

VT Engage: The Community Learning Collaborative

Faculty Fellows Program 2017-19 Request for Proposals

Overview

VT Engage invites applications for its 2017-19 Faculty Fellows Program. The goal of the program is to increase the prevalence and quality of community-based learning, especially service learning, at Virginia Tech. Selected fellows will join a community of scholar-educators dedicated to integrating high-impact, ethical community-based learning experiences in their academic courses and programs. Fellows will receive financial resources and technical support from VT Engage during the two-year program.

Background

In light of [Virginia Tech's commitment](#) to provide transformational experiential learning opportunities for students, service learning holds great potential to enhance pedagogical practice in a wide range of disciplines. Well-designed service learning contributes to the development of students as future leaders in their disciplines and their communities by integrating [informal communal and guided experiential learning](#).

As well, by coupling community engagement and problem-based learning, service learning can present dynamic environments where students are able to innovate while gaining new perspectives and deepening their understanding of complex systems. Integrative learning initiatives, like [Pathways to General Education](#) at Virginia Tech, can be strengthened by employing service-learning strategies at formative stages of course, sequence, and program development.

The Program

The Faculty Fellows Program is an opportunity for new and experienced service-learning practitioners to participate in the collaborative design of intentional, learning-focused community engagement opportunities. The program includes support for instructional faculty who are developing or significantly revising courses or curricular programs utilizing a community-based service learning pedagogy. During the two-year program, VT Engage will support the design of high quality service-learning and community engagement experiences.

Faculty Fellows will collaborate with community organizations to create or enhance mutually beneficial partnerships, build assessment strategies for student learning and community outcomes, and serve as community engagement ambassadors to the Virginia Tech community. Fellows will present their work products to peers and engage with broader scholarly and practitioner audiences. The current VT Engage Faculty Fellows program period is May 2017 to May 2019.

Benefits of being a VT Engage Faculty Fellow

- **Focused Investment:** Individual faculty or faculty teams may receive up to \$12,500 per new course or \$8,000 per existing course in support of the development process.
- **Partnership Development:** Fellows will have designated time to invest in local, regional, or global partnerships to create mutually beneficial service-learning programs. Fellows will have access to VT Engage's networks of community collaborators and can develop or enhance existing relationships with government and nonprofit partners.
- **Learning Community:** Fellows will have opportunities to seek feedback and support from a growing body of faculty with expertise in all aspects of experiential learning, community engagement, and service programs. This diverse community can provide assistance as fellows strengthen courses, test innovative pedagogies, and collaborate on projects to advance the scholarship of engagement, teaching, and learning.
- **Increased Visibility:** VT Engage will showcase the community-based work of each fellow or team at key points during the project lifecycle.

Eligibility

The VT Engage Faculty Fellows Program is open to any full-time, qualified instructional faculty member at Virginia Tech. Proposed courses may be at the undergraduate or graduate level. Graduate students may not apply to be part of the fellows program. Previous VT Engage Faculty Fellows are ineligible for this cycle of awards.

Applications will be accepted from individual faculty members or faculty teams. Interdisciplinary teams and teams from single departments are encouraged to apply. Teams proposals should create community-based learning experiences across course sequences or curricula.

Expectations of Fellows

- Develop new community-based learning course(s) or add substantial service-learning elements to existing courses. Course(s) must be offered at least twice in the three academic years following course development, and each offering must have the university's service learning designator.
- Meet four (4) times during the fellows period with VT Engage and the Faculty Fellows cohort to discuss progress, challenges, and strategies.
- Establish a partnership agreement with at least one community partner, typically nonprofit or government entities, detailing a feasible, sustainable, and mutually beneficial service-learning program.
- Create an assessment plan to document student learning and community outcomes.
- Serve as an ambassador for community engagement and service learning at Virginia Tech by sharing outcomes and reflections at appropriate forums.

- Present about the project at a conference or professional meeting focused on the scholarship of engagement, teaching, or learning (e.g., CIDER's Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy). Related expenses may be part of the budget proposal.
- Collaborate with VT Engage to publicize the project in appropriate outlets.
- Submit a final report to VT Engage documenting the results of course and partnership development relative to the original proposal and the proposed teaching schedule.

Application Process

Applicants should submit the following materials in a single electronic document to VT Engage (engage@vt.edu) by **April 15, 2017**.

- 1) **Proposal/Concept Paper** (<2500 words), including:
 - a. description of the course(s) to be developed/redesigned and a discussion of how service-learning pedagogies will support specific student learning goals; if team proposal, also indicate why coordinated development is desirable,
 - b. vision for how the course(s) will engage students and community partners,
 - c. connections to broader curriculum or university initiatives (Destination Areas, Strategic Growth Areas, Pathways to General Education, VT-Shaped Student, etc.),
 - d. anticipated course development and offering timeline, and
 - e. self-assessment of the primary barriers to success; areas where additional expertise may be useful,
- 2) **Budget:** Include a categorical breakdown by year and a list of supported faculty. Provide narrative justifying each major component. Proposals may request up to \$12,500 for new courses or \$8,000 for existing courses. Total requests may not exceed \$37,500 per proposal. Budget transfers to faculty members' departments will be made in two installments—1) upon acceptance of the fellows award (May 2017) and 2) upon delivery of all product(s).
- 3) **Faculty Profile:** For each faculty member, provide a brief biographical sketch (1 page maximum) including any similar or related courses taught and level of experience with community-based learning.
- 4) **Letter(s) of Support:** Each application must provide evidence of support from the department chair(s) associated with the course(s) and/or faculty member(s). Specifically, the letter should affirm departmental intent to offer the courses under development. For proposals that rely on participation of specific community partners, applicants should include a letter of support from an authorized representative of the organization.

- 5) **Additional Requirement for Teams:** For team applications, please submit e-mail and telephone number for the team's primary point of contact and a list of courses and who will teach them.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

- **Course Proposal Quality (25 points):** The quality of course proposals will be scored based on the clarity of learning goals for students, the relevance of service-learning pedagogy, the depth of the community engagement experience for students, and the vision for benefit to the community. Proposals that include active, ongoing student reflection as part of the course design are preferred, as are proposals that address assessment of student learning outcomes.
- **Community Engagement (25 points):** Points will be awarded based on the plan for involving community in the identification of community needs, strategies, and outcomes presented in the concept paper. Proposals that identify authentic, meaningful roles for community members during the project are preferred, as are proposals that address assessment of community outcomes.
- **University Initiatives & VT Engage Core Values (25 points):** Points will be awarded for proposals with clear linkages to broader university and college initiatives including: Destination Areas, Strategic Growth Areas, and Pathways to General Education. Additionally, proposals aligned with [VT Engage's Core Values](#) will be favored.
- **Feasibility & Sustainability (25 points):** Proposals deemed to have a high probability of implementation success will be favored—including departmental support, faculty/team, and consideration of ongoing costs. Proposals that explicitly address efforts to sustain the partnership will be favored—opportunities for continuing, post-course engagement between faculty, students, and community members are preferred.
- **Bonus (5 points):** In order to promote integration of service learning across all disciplines, proposals from faculty in departments where there is not a strong record of service learning may receive up to 5 bonus points.

Applicants will be notified of the status of their application by May 1, 2017.

Questions about the program or the application process can be directed to VT Engage's director, Dr. Gary Kirk, at engage@vt.edu or by phone at 1-7935.

About VT Engage

[VT Engage](#) is a university center focused on service-learning and civic engagement. The center collaborates with communities, students, and faculty to cultivate sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships through engaged service, learning, and reflection. Service-learning faculty are supported by VT Engage through professional development initiatives, consulting, course support, community partnership development, and assessment.