



Great Lakes Colleges Association
Academic Leadership and Innovation Institute

Academic Innovation Fund

The Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) is pleased to announce a new professional development resource for faculty members who seek to collaborate in pursuing shared interests in research, teaching, or leadership development. The Academic Innovation Fund will provide professional development support totaling \$100,000 over three years to groups of faculty seeking to work together in achieving common purposes within and across GLCA's 12 member colleges. Proposals for grants will be accepted beginning in January 2007.

The Academic Innovation Fund is one component of the GLCA Academic Leadership and Innovation (GALI) Institute, begun in Fall 2006 with a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In addition to providing support for collaborative faculty initiatives, the Mellon grant supports a series of GALI Institute faculty development workshops, which will provide a growing number of faculty members with foundations for better understanding academic leadership, governance, and decision making at liberal arts colleges.

This document describes the Academic Innovation Fund. It identifies two broad thematic areas the fund will support, with examples of each, and it outlines different categories of awards for single- or multiple-college projects. Finally, it describes characteristics of grant proposals the Academic Innovation Fund seeks from faculty groups. GLCA encourages faculty members of its 12 member colleges to consider the Academic Innovation Fund as a resource to support collaborative explorations of new themes and approaches with potential to strengthen liberal arts education.

Thematic Areas and Examples of Collaborative Projects

On a competitive basis, the Academic Innovation Fund will provide grant support to groups of two or more faculty members who propose to work collectively in achieving either of two broad purposes:

- A. *To build academic community* and contribute to the enhancement of research and teaching, within or across academic disciplines;
- B. *To foster academic leadership* skills that contribute to effective decision-making in the context of institutional governance, thereby strengthening the ability of departments, interdisciplinary programs, or small independent colleges to fulfill their liberal arts missions.

The kinds of proposals that the Academic Innovation Fund could conceivably support include the following:

A. Examples of Projects under the Category of Building Academic Community

- Convene a group of faculty members with a combined disciplinary or interdisciplinary interest to take account of new developments within a field and identify opportunities for collaboration in research, curriculum design, and in some cases, shared teaching.
- Create models for assessing learning in a given field, particularly within newer interdisciplinary fields in which the standards of evaluation have not been fully developed or tested.
- Develop inter-institutional approaches to fostering stronger skills of quantitative or verbal literacy in students regardless of major.
- Build networks for enhancing the presence of lesser-taught subjects and smaller departments across member colleges, through such means as guest lectureships or a course jointly taught by members of two colleges. It is conceivable that a project of this kind could yield a new conception of an academic “department” that spans two or more institutions.
- Purchase books and materials for a faculty reading/discussion group to focus on a topic of common interest within or across academic disciplines.
- Convene a meeting among faculty of a common discipline across institutions to develop agreements for the shared use of unique scientific equipment for data analysis.

B. Examples of Projects under the Category of Fostering Academic Leadership

- Convene an exploratory group of faculty members who have similar governance responsibilities at different colleges – i.e., as chair of a curriculum, budget, or personnel committee – to compare leadership challenges and develop models for effective practice.
- Assemble a group of current and past department chairs within one or more academic fields to identify common challenges and formulate best practices in such areas as hiring, tenure and promotion, and reconciling aspirations with budgetary limitations.
- Create a work group to explore ways of making academic governance less time-consuming and more productive in liberal arts colleges, comparing strengths and drawbacks of different governance environments and developing principles that help faculty members fulfill their governance responsibilities in more efficient and satisfying ways.
- Convene a group to focus on recurrent challenges to academic leadership: e.g., formulating an institutional vision, fostering effective communication (between administration and faculty or among faculty members), eliciting buy-in for institutional goals, or working constructively with those who impede the attainment of institutional goals.
- Create a group to explore ways of resolving tensions that may exist between senior faculty members strongly ingrained in traditional modes,

and younger faculty members who perceive new developments and seek to explore emerging opportunities for research and teaching.

Innovation Award Categories and Judging Process

All grant proposals submitted to the GLCA Academic Innovation Fund must involve at least two faculty members who propose to work together in pursuit of given objectives. One of GLCA's core purposes is to strengthen liberal arts education by providing faculty members with opportunities to collaborate. As such, this fund will not support proposals for individual faculty work.

The Academic Innovation Fund includes two broad categories of awards:

- A. Awards to two or more faculty members of a single college who propose to work on a given topic;
- B. Awards to groups of faculty members who seek the engagement of colleagues across two or more colleges in addressing a topic of shared interest.

A. Judging Process for Single-College Proposals

The academic dean of each GLCA member college will receive \$1,000 per year from the Academic Innovation Fund for the purpose of supporting campus-based collaboration in either of the two thematic areas described above (i.e., building academic community, or fostering academic leadership). Each college dean will oversee the process of evaluating proposals and determining awards for support from this single-college fund.

B. Judging Process for Multiple-College Proposals

The Innovation Fund establishes three classes of awards within the Multiple College category, corresponding to the number and distribution of participants in a project. As the number of participants increases, so too does the amount of funding a project could potentially receive:

- a *cluster* (two to four participants across at least two campuses – up to \$1,500);
- a *configuration* (three to five participants across two or more colleges – up to \$5,000)
- a *collaboration* (six or more participants across at least three colleges – up to \$10,000).

Funding proposals in the first of these categories (“cluster”) will be judged by the academic deans of the faculty participants’ respective home institutions (possibly with the help of campus review committees).

Proposals in the second (“configuration”) category will be judged by the deans of the proposers’ respective home institutions in addition to a third dean from a college that has no faculty stakeholder in the proposal. The

recommendation of this judging panel will be submitted to the full GLCA Deans' Council for final approval (by e-mail dissemination and vote if it will be more than two months before the next Deans' Council meeting).

Proposals for funding in the third category ("collaboration") will be judged initially by a subcommittee of three members of the GLCA Deans' Council. This subcommittee will consist of academic deans of GLCA member colleges with no faculty stakeholder in the proposal. A proposal for a project of this scale must have the endorsement of the home college dean of each faculty stakeholder before being submitted to the Deans' subcommittee. The recommendation of this subcommittee will be submitted to the full GLCA Deans' Council for final approval (by e-mail dissemination and vote if it will be more than two months before the next Deans' Council meeting).

The judging process as outlined above seeks to accord campus deans relative flexibility in granting smaller awards to faculty members of a single college who are proposing to collaborate. Proposals that involve larger numbers of faculty and institutions call for a more extensive cycle of review and approval – first among a subset of deans, and finally among the full GLCA Deans' Council.

Proposal Guidelines

Proposals seeking support from the Academic Innovation Fund should describe succinctly the nature of the project and the actions proposed. Proposals for single-college projects will likely be briefer (i.e., one to two pages) than those involving larger numbers of participants and institutions. Proposals of any category should not exceed five pages in length. All proposals should be written in the expectation that they will be read and discussed by deans and faculty members both on and beyond one's home institution. Even proposals for collaboration on a single college campus may become interesting as exemplars of ideas to explore in or across other GLCA member colleges.

Proposals should state the following:

- The amount of funding requested
- The category of proposal (i.e., single-college, or multiple-college in the class of "cluster," "configuration," or "collaboration")
- The project's topic or purpose
- The importance of the topic or purpose
- Description of the actions to be undertaken
- Anticipated outcomes
- Measures of success
- Name, title, and institution of the lead proposer (i.e., the faculty member who would administer the grant)
- Name, title, and institution of each faculty stakeholder

Proposals for inter-campus projects should include vitas (shorter versions) of faculty participants. In addition, please note that proposals for awards of \$5,000 or more in the “collaboration” rubric require the signature (or an e-mail statement supporting the proposal) from the academic dean of each proposer’s home institution.

Proposals for single-campus projects should be sent to the academic dean of the proposers’ home institution. Proposals for multiple-campus projects should be sent to Gregory Wegner, Director of Program Development, GLCA: wegner@glca.org. E-mail is the preferred mode of conveyance.

For more information about the Academic Innovation Fund, please contact Greg Wegner at GLCA: wegner@glca.org; telephone 734-661-2338.