and curricular pathways, (c) a description of departmental resources to be invested in the project, (d) a description of the perceived sustainability of the project and (d) a statement of how this teaching innovation aligns with other departmental strategic goals.

**Discussion Forums:** RFP discussion sessions will be held June 16, 2-4 p.m., and July 16, 10-noon, in the Innovation Hall building.

### **Deadline**

Deadline for proposals is August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Please send materials to James Hall ([jchcms@rit.edu](mailto:jchcms@rit.edu)) or Richard DeMartino ([rdemartino@saunders.rit.edu](mailto:rdemartino@saunders.rit.edu)).

## **Implementation**

*Expectation is that projects will be implemented in the spring semester of 2016.*  
Successful project team members will be required to participate in a public forum in May of 2016 to reflect on the sustainability, scalability, and reproducibility of the spring's efforts.

## **Resources**

We encourage applicants to take advantage of recent campus reflection on the challenges and opportunities that interdisciplinary teaching presents, including:

[RIT Collaboratory for Cross-Disciplinary Education Implementation Task Force Report \(2010\)](#)

[The Ad Hoc Task Force for Interdisciplinary Programming, College of Liberal Arts \(2014\)](#)

We also encourage applicants to familiarize themselves with current RIT teaching innovations that have pressed up against the typical limits of the traditional classroom:

[Industrial Design – T minus 151](#)

[Imaging Science – Innovative Freshman Experience](#)

[Simone Center – Idea Lab](#)

Finally, for the purposes of this exercise, it may be helpful to familiarize yourself with the kinds of large scale cross-disciplinary experiments pursued by other innovative institutions around the country:

[Evergreen State College – Programs](#)

[Virginia Ball Center for Creative Inquiry at Ball State University – Immersive Learning](#)

[Vanderbilt University – “Center for Teaching and Learning” -- Best Practices in Team and Collaborative Teaching](#)