VPOL Seed Grants for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning

VPOL’s initial seed grant program (offered summer 2012 – spring 2014) aimed to broadly promote innovative teaching & learning activities at Stanford. The success of that program is evident: VPOL funded more than 80 projects across the university. The grants yielded projects ranging from discrete online learning modules, to blended classes, to large-scale gaming-based learning environments.

Building on the success of the initial seed grant program, VPOL is now offering a new grant program for the advancement of teaching and learning. The goal of this program is to fund projects that reimagine and advance learning and that have significant impact on Stanford students, our academic programs, and learners beyond Stanford.

This seed grant program will fund projects within two categories. Awards may be given to proposals that fall into one or both categories:

1) Teaching and learning innovation

Projects in this category will demonstrate exploratory and exciting approaches to teaching and learning. These projects should have an identifiable benefit for Stanford students. In some cases, targeting additional audiences may be useful in helping to establish the overall impact and benefit of the learning innovation. Some projects may propose using edge technologies (e.g., virtual reality, wearable technology/quantified self, 3D printing) paired with specific and justifiable pedagogical goals for using those technologies. Other projects may propose an innovative teaching & learning strategy (community-immersed learning, block schedules, mission-based learning) that uses technology to achieve certain learning goals, or automated learning, data mining, or assessment tools. These projects should try to solve learning problems or achieve an aspirational goal.

2) High impact projects

Projects in this category will target high-impact opportunities for leveraging digital learning such as large enrollment undergraduate courses, specialized mezzanine or advanced courses (e.g., courses where Stanford faculty have distinctive expertise and may connect with communities of prepared learners at other institutions), or opportunities for changing students’ relationships to Stanford across their life courses. Projects should be strategic in nature and focused on creating learning experiences that have a high degree of impact on Stanford students and/or learners outside of Stanford.

Projects should demonstrate potential for broad university impact at some point in the future, possibly becoming targets for VPOL Leap Grants funding. Future impact might include broad curriculum redesign, or major changes to students’ experiences (e.g., junior year off-campus embedded in communities, travel abroad, experiential learning). Preference will be given to projects that are demonstrably integrated with the strategic goals of one or more departments at Stanford.
High impact projects may also involve coordination with other communities of learning, such as partner universities. For example, we have received interest from the University of Edinburgh in projects that connect or complement programs at Stanford and Edinburgh. Such projects may bring together the digital learning goals of departments at both universities; advance and support teaching around important shared research areas (e.g., sustainability); or provide a new model for meaningful learner interactions across geographically distant universities.

All proposals should identify research questions and provide plans for collecting and analyzing data to answer those research questions.

VPOL provides a basic level of assistance for centers, teams, and individual faculty who decide to produce a MOOC to highlight their research or teaching on one of the supported platforms. As has been our policy with seed grants, however, VPOL will not provide seed grants for projects that consist solely of MOOCs. We encourage faculty who seek broader impact through MOOCs to leverage alternate funding sources. Several faculty have already used outreach/education funds from research grants for this purpose. For more information about budgeting online learning activities in current or proposed grants and contracts, please contact Todd Logan (todd.logan@stanford.edu).

All projects with external audiences will be guided by the Course Development Agreement and Public Online Course Guidelines. These documents reference Stanford’s course ownership policies, copyright guidelines, privacy requirements, and more. Please contact Jackie Krueger, jamai@stanford.edu, for copies of these documents.

For general inquiries related to the seed grant program, please contact Amy Collier (amycollier@stanford.edu).

Proposal submission process

Proposals will be accepted twice a year, in December and June. The due dates for proposal submissions are December 1, 2014, and June 1, 2015.

Please submit proposals via this form: https://vpol.submittable.com/submit

Proposals should include:

- a 150-200 word abstract suitable for websites and news articles;
- a rationale for the project that addresses how the project meets the criteria of the grant program;
- specific goals for the project and plans for how those goals will be met;
- a clear timeline for the project, including milestones and intermediary objectives;
- a budget outline that includes expected expenses. **No faculty salary support will be paid via these grant funds.**
We strongly encourage faculty who plan to submit a proposal to first consult with VPOL instructional designers. Please complete this form to schedule a consultation: http://stanford.io/vpolRequestConsultation

**Writing a budget**

VPOL grants are awarded in amounts of up to $28,000. No faculty salaries can be included in seed grant budgets. In addition to the seed grant award, VPOL will provide up to $22,000 in budgeted instructional design, production, and platform support services. Please consult with a VPOL instructional designer to discuss our services.

**Department and school support**

All proposals must have support from the department and school in which the activities will be housed. We strongly encourage faculty to speak with their department chair and senior associate dean regarding a project well before they submit a proposal.

Department chairs will need to submit a brief but evaluative letter of support for a proposed project. This letter should address the following: 1) the importance of this project to the department, 2) the chair's assessment of the quality of such a project, and 3) other reasons to fund or not fund the project (e.g., career development). Department chair letters must be attached to proposals before they are submitted. For School of Medicine core courses, a letter is needed from one of the Assistant Deans for curriculum, Dr. Pree Basaviah or Dr. Elizabeth Stuart.

Submitted proposals will be shared with a senior associate dean or school representative associated with online learning initiatives in each school. They will have the opportunity to rate and comment on proposals submitted by faculty in their schools. The grant review committee will consider this feedback as part of their deliberations. Please discuss your proposal with the relevant person from your school so that they can provide helpful feedback to the committee.

The list of senior associate deans or school representatives is below:

- School of Medicine: Charles Prober (cprober@stanford.edu)
- School of Engineering: Larry Lagerstrom (lagerstrom@stanford.edu), representative on behalf of Bernd Girod
- School of Law: George Triantis (gtriantis@stanford.edu)
- School of Earth Sciences: George Hilley (hilley@stanford.edu)
- School of Humanities and Sciences: Elaine Treharne (treharne@stanford.edu)
- Graduate School of Education: Tom Dee (tdee@stanfor.edu)
- Graduate School of Business: Paul Pfleiderer (pfleiderer_paul@gsb.stanford.edu)
Individuals who are not full-time Stanford faculty may submit project proposals but must have a faculty sponsor who is a member of the Academic Council. This faculty sponsor must be willing to accept responsibility for the project and adherence to any agreements signed by the participants.

School of Medicine matching funds
The School of Medicine is pleased to offer additional financial support (up to $14,000) and resources to faculty who receive a VPOL seed grant for the development of content of specific relevance to their core medical student courses. Matching funds raise the maximum award to $42,000 per project. For more information, contact Charles Prober: cprober@stanford.edu

School of Engineering matching funds
The School of Engineering will provide additional funds for successful seed grant proposals by Engineering faculty, for a total maximum award of $60,000 per project. No separate application is required. With proper justification, we will permit the following faculty salary offsets against the additional SoE funds: (a) for any quarter, up to 20% of an individual faculty member’s salary, (b) no more than 25% of the total project budget. Neither limit (a) nor (b) can be exceeded. Only time spent beyond the regular faculty teaching duties can be offset. For more information, contact Larry Lagerstrom: lagerstrom@stanford.edu

Professional and continuing education
Proposals to develop free and revenue-generating professional education courses will be handled separately through a collaborative process between VPOL and the relevant school. For more information about opportunities to develop and offer professional education courses, please contact Carissa Little at the Stanford Center for Professional Development: carissa.little@stanford.edu

VPOL Leap Grants
VPOL Leap Grants are grants offered to departments for campus-wide strategic initiatives related to teaching and learning. These grants will be awarded once a year in June. More information about VPOL Leap Grants will be distributed in early 2015.