

2019 PROVOST'S LEARNING INNOVATIONS GRANTS

APPLICATION

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete this Application Form and save as "Lastname_Firstname_APP" (*using your name*).
2. Ask your Department Head to complete the Department Head Certification, scan and save as, "Lastname_Firstname_SIG" (*using your name*).
3. Email all documents to plig@rit.edu, **no later than 11:59pm ET, January 21, 2019**.

If you have any questions about completing this application, please contact Michael Starenko at 585-475-5035 or mssetc@rit.edu.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

This application is for a (please select *one* type of grant):

Exploration Grant

Focus Grant – Active Learning Across All Course Modes

Principal Applicant Name: Daniel Worden

Faculty Title: Associate Professor **Email:** dxwind@rit.edu **Phone:** (585) 475-5226
(*Full-time only*)

College: School of Individualized Study / College of Liberal Arts **Department:** SOIS / Department of English

Department Head Name: Sharon Beckford-Foster (English) / James Hall (SOIS)

Email: smbgsl@rit.edu / jchcms@rit.edu

Others involved in the project (if any): Mike Johansson, Senior Lecturer, School of Communication, COLA

Project Name: Micro-Credentials: Last Mile Professional Skills and Pop-Up Courses Across the Curriculum

Total Funds Requested (*as calculated on the budget worksheet on the next page*): \$4,000
(*requests of \$1,000 to \$5,000 will be considered*)

BUDGET

Complete the table below to calculate your budget

- The total shown on this worksheet must match the “Total funds requested” in the Applicant Information section on page 1 of this application form.
- If awarded, additional funds will be provided to cover any benefits and ITS expenses associated with the salary budget requested.
- Note that any equipment or other materials purchased with grant funds are the property of your department and revert to the department after your project is completed

Personnel	Purpose/Justification	Amount
Full-time Faculty/Staff		
Mike Johansson	Summer salary	\$2,000
Daniel Worden	Summer salary	\$2,000
Adjuncts, Part-time Faculty/Staff, Summer Salary		
Student Workers, Graduate Assistants		
Personnel Total		\$ 4000.00
Equipment	Purpose/Justification	Amount
Equipment Total		\$ 0.00
Travel	Purpose/Justification	Amount
Travel Total		\$ 0.00
Other (Specify)	Purpose/Justification	Amount
Other Total		\$ 0.00
Total Award Requested		\$4,000.00

STATEMENT OF UTILITY (two pages maximum)

Using the evaluation criteria outlined in the [Proposal Evaluation](#) section of the PLIG website, please provide an overview of the project you are proposing, including:

- Project objectives
- An explanation of the teaching/learning problem(s) it is designed to address
- An explanation of the significance of the project to student outcomes and/or the student experience.
- A brief description of how the project integrates with activity already underway at RIT in a priority area and/or how this approach has been successfully used at RIT already.

We propose to offer new pathways for course and microcredential development at RIT, by creating strategies for developing one credit-hour courses that can be bundled into three to six-hour certificates. In the School of Individualized Study, we have recently piloted two successful one credit-hour courses: Livestreaming and Making Comics. Both of these one credit-hour courses provided students an experiential learning opportunity in a condensed timeframe.

These courses represent ongoing currents in higher education. These courses exist as “pop-up” and experiential learning opportunities for students, focused on specific skills and technologies. In so doing, they are part of a larger discourse in higher education today about transforming traditional curriculum through the inclusion of experiential and skill-based learning. Cathy Davidson describes this synthetic approach – the blending of traditional modes of learning through research and analysis with experientially-focused opportunities to make and contribute to the world—the “New Education” (Davidson 2017). A robust portfolio of one credit-hour course shells would allow faculty from across the Institute to develop “pop-up” courses that could be linked across a student’s time at RIT, resulting in a unique set of learning experiences that would exist within, but not according to the strict timeline of, the academic calendar.

These one credit-hour courses can be designed and offered quickly, since the course content is limited to the one credit-hour model. Similar to Ohio University’s “Accelerator Program” (Biemiller 2018) in which faculty and students can propose project-based or topic-based courses that can then be offered quickly, we envision one credit-hour courses that could consistently run, as well as one credit-hour courses that would be designed on a semester-by-semester or yearly basis to focus on particular events and topics.

For example, RIT routinely brings in scholars, authors, and artists to give talks on campus. What if faculty could design a one credit-hour course around a particular speaker’s visit, to ground academic events within the curriculum? For example, the author of a new Frederick Douglass biography, David Blight, came to Rochester in December. A one credit-hour course leading up to or following his visit could ask students to not only attend his public lecture, but to read his biography alongside Douglass’ own writings and relevant scholarship, as well as visit sites in Rochester such as the Susan B. Anthony House and Mt. Hope Cemetery. Students would then meet with a faculty member for a number of discussion sessions, and write reflections on their readings and experiences. This kind of one-credit hour course would provide a unique experiential learning opportunity, and it could be revised according to different speakers and faculty expertise.

With the assistance of a PLIG grant, we will create content-specific course shells for these one credit-hour experiences, and map out possible groupings of these one credit-hour offerings that may be suitable for microcredentials. We will also create a “best practices” checklist for one credit-hour course design, delivery and assessment that will provide specific guidance on blending experiential learning with critical thinking and skills development.

While these 1-credit courses can certainly be offered live on campus, they may also be delivered fully or partially online. Therefore this model will spend considerable time looking at best practices in online micro-course delivery..

If it is determined that these micro-course offerings conflict with any RIT policy, the investigators intend to work toward campus-wide approval for such offerings. We would also suggest safeguards against students using such course to make up too many missing classes – with suggestions to the institute about limitations on how many of these courses a student may be able to take to count toward required graduation credits. We will also investigate the viability of general education approval for select one credit-hour courses.

By bundling one credit-hour courses into microcredentials, we hope to offer a model that blends both traditional, transcriptable credit, with the new wave of badges and certificates that have become prominent in higher education today. It is now routine for students and non-students alike to pursue microcredentials and badges through alternative education platforms, such as edX. The well-documented concerns about these platforms and credentials, though, are that they may not be as rigorous in their assessment and dissemination than traditional courses on a college transcript. By building one credit-hour experiences that may be bundled into microcredentials, RIT will both be able to offer a new mode of learning certification while also preserving the integrity of the college transcript and reliable, expert assessment. Students headed to the workforce are all looking for a point of differentiation from others applying for a position. A microcredential might well be that difference maker. Furthermore, these microcredentials might also be of interest to non-RIT students. We would welcome further exploration of the marketability of the one credit-hour model as a continuing education opportunity.

References

Biemiller, Lawrence. “This University’s ‘Accelerator’ Tests New Ideas for Teaching—and It’s Working.” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (21 Oct. 2018). Web.

Davidson, Cathy N. *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux*. New York: Basic Books, 2017.

STATEMENT OF CREATIVITY (three paragraphs maximum)

Provide a brief description of how this is a novel approach, or a new application of an existing mode or model of teaching and learning, and/or research about how teaching and learning represents a new paradigm.

This project would evaluate RIT's existing one credit-hour courses and provide course shells, best practices, and bundling strategies for a more standardized offering of these courses. An innovative microcredential synthesizing one credit-hour courses in one focus area may be an extra incentive for students looking to go that last mile in their RIT experience.

In so doing, this project would synthesize currents in higher education today that emphasize the importance of experiential learning, alternative modes of course delivery, and "pop-up" courses that are focused on emergent and timely problems, skills, and technologies.

By creating a set of documents and best practices for the creation of microcredentials and one credit-hour experiences, we hope to better incentivize faculty to create these innovative curricular experiences for our students. We believe they will offer exciting possibilities for students looking to gather one last three credit-hour series of experiences that will help them go the "last mile" at RIT, as well as develop as professionals, thinkers, and creators.

STATEMENT OF EFFICACY (two pages maximum)

Provide a brief description of the experiment/research design, methodology, and methods of data collection and analysis you will use to gauge efficacy.

The project will be in two stages. The first will involve the research of and gathering of best practices and then developing the frameworks and models. The second will involve an initial offering of six 1-credit courses and a corresponding micro-credential in the 2019-2020 academic year. One set of courses will focus on topics such as personal branding, and the other will consist of one credit-hour offerings about creativity and the comics medium.

Students in each of the 1-credit classes will be assessed in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, journaling, discussions, reflective papers, model making and quizzes. Over the period of the three courses running the investigators will track how many students sign up for all three and how many persist and complete all three to earn the micro-credential. This data will be compared to existing data on 1-credit class participation.

If, as the investigators expect, the potential to earn a micro-credential greatly increases participation in a cluster of 1-credit classes the project will be adjudged to have been successful.

Students will also be surveyed on their experience in the classes and their attitudes about earning micro-credential.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Please address these questions, if needed.

Will your project require assistance for extensive or unusual media, multimedia, simulation, and/or software development? If so, please explain?

No additional equipment or materials will be needed.

All courses offered by RIT must be accessible to students with disabilities, according to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (rit.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices/info). Is your proposed teaching approach accessible to all students, with reasonable accommodation? If not, please explain.

It will be accessible.

RIT abides by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), which prohibits instructors from making students' identities, course work, and educational records public without their consent (rit.edu/xVzNE). Will any data gathering or sharing for your project raise any FERPA issues? If so, please explain.

It will not. We will seek IRB approval for all student surveys.

DISSEMINATION AGREEMENT

By completing this grant application, I agree to provide the materials and services described here, in support of disseminating what is learned from this project to the RIT community.

I also agree to return all/a portion of the funds that I receive for this project to RIT if I fail to complete or provide the materials described here:

- Full Project Plan (*including roles and responsibilities, milestone dates, and pertinent project details*)
- Preliminary Findings report (*may include experiment/study design, lessons learned, initial data collection, and/or literature review summary*)
- Participation in an ILI/TLS Preliminary Findings Roundtable dissemination event (*share and discuss your preliminary findings with your PLIG cohort*)
- Final Summary of Findings (*including data collection, lessons learned, implications for further study, and which may be in the form of an article abstract, conference presentation outline, or short report*)
- Final budget accounting (*reconciliation of budget provided with your application and the actual project expenses*)
- Participation in an ILI/TLS PLIG Showcase dissemination event (*present a poster or other display at the annual Showcase*)

By submitting this application, I accept this agreement. DW (*applicant, please initial here*)

TIMELINE AND TASKS

Please indicate any variances to the planned PLIG 2019 schedule as described in the above Dissemination Agreement and the reasons for this variance. *If you do not intend to deviate from the schedule, you may leave this section blank.*

Task	Date	Proposed Variance and Reason
Full Project Plan submitted to TLS	August 16, 2019	
Preliminary Findings report submitted to TLS	January 10, 2020	
Participation in an ILI/TLS Preliminary Findings Roundtable dissemination event	February, 2020	
Summary of Final Findings report submitted to TLS	August 21, 2020	
Final Budget Accounting report submitted to TLS	August 21, 2020	
Participation in an ILI/TLS PLIG Showcase dissemination event	November 2020	

DISSEMINATION PLAN (*optional*)

Provide details about the journals, conferences, shows, or other external vehicles with strong potential for dissemination of your results (in addition to the ILI/TLS Preliminary Findings Roundtable and PLIG Showcase dissemination events). Include supporting documentation, such as preliminary interest or acceptance, with your application, if available. *(Please note that special consideration will be given to proposals that have a defined opportunity for external dissemination, such as an academic journal or professional conference.)*

We believe that this model of “pop up,” experiential course development will be of interest to many faculty and administrators in higher education. Accordingly, we will plan to present our findings at a Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning Annual Meeting and at an Individualized Major Programs Network Annual Meeting.

We will also draft a report of our findings for a higher education news outlet, such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* or RIT's University Magazine.