



Innovation in Education Awards

Request for Proposals 2026-2027

Submissions due: 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026

OBJECTIVES

In support of the Plan for Pitt 2028 and its continued goal of advancing academic excellence at the University of Pittsburgh, the Provost's Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence (ACIE) again invites applications from University faculty for projects to enhance teaching by fostering new instructional approaches, techniques, or activities that represent advances over existing methods to promote and support student learning. We encourage applications from all schools and disciplines, and from a wide range of perspectives, approaches, and ideas. While we aim to provide flexibility for applicants, we offer the following examples of broad thematic areas to consider when framing the direction of their applications.

Examples of broad thematic areas to consider:

- Promoting and supporting student skill development in critical thinking, information literacy, communication, leadership, data analysis, intercultural and global competency, collaboration, or teamwork.
- Optimizing technology - both hardware and software applications - to enhance learning
- Broadening academic opportunities for new or nontraditional student populations or in nontraditional settings
- Expanding interdisciplinary learning opportunities
- Enhancing belonging, equitable access, and learning outcomes for all students
- Discipline-based projects and learning
- Innovative approaches for students to participate in community-engaged learning (e.g., service-learning)

Specific areas of interest for this year's proposals:

Beyond these broad thematic areas, this year's call strongly encourages faculty to explore ideas that focus on:

- The use of technologies, including generative AI, to support or improve student learning or assessment. Priority will be given to translational projects that bridge research and practice, particularly those that enhance experiential and discipline-based learning through the intentional integration of generative AI.
- Creative approaches to support and facilitate constructive and meaningful dialogue and discourse across differences (including personal, demographic, and disciplinary/professional) among students.
- Experiential learning: encouraging hands-on, immersive, reflective experiences in and outside of a traditional classroom setting
- Student engagement, especially in challenging learning environments, includes, but is not limited to, high-enrollment courses and asynchronous courses.

Proposals should focus on teaching innovations in undergraduate or graduate-level courses. These grants are NOT intended to support innovations in post-graduate training (e.g., for health sciences residents) or continuing education. Preference will be given to projects/project directors that have not been funded under this program in the last three (3) years.



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NOTE

Before submitting, applicants are advised that the Teaching Center reviews all applications for pedagogical and educational technology feasibility. The Council **strongly recommends** consulting with the University Center for Teaching and Learning while developing proposals. Contact teaching@pitt.edu with any questions or concerns.

ELIGIBILITY

All [full- and part-time faculty members](#) across all University of Pittsburgh campuses can submit or resubmit revised proposals that were not selected for funding in the last three (3) years. Please contact faculty@pitt.edu with any questions.

FORMAT

All proposals must be submitted through ([InfoReady Review](#)), where applicants can upload the following seven application sections.

1. Cover Sheet, including:

- Project Title
- Name and signature of the designated project director (for contact and budget responsibility), including school or department affiliation, complete campus address, phone number, and e-mail.
- Name and signature of the project director's department chair (or dean in non-departmental schools)
- Project Duration (maximum period: **May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027**)
- Total funds requested

2. Executive Summary

This one-page summary should address each of the required project components (see below 4.A.–4.F.) so the reviewers will have an overview of the proposal.

3. Key Project Personnel and Role in Project

Limit key project personnel descriptions to half a page, including the project director, co-director(s), and contributing faculty. Please provide a brief biographical sketch and explain their qualifications for the project and the specific responsibilities each will assume or oversee.

4. Body of the Proposal

The body of the application should be **up to five** single-spaced pages (excluding figures, tables, and references), using a 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Required sections are:

- A. A clear statement of the proposed project's **goal(s) and rationale**.
- B. A clear **description** of the project.

The Council recognizes that innovation varies by discipline, particularly in technology-enhancing classes. Please remember that you are writing an application that will be reviewed by faculty representing a cross-section of university faculties and disciplines. Proposals should be jargon-free and responsive to the objectives identified on page 1. As part of the description, include explicit statements on how the proposed project represents an innovative (i.e., new) approach or method of teaching and how it differs from existing approaches or methods.

- C. The review committee will look for **evidence** that the proposal reflects **sound instructional design**. This may be demonstrated by consulting relevant University resources – particularly the Teaching Center (**see Note, page two**) – or by outlining the project team's instructional expertise and qualifications.



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- D. Clear indications of the **potential impact on the University's teaching mission** (e.g., number of students affected, contributions to the curriculum, the department, and the greater University community). Applications can often be justified by citing potential effects beyond a single instructor's course. Still, the review committee cannot give this much weight unless evidence is provided that additional instructors from the same or different departments have been included in the process. To strengthen the case, **two** letters of support from deans, department chairs, or instructors in potentially affected units could be provided.
- E. A clear and explicit statement on the project's **sustainability** beyond the funding period. If the project's budget includes a need for operating expenses, be sure to explain how these operating costs will be covered in future years.
- F. An indication of how the effects of the teaching innovation will be evaluated. Provide a clear description of the **assessment methods and procedures** to be used to determine whether the project will lead to a positive outcome, what those specific measured outcomes will be, and, to the extent relevant and feasible, any experimental procedures that will be used to verify the validity of the conclusions regarding outcomes. Some previously funded projects have employed established measurement techniques, while others have been developmental.

5. Budget and Budget Justification

The Council plans to award grants ranging from \$3,500 to \$12,500. However, *exceptional* proposals with significant scale or scope that justify the additional support may be considered for larger awards of approximately \$12,500 to \$25,000.

- a. Prepare a budget for the proposed project using the form included in the *Guidelines or the Other Supporting Documents* section of the application. Also, provide a separate statement justifying each line item in the proposed budget. Statements of departmental/school-matching salary contributions are encouraged.
- b. **Acceptable** budget items may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Purchase of supplies and equipment deemed crucial for the project and unavailable from school, departmental, or other University sources (and provide a rationale for these proposed purchases)
 - ii. Purchases or costs for the development of new instructional resources
 - iii. Student assistants for course development (including fringe benefits charges as applicable)
 - iv. Cost of assistance from campus support units.
 - v. Student (including fringe benefits charges as applicable) or professional assistance for coordination/production of course websites
 - vi. Travel to acquire necessary project resources or to obtain professional development.
 - vii. Project-related consultant costs (please note that for Pitt faculty and staff, external consulting rates cannot be charged to these projects)
 - viii. One month of summer salary (fringe benefits charges must be included), to be paid as direct compensation for those on 8- to 10-month base salaries and to cover release time for those on 12-month base salaries
- c. The following budget items are **not** acceptable:
 - i. Travel and maintenance costs for participation in professional meetings
 - ii. Subscriptions and professional journal costs
 - iii. Editorial assistance
 - iv. Release time (maximum one month), except for faculty on 12-month base salaries



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6. Required Letter(s) of Support

The application must include **up to two** letters of support from the applicant's department chair, division chief, or dean. These letters should directly address the project's expected impact and confirm its relevance or benefits to the department or other affected units.

7. Required Application Materials

Submit only the required materials. Additional documents or appendices will not be considered to ensure a fair and consistent review process for all applications.

UNIVERSITY COPYRIGHT POLICY

Any copyrightable materials created by faculty, staff, or students as part of this University-funded project will be owned by the University, subject to a royalty-sharing agreement with the creator. For specific information, please refer to.

PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

All proposals will be evaluated by the Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence, which may consult relevant subject-matter experts as needed. Review criteria will include:

- Congruence between the objectives of the grants program and those of the application.
- The projected likelihood for success.
- Perceived potential impact on students, the curriculum, the department, and the academic community.

Final recommendations to the provost will be based on a thorough Council discussion. Preference will be given to projects and project directors who have not received funding under this program in the past **three years**.

EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS

A summary of previous years' awards is available on the ACIE website at [Innovation in Education Awards Funded Projects](#). Examples of previously funded proposals can also be reviewed. Please contact faculty@pitt.edu to request copies of past proposals.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE AND NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS

Proposals must be submitted to the Innovation in Education Award Application by **11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 15, 2026**. Please direct questions about the submission process to faculty@pitt.edu. We expect to notify award recipients in **early April 2026**.

NUMBER, SIZE, AND DURATION OF AWARDS

The Council plans to award grants ranging from \$3,500 to \$12,500. However, applications with larger scale or scope that justify additional funding may be considered for larger awards of approximately \$12,500 to \$25,000.

The **award period** will cover projects conducted **between May 1, 2026, and April 30, 2027**.

NOTIFICATION

Successful applicants will be notified by email, with their department chairs and deans copied. Those not selected can request feedback by contacting faculty@pitt.edu.

REPORTING

Successful applicants must report on the project's outcome(s), particularly on the success criteria outlined in the proposal. Funded project directors will receive additional reporting guidelines. The summary report is due at the Office of the Provost by **June 30, 2027**.