

GRINNELL COLLEGE INNOVATION FUND

FY 2021-2022 Program and Application Details

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Introduction

The Innovation Fund stimulates innovative ways of teaching and learning at the College by funding (1) one- to three-year pilot projects that will investigate and implement ideas initiated by creative faculty, staff, and students; and (2) one-time planning projects by faculty, staff, and students to explore the feasibility of an innovation. The Fund fosters an agile institution by promoting an environment that is conducive to experimentation and imagination.

This document describes the criteria and process by which proposals for funding will be evaluated and awarded. Note that there will only be one application cycle, with a firm deadline of Monday, October 11, 2021, 11:59 PM, for academic year 2021-22.

This document may be updated or modified as circumstances warrant.

Funding Information

- Information in this section is meant as a guideline; there is flexibility in how funds are to be distributed.
- There are three types of funding available from the Innovation Fund: funds that are used to implement an innovative idea (pilot project); funds that are used to investigate whether an innovative idea is feasible and worthy of implementation (planning project); and Seed Projects (see Appendix A).
- Annually, up to \$450,000 will be available for pilot projects and up to \$50,000 for planning projects. The total amount available during any application cycle will vary depending on how much has already been allocated to previously awarded, multi-year projects.
- For pilot projects, the maximum award amount is a total of \$150,000 over a three-year period (\$50,000 maximum per year).
- For planning projects, the maximum award amount is \$10,000; one-time action, no longer than a one-year duration.
- Inspired by the College's mission, the Innovation Fund assists in the open exchange of innovative ideas. These ideas allow for the core value of "varied forms of learning, in and out of the classroom and beyond college."
- The Innovation Fund reflects the continuous realization of the College mission through contemporary strategic planning. Proposers are urged to familiarize themselves with current strategic planning conversations.

Eligibility

- Faculty, staff, and students may submit a proposal via the [Innovation Application website](#). (The application should be no longer than 1,200 words. The word limit does not include the proposed budget.) Note that the applicant must also be the project lead for a project, if funding is awarded. Therefore, for pilot projects, there is a strong preference for tenured or tenure-track faculty applicants and non-term staff applicants to ensure continuity of a project.
- A member of the community may be involved with more than one proposal provided that the person has the time and resources to allocate to the project.
- To promote creative thinking, no project is off limits; however, the project should have the potential for significant impact on teaching or learning and provide an innovative way to fulfill one or more parts of the College's mission:
"The College aims to graduate women and men who can think clearly, who can speak and write persuasively and even eloquently, who can evaluate critically

both their own and others' ideas, who can acquire new knowledge, and who are prepared in life and work to use their knowledge and their abilities to serve the common good.”

- Directly contribute to the success of one or more of these five strategic planning areas: Community; Educational Excellence and Continuity; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Health and Well-Being; and Financial Sustainability.
- While no departmental or office sign-off is needed to submit a proposal, applicants are encouraged to consult with colleagues for appropriate advice. If your proposal is accepted for further consideration, the funding committee will explore what implications your proposal may have on your department or office.

Pilot & planning projects

Submissions:

All proposals must be submitted by Monday, October 11, 2021 via the [online form](#). This form must be submitted by 11:59 PM CST.

All proposals must include the following components:

- *Short Title*. In a few words, provide a title for your project.
- *Abstract*. In two or three sentences, provide a summary statement of your project, an estimate of the total amount of funding you are seeking, and the project timeline, if appropriate (for pilot projects, e.g., one, two, or three years).
- *Project Description*. What is the project? The significance and potential impact of the project; and the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources needed for your project to succeed.
- *Strategic Goals*. Which of the College's five strategic goals apply to your project? Describe the goal or goals that are most appropriate for your proposed project.

Community – An area that includes the multiple layers of social, cognitive, and behavioral presence. Projects may relate to learning spaces, student residential experience, collaborative decision making, promotion of a mentoring community, and the evocation of belongingness and thriving.

Educational Excellence and Continuity – A broad area that includes projects that directly impact the curriculum, i.e., formal courses for credit, requirements for majors and concentrations; courses that incorporate experiential learning, interdisciplinary learning, technology-enhanced

learning, and other curricular innovations; projects that facilitate or enhance scholarship and research; projects that enhance learning of the physical and cultural world; projects that cultivate post-graduate success.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – A broad area including projects that have potential to contribute to a shared understanding of identities, improve campus climate, or promote equity in education.

Health and Well-Being – An area that includes projects that promote physical and emotional health, the impact of work and workload stress, improving the balance of work and leisure, understanding the interaction between curricular and co-curricular experiences, or optimizing the balance of communal and individual needs.

Financial Sustainability – An area that includes projects related to the effective use of resources, the clarification of the institutional priorities, and the shared understanding of stewardship of the College's distinctive features.

- *Innovativeness*. Innovation implies the introduction of some new idea, process, or content. Innovation is sometimes characterized as disruptive in that the innovation changes, enhances or replaces a traditional practice. Describe how this project is innovative. It may be helpful to consider both the short-term and the long-term outcomes of the project. In the short term, what new ideas (for planning) or new practices (for piloting) will occur? In the long term, how will successful planning result in a proposed idea or practice; how might a successful pilot project lead to long-term change? Will this change need to be supported by the operating budget of the College after the grant ends?
- *Suitability for Innovation Fund*. Why is the proposal uniquely suited to the stated goal of the Innovation Fund rather than other funding sources? Note that the Innovation Fund is not the place to seek alternative funding for projects or ideas, such as an expansion of an existing program. Those requests should go through the normal budgeting process in your department or office.
- *Evaluation Plan*. Describe the criterion for a successful project. Identify how you will collect information that helps evaluate the success of the project. This information will be incorporated into progress reports and the final report of the project. Evaluation information from planning projects may serve as support for a later pilot project; evaluation information from pilot projects may serve as support for efforts to gain long-term institutional support for the project.

- *Project Lead Qualifications.* Describe how the individual who is submitting the project is qualified to lead the project. Identify plans for continuity if, for example, the project lead is proposing a two-year project but will be a faculty member on sabbatical, or a student lead is graduating at the end of one year.
- *Budget Items & Total.* Provide the total amount you are seeking per year, and a list of budget items and their estimated costs, if known. If costs are unknown, list the cost as “unknown”.

Notes on Budgeting:

- Student workers: Students are paid per campus [student employment guidelines & pay categories](#).
- Faculty summer stipends: The maximum stipend amount for summer course or program development is \$5000.
- Fringe benefits (for FICA/TIAA): Calculate 17.65% of stipends and wages and add to the budget as a line item.
- Course reduction: It is not in the purview of the Innovation Fund committee to recommend faculty course reductions or modified teaching schedules. Faculty who intend to propose reduced or redirected time should consult with their department chairs and the Dean of College prior to making a proposal.
- Course replacement: Please consult with the Dean’s Office.

After Submission:

By early December 2021, the Innovation Fund Committee will notify the President of its recommendations by grouping project applications into four categories: (i) highest fundable projects; (ii) fundable, low priority projects; (iii) conversion to a planning project, for pilot projects that require additional planning; and (iv) projects that will not be funded. The committee is encouraged to elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the projects, identify ways a proposal could be strengthened, and propose other recommendations to the president, including, but not limited to, modifying the length of proposals or limiting funds requested.

Funded projects will be announced via an all-campus email at the end of the fall semester.

From the time of an application's submittal to the announcement of awards, the Committee may reach out to applicants to obtain additional information as needed.

An applicant shall provide additional information as requested by the committee, including but not limited to a detailed budget proposal, specific goals, and ways to measure, quantitatively or qualitatively, a project's success or failure. An applicant's department/office and other affected departments/offices may be asked to comment on a proposal that is in the final stage of evaluation by the committee.

Proposal Review:

There is a two-phase review for Innovation proposals. For the first phase, committee members will evaluate all submissions according to the criteria below and ask questions of the project leads. All questions and answers will then be forwarded to the entire committee and projects preliminarily scored by each member. The compiled, preliminary scores will then be forwarded to the committee for the second phase, which includes the discussion of proposals and decision on final recommendations.

Criteria

Please note: For 2021-22, the Innovation Fund will focus on the strategic planning area of Educational Excellence.

- *Innovativeness.* Does the proposed project include the introduction of some new idea, process, or content? It is useful to consider both the short-term and the long-term outcomes of the project. In the short term, what new ideas (for planning) or new practices (for piloting) will occur? In the long term, how will successful planning result in a proposed idea or practice; how might a successful pilot project lead to long-term change?
- *Alignment with Strategic Plan Priorities.* How does the project align with the mission and/or one or more of the strategic foci of the college: Community; Educational Excellence and Continuity; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Health and Well-Being; and Financial Sustainability?
- *Project Lead(s).* Do the project leaders have appropriate experience and training to give the project a reasonable chance for success? If students are project leads, should they recruit faculty or staff project advisers?
- *Approach.* Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the project?

- *Evaluation.* How will the success of the project be evaluated? Does the plan for information gathering yield appropriate evaluative information?
- *Broader Impact.* An assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on teaching and learning that will change the way things are done at the College, in consideration of the following criteria. A proposal does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major overall impact.

Award Administration:

The CTLA staff will function as informal program officers, advising the project leads on the creation of a budget, the appointment of budget officers, and the submission of reports, as well as aiding the project leads with questions regarding scheduling and budgeting.

Progress Reports and Final Reports

One- to two-page progress reports for funded projects are due twice a year: at the end of the fall semester (December 31) and end of the academic fiscal year (June 30). A final report replaces the last progress report. Progress or final reports may be submitted sooner if, for example, a project lead who was awarded funding for a one-year planning project would like to apply for an additional one to three years of funding to continue their project as a pilot project. There is only one cycle of applications and funding granted, and it occurs in the fall. See the section **Regularization into the Operating Budget or Seeking Additional Funding** for more information on sustained funding.

As an example, for pilot projects awarded in the fall of 2021, the first progress report will be due on December 31, 2022. For a one-year planning project, a progress report will be due on December 31, 2022 and a final report due on June 30, 2023. The first progress report should include an explanation of which of the five strategic directions are most applicable to the project.

For all progress reports, the following should be included:

- **Assessing project to date:** list the project's learning objectives, and address how these objectives have or have not been met. Describe measureable outcomes and results from the project to date.

- Approximately how much of the awarded budget has been spent?
- Is the project lead seeking to regularize the project (i.e., incorporate it into the College's regular operating budget)? Alternatively, will the lead be seeking additional funds from the next Innovation Fund cycle to continue the project?
- Describe the non-monetary resources - e.g., staffing, space - used for your project.

A final report is required in place of a progress report during the last semester of funding. Final reports close out an award and should include the following:

- A comprehensive summary of knowledge acquired, successes, failures, and other measurements as determined by the project lead.
- A conclusion statement, including potential next steps as applicable.
- Final reports are not page limited; the length and details are the project lead's discretion.

Regularization into the Operating Budget or Seeking Additional Funding:

If the project leads wish to nominate the project for inclusion in the regular operating budget of the College, they should consult with the CTLA staff. Inclusion in operating budget requests is not automatic; all proposals for budget inclusion, whether Innovation Fund projects or any other budgets, are submitted to the office of the Dean of the College for consideration by the budget committee.

Planning projects, by definition, and some pilot projects, would likely not be ready for inclusion in the College's regular budget. For leads with planning projects who wish to submit a subsequent application continuing their project as a pilot project (up to three additional years of funding), the planning project's progress or final report would be reviewed, along with the new application, by the funding committee to evaluate if further funding is warranted.

Note that: (1) there is no guarantee that the successful completion of a planning project will result in funding of a subsequent pilot project; and (2) decisions for pilot project funding following a planning project are to be reviewed and decided at the same time as all other regular applications during the academic year (once a year, in late September). Planning projects leads should know that there may be a gap between planning and pilot project funding, if such leads are successful in applying for subsequent pilot funding, and plan accordingly. The Innovation Fund will not provide interim funding.

Seeking Space or Course Release Needs

It is said that innovative ideas come from “thinking outside the box.” The implementation of these ideas, however, may require some consideration of the constraints of time allocation, space planning, and work commitments. During the review process the Innovation Fund Committee may offer advice on removing institutional barriers to the innovation, however, the proposers’ request may have to be adjusted to best fit the needs of the College or academic department. To minimize barriers to a successful proposal, a project lead should communicate with the relevant academic department, committee, or administrative office. For example, if the project requires an allocation of space on campus, it is helpful to consult with the College’s space committee. If the project relies on a faculty member receiving a course reduction, it is necessary to consult with the Dean of the College.

Innovation Fund Committee

Selection and Composition:

- The Innovation Fund Committee is composed of no more than nine members as appointed by the president, including an appointed chairperson.
- Interest in member positions may be solicited by announcing the opportunity in any public communication or other process (e.g., FOC survey, faculty or staff meetings).
- Though not exclusively, members for the committee may be drawn from the following: faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees. Other unaffiliated members will also be considered.

Responsibilities:

- Using the procedure outlined in this document, the committee will evaluate and recommend funding to projects that most exemplify the criteria and goals of the Innovation Fund.
- The committee will consult with other relevant persons, including faculty or staff members, to seek expertise or assistance as needed.
- They will meet or teleconference to discuss and select proposals.
- They will ask relevant follow-up questions of the applicant.
- A committee member will recuse him/herself from discussion and voting where conflicts of interest arise regarding a particular proposal.

Procedure:

- Proposals will be distributed to committee members for review.

- Funding recommendations for pilot projects shall be by majority. If a tie breaker is needed, the President will decide.
- To avoid loss of consideration of very high risk/high positive impact potential, each member of the committee will be given the opportunity to champion a particular planning proposal.
- Decisions can be made via email or teleconference or other means besides in person.
- The chair will distribute agendas prior to every meeting and minutes will be recorded and distributed to all committee members post-meeting.

Review and Evaluation:

- The CTLA staff will advise project leads who seek regularization of the grant project by reviewing final reports to evaluate whether a concluded pilot project should be included in the regular operating budget of the College.
- The CTLA staff may request that the Innovation Fund Committee provide feedback to leads on both their progress reports and the final report.

Glossary

Applicant: the individual faculty, staff, or student submitting an Innovation Fund proposal.

Innovation Fund Committee: the committee that awards initial funding to pilot projects or one-time planning projects.

Pilot project: a project that implements and puts into practice an innovative idea, which will be evaluated for success based on goals and measurements as determined by the project lead. Pilot projects may be funded for a 1- , 2- , or 3-year period.

Planning project: an action that investigates or researches whether a certain innovative idea is feasible before actual implementation. Planning projects are funded for 1 year.

Project lead: the individual student, faculty, or staff responsible for leading a pilot or planning project.

Seed Project: For information, see Appendix A.

Appendix A

Seed Projects (new for 2021-22):

To help foster new and reinvigorate existing collaborations, the Innovation Fund has designated 'seed project' funding during 2021-22 to facilitate exploration or enhancement of projects of shared interest.

A Seed Project grant may provide up to \$3500 in fast-track support of initiatives to advance partnerships in one or more of the five strategic planning areas:

- 1) Educational Excellence
- 2) Community
- 3) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- 4) Financial Sustainability
- 5) Health and Well-Being

Seed Project funding will be available on a rolling basis for the 2021-2022 academic year. Faculty, staff, and students may submit a proposal via the link found on the [Innovation Application Process website](#).

Leads that are awarded Seed Project funding will receive an award letter that includes instructions for the award. A brief report will be requested from the leads that summarizes the outcomes of their Seed Project.