

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

2012-2014

Engaged Learning, Civic Engagement and Development, and the Psychosocial Well-Being of College Students

Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) requests proposals in one or more of the following three categories. In the third category, we anticipate but do not require that the institution has already taken steps made possible by support from BTtoP.

Category I. Seminar Grants

Seminar Grants up to \$1,000 are available for institutions to bring together diverse members of the campus community for meaningful conversations which will result in institutional actions. Matching support is not required. Proposals are accepted on quarterly deadlines between 2012-2014 (June 15, September 15, December 15, and March 15) and awards are announced 2 weeks after each deadline.

Category II. Program Development Grants

Program Development Grants up to \$10,000 are available for institutions to enhance or extend a program which is consistent with our objectives. Institutional matching support is required. Grants may be renewable. Proposals are accepted on quarterly deadlines between 2012-2014 (June 15, September 15, December 15, and March 15) and awards are announced 6-8 weeks after each deadline.

Category III. Demonstration Site Grants

Grants up to \$75,000, distributed over two years, are available for institutions proposing to demonstrate the outcomes of building institutional capacity for a program of work consistent with our purpose. Institutional matching support is required. Proposals are due by June 15, 2012, and awards are announced by July 15, 2012.

Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) is an independent project in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and supported by the S. Engelhard Center (whose major contributors include the Charles Engelhard Foundation and the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, in addition to other foundations and individuals.) The Project explores and advocates the academic community's support of engaged learning and the relationship of such learning to student well-being and civic development.

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BACKGROUND

Bringing Theory to Practice Project (BTtoP) is an independent project established in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and funded by the S. Engelhard Center with support from the Charles Engelhard Foundation, the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation and other foundations and individuals.

The project is based on evidence that engaged learning, civic engagement and development, and psychosocial well-being are interrelated; that colleges and universities are strategically situated to strengthen their relationship; and that building capacity for this purpose complements the educational mission and democratic purpose of higher education.

The BTtoP Project has involved more than 300 colleges and universities, over 130 of them through grants. We have organized national conferences, created working groups, and built a learning community. We have conducted research, commissioned papers, and produced publications with case studies and empirical evidence.

Evaluation and reflection are integral to our work. Documentation of the Project's origins, objectives, activities, and accomplishments, including studies of funded projects, are available through our research (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/research.cfm) and publications (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/publications.cfm) webpages. Of particular use is the *Decennial Report: A Decade of Support, 2002-2012* (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/dos).

AREAS OF EMPHASIS

BTtoP continues in its original commitment to strengthening the relationship of engaged learning, civic development, and psychosocial well-being of college and university students. We are always open to ideas that will advance this purpose.

Our areas of emphasis are discussed in each of the grant categories. The following are our understandings of key terms at the present time, offered with recognition that their meanings are themselves topics of ongoing discussion. More nuanced definitions are readily available in current higher education literature, including in *Transforming Undergraduate Education: Theory that Compels and Practices that Succeed*—please see BTtoP website for more detail (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/publications.cfm).

- "Civic engagement" is when students participate in public work—such as, but not restricted to—social and political action, community organizing, issue advocacy, and other activities which contribute to actual changes. Community service or service-learning by themselves are not necessarily forms of engagement, but they might become such when linked to learning, reflection and action that produce changes.
- “Civic development” refers to indicators and measures of civic outcomes, such as civic knowledge and skills, civic dispositions, caring for others and community, and personal and social responsibility.
- “Engaged learning” is when students are active participants in “deep” rather than “surface” learning. There are various curricular and co-curricular approaches that contribute to engaged learning, in addition to the usual lectures and seminars that characterize most curricula.

Such learning raises expectations of students, enables them to consider how their learning affects and is affected by its application, and enhances the educational process by increasing their involvement in learning. Authentic engagement can contribute to civic development and promote psychosocial well-being of students.

- “Psychosocial well-being” refers, at a minimum, to the presence of characteristics that typify positive mental health, such as a sense of direction, personal growth and fulfillment, social development, empathy, perspective-taking, resilience, mindfulness, and psychological flourishing.
- “Building institutional capacity” is about institutional sustainability, rather than one-time events. We support strategies for institutional change. Although we normally invest in institutions, we also are open to proposals that build capacity among clusters of institutions, such as the creation of a regional network of colleges and universities.

CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT

Category I Seminar Grants

Seminar Grants for up to \$1,000 are available for institutions to bring together diverse members of the campus community for a half-day or longer facilitated conversation (“seminar”) that will subsequently result in the planning, implementation, and assessment of actions consistent with the context and mission of the institution.

Seminar Grants require no matching support. Proposals are accepted on quarterly deadlines throughout the 2012-2014 funding period (June 15, August 15, November 15, and March 15) and awards are announced two weeks after each deadline.

Recognizing the urgency and general awareness of recent studies calling for campus actions, BTtoP has, for the 2012-2014 period, placed special interest on supporting “Civic Seminars” in which diverse campus representatives participate in a seminar (or series of seminars) that discuss the civic mission of the institution and how the full expression of this mission can be achieved.

The BTtoP website includes information that might prove useful in proposing and planning a civic seminar, including an adaptable format, illustrative questions and a reporting process that will produce a national sharing of ideas and actions that could be used by institutions of all types (http://www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/civicseminarinitiative.cfm). *Civic Provocations*, a BTtoP monograph (available April 2012 online and in print) can be used to stimulate discussion, planning, and the design of a potential campus civic seminar and subsequent steps of action.

Also useful, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future*, the report of the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, is available on the AAC&U website (www.aacu.org/civic_learning/crucible/).

While attentive to the current need to address civic issues, the BTtoP Project continues to be interested in proposals for similarly structured “seminars” on topics that link engaged learning and the psychosocial well-being of students.

Category I proposals should include the following information:

- Name and contact information of the primary contact person; name of seminar host/facilitator
- Purpose of the seminar
- Proposed participants by campus area and rationale for their selection
- Facilitation process and proposed initial guiding questions that reflect the context and culture of the institution
- Anticipated outcomes and subsequent action steps
- Evaluation and reporting described below
- Amount of funds requested

Category I proposals should not exceed 2-3 pages.

Evaluation and Reporting

Seminar grant recipients will be provided a common template for evaluation and reporting of activities and outcomes upon completion of their seminar. As a shared contribution to institutional practices and a national learning community, reports will be made publically available on the web.

Budget

The budget should include the amount requested for facilities, food, facilitation, documentation, or other expenses. A very brief budget narrative should summarize the relationship of costs to activities and justify the proposed expenditures.

Submission Guidelines

Proposals are accepted on a quarterly basis with the following deadlines:

June 15, 2012	June 15, 2013
September 15, 2012	September 15, 2013
December 15, 2012	December 15, 2013
March 15, 2013	March 14, 2014

Seminar grant awards will be announced two weeks following each deadline.

Please submit your proposal via our web application upload feature (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/apply).

In addition, please send one (1) hard copy via mail to:

Bringing Theory to Practice Project
1818 R St., NW
Washington, DC 20009

Category II Program Development Grants

Program Development Grants up to \$10,000 are available for institutions to enhance or extend a program which is consistent with BTtoP objectives.

Proposals are invited from BTtoP grant recipients that want to take next steps, and from institutions that have not received previous BTtoP funding. Preference will be given to proposals that relate the objectives of BTtoP to a broad strategy, directed to achieving clear and sustainable campus objectives.

Category II proposals should include the following information:

- Name and contact information of the primary contact person
- Purpose of and rationale for the project
- How the proposed work will link the objectives of BTtoP to advancing the larger campus strategy
- Key project participants and rationale for their selection
- Anticipated outcomes and subsequent action steps
- Evaluation and reporting information
- Amount of funds requested

Illustrative examples of Program Development Grant proposals include:

- The vice president for academic affairs and vice president for student affairs together propose to establish new learning communities built upon an existing first-year program.
- Two professors work with the provost to propose a series of courses that combine content on engaged learning, civic learning, and psychosocial well-being.
- The director of psychological services and a professor of political science propose courses that enable students to choose to participate in civic projects at various levels of engagement, then include assessment of various levels on student self-efficacy and academic achievement.
- A department chair proposes a new integrative capstone experience that draws on the discipline in ways which integrate civic engagement and psychosocial well-being of students.
- Faculty members and student affairs professionals propose general education courses that will enhance engaged learning and assess measureable effects on psychosocial well-being.

Evaluation and Reporting

Applicants should clearly indicate the anticipated outcomes and methods by which outcomes will be assessed. Applicants are encouraged to employ multiple forms of information collection (e.g., existing campus data, individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys). The BTtoP website includes a *BTtoP Toolkit Instrument* and other assessment resources available for download in the “Tools” section (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/assessmenttools.cfm).

Proposals should include plans for dissemination of the findings in the campus community (e.g., constituent group convenings, presentations to key stakeholders, reports in faculty newspaper, etc.) and next steps to sustain successful outcomes.

Grant recipients will assess and report on their project at its conclusion, using a report template provided by BTtoP.

Budget

Category II itemized budgets in tabular form must include both the amount requested and other sources of institutional support. A budget narrative is expected, and should describe and justify the proposed expenditures by category and sub-category, and include information on the relationship of budgeted costs to project activities.

Category II grants require 1:1 institutional matching, which must include at least 50% cash matching; the remaining 50% of the match may be in-kind. We favor projects for which budgets provide a balanced distribution of grant funds across categories, and are especially attentive to programmatic expenses.

BTtoP does not fund endowment or development campaigns, or separate budget line items considered to be “indirect” or “overhead” costs. For information on how BTtoP defines “indirect”, “overhead” and “in-kind” costs, see the BTtoP “Grant Applicant Frequently Asked Questions” webpage (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/GrantApplicantFAQs.cfm).

Submission Guidelines

Category II proposals should not exceed 5 pages, and applicants might be asked for additional information. Applicants should expect to receive a decision 6-8 weeks following the submission date.

Proposals are accepted on a quarterly basis with the following deadlines:

June 15, 2012	June 15, 2013
September 15, 2012	September 15, 2013
December 15, 2012	December 15, 2013
March 15, 2013	March 14, 2014

Program Development grant awards will be announced 6-8 weeks following each deadline.

Please submit your proposal via our web application upload feature (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/apply).

In addition, please send one (1) hard copy via mail to:

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1818 R St., NW
Washington, DC 20009

Category III Demonstration Site Grants

Grants up to \$75,000, distributed over two years, are available for institutions proposing to demonstrate clear and assessable outcomes, building institutional capacity for a program of work consistent with BTtoP's objectives.

We are particularly interested in what might be considered “transformative” projects carried forward by the campus. Such projects will reflect the specific campus culture, but must be widely supported and sustained if they are to be truly transformative. For some previously sponsored examples and discussion of transformative change, see *Transforming Undergraduate Education: Theory that Compels and Practices that Succeed* (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/publications.cfm).

Each institution is expected to plan, implement, and evaluate its project; participate in cross-site meetings with other institutions; exchange information and ideas; and build mutual support as part of an overall learning community.

Category III proposals should include the following information:

- Project name or title
- Project primary investigator, including mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address
- Statement of purpose identifying intended impact that will be accomplished as a result of the project (one sentence)
- Rationale for why the project is important at this time
- Project overview (50 word maximum)
- Key project objectives necessary for success
- Anticipated ancillary outcomes, beyond key objectives, that will result from the project
- Project activities that will be performed in order to accomplish key objectives and related outcomes
- Information about the institution's track record in the project area, and why it should be considered a demonstration institution
- Information about the institution's plans for project evaluation
- Information about the institution's plans for sustaining the project after the funding period
- Implementation timetable
- Names and qualifications of the persons who will have responsibility for the project and who are members of the campus “team” leading and guiding the project
- Total dollar amount requested
- Estimated project line-item budget, including amounts available and needed (two-page maximum)
- Budget narrative
- Letters of support

Institutional Capacity Building

Institutions must demonstrate commitment by senior leadership that includes the president and vice presidents for academic affairs and student affairs, in addition to faculty and students. Support must include at least 50% cash match (see Budget for more information), sustainability plans, and potential to exercise leadership among peers.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of senior leadership support in site selection and institutional sustainability. Letters of support, demonstrating institutional commitment, are minimal to this purpose, but BTtoP expects more than letters alone.

Each institution will be led by a project team that includes senior leadership who will participate in cross-site meetings and other institutional, cross-site, and national activities.

Proposals should emphasize how the proposed work will contribute to a broader campus strategy for institutional capacity-building and sustainability.

Evaluation

Evaluation is instrumental to the demonstration site program. Evaluation will contribute to the knowledge base, and advance this work as both a field of practice and subject of study.

Evaluation will operate at the local and national levels. Each institution is expected to formulate clear definitions and evaluative criteria for assessment and to communicate plans and progress with BTtoP's national evaluator. At the local institutional level, the project evaluator will be a project team member who will gather empirical data, assess outcomes, and answer specific evaluative questions raised by their college or university. At the national level, each project evaluator will work with the BTtoP national evaluator as well as fellow demonstration site project evaluators to assess findings across institutions and develop a national narrative for dissemination (while retaining appropriate confidentiality).

Evaluation should include information about the project's objectives, outcomes and activities; individual and institutional outcomes; facilitating and limiting factors; and themes and lessons learned. Primary evaluation activities include the submission of two interim and two annual reports and attendance by the grant's primary investigator and project evaluator at two "cross-site" meetings (summer 2013 and 2014), where findings and methodologies will be shared among all demonstration site teams.

Each institution should clearly address specific evaluative questions in the proposal. Examples might be versions of the following:

- What empirical evidence or scientific knowledge is available, and what might be learned from it?
- What evidence is there that the project has directly or indirectly affected the campus culture?
- What evidence is there that campus systems of support make the gains and changes in priorities sustainable? Are the gains in how this is achieved transferable to other institutions?

- How has the project affected both curricular and co-curricular activities on the campus and their integration?

Proposals should demonstrate the team's capability to carry out evaluation of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and assessment that allows for a national level of evaluation. At a minimum, this requires a project evaluator with experience and expertise, and involvement of institutional research professionals.

Applicants should clearly indicate the anticipated outcomes and the methods by which they will assess them. Applicants are encouraged to employ multiple forms of information collection (e.g., existing campus data, individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys.) The *BTtoP Toolkit Instrument* and other assessment resources are available for download on the BTtoP website (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/assessmenttools.cfm).

Proposals should include plans for dissemination of the findings in the campus community (e.g., constituent group convenings, presentations to key stakeholders, reports in faculty newspaper, etc.) and next steps to sustain successful outcomes.

Grant recipients will be expected to provide interim and final reports. They will assess and report on their project at the one-year mark, and at its conclusion, using a report template provided by BTtoP.

Budget

The final approved budget for a demonstration site project will be distributed over two years. Each budget must include both the amount requested and the institutional matching support which identifies a total cash and in-kind matching amount that is equal to the funds requested, of which at least 50% must be cash matching. We favor projects for which budgets provide a balanced distribution of grant funds across categories, and are especially attentive to programmatic expenses. The institution will maintain responsibility for funding project team travel and travel-related expenses to annual cross-site meetings, and may include these as part of its cash matching.

A budget narrative is expected, and should describe and justify the proposed expenditures by category and sub-category, and include information on the relationship of budgeted costs to project activities. An itemized budget (in table format) is also expected. There is no template for an itemized budget, as categories will differ across institutions.

BTtoP does not fund endowment or development campaigns, or separate budget line items considered as "indirect" or "overhead" costs. For information on "indirect", "overhead" and "in-kind" costs, see the BTtoP "Grant Applicant Frequently Asked Questions" webpage (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/GrantApplicantFAQs.cfm).

Submission Guidelines

The proposal should not exceed 15 pages, including the budget narrative and itemization table. Letters of support are encouraged, and do not apply to the page limit. Additional appendices and

supportive materials, (i.e., brochures or promotional programmatic materials) are not encouraged. Please do not send plastic bound or expensive covered documents.

Please submit your proposal via our web application upload feature (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/apply).

In addition, please send eight (8) hard copies via mail to:

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1818 R St., NW
Washington, DC 20009

All Demonstration Site Grant proposals must be received by June 15, 2012; awards will be announced and funds will be available on July 15, 2012. June 15, 2012 is the sole deadline for demonstration site grant proposals in the 2012-2014 funding period.

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESSFUL CATEGORY II AND III PROPOSALS

BTtoP Core Elements

- Does the project address the stated objectives and emphases of BTtoP?
- Does the project promote the integration of the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and civic development of the student “as a whole person”?

Institutional Commitment

- Does the project intend to build institutional commitment and capacity for sustainability over the long haul? Does it reach out to the general student population, rather than a selected few?
- Does the project build upon existing work and enable the institution to go to the next level?
- Does the project demonstrate strong institutional commitment by senior leadership that includes the president and vice presidents for academic affairs and student affairs, in addition to faculty and students?

Quality and Sustainability

- Does the project have a qualified person and core group with potential to represent key campus constituencies, formulate strategy, and provide leadership?
- Does the project have potential to increase student and faculty involvement in crafting a campus culture which integrates learning inside and outside the classroom?
- Does the institution have a project team that represents relevant campus constituencies and has the potential to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of the initiative?

Evaluation

- Will the project evaluate and disseminate findings to individuals and institutions in a systematic fashion?
- Does the institution have the capacity for evaluation, including the ability to gather empirical data, assesses outcomes, and answer specific evaluative questions?

OTHER INFORMATION

This RFP can be accessed through the funding opportunities section of the BTtoP website (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/fundingopportunities.cfm).

Please check our website (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory) for the most current grant information, which may affect submission expectations. Additional information will be posted as it becomes available.

For answers to frequently asked questions, including information on eligibility, review procedures, definitions and deadlines, please consult our website's "Grant Applicant Frequently Asked Questions" webpage (www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/GrantApplicantFAQs.cfm).

If, after reviewing this RFP and the Grant Applicant FAQ page, you cannot find the information you require, please email btp@aacu.org.

