About the Grants Program

The goal of this grants program is to increase student success in persistently challenging courses (PCCs) — that is, courses with high rates of grades of D, F, and withdrawals (W), and courses with equity gaps. Ultimately, we hope that increased success in individual classes will lead to a higher rate of degree attainment. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) will support you in this work through financial support, coaching, collaboration, professional development, and/or other assistance.

For this program, FCTL has examined data from Fall 2014-Spring 2022, and has identified two types of PCCs:

1. **Overall PCCs:** Each Overall PCC has a 20% or higher rate of D, F, and/or W grades (hereafter referred to as a "high DFW rate") for at least one-third of the semesters that it was offered. It also has at least 10 students enrolled in at least one of the semesters with a high DFW rate.
2. **Equity Gap PCCs:** Each Equity Gap PCC has a DFW rate for a demographic group that is at least 1.5 times higher than the DFW rate for another group [i.e., male and female; Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students and White students]. Additional criteria are having at least six students from each demographic group being compared enrolled; having at least three students from either or both demographic groups with D, F, or W grades; and having a high DFW rate for either or both demographic groups.

Finding the right criteria to identify persistently challenging courses is not straightforward, as various thresholds have been used. For instance, some researchers suggest a 20% DFW rate is "high" (e.g., Johnson, 2017; Stites et al., 2016) while others have argued for a 30% (e.g., Thomas et al., 2019) or even 35% threshold (e.g., Lyle-Gonga, 2013). We recognize there are other types of PCCs and other ways to define PCCs. Because of this, we welcome applications for PCCs that fall outside of these definitions we provided above.

The work involved in this grants program follows a five-stage process that is designed to engage you and others in a collaborative effort to understand and reduce, if not eliminate, barriers to students' success in persistently challenging courses. Stages 1-3 involve selecting a course or courses to work on and identifying variables that most predict student learning, success, and equity. Stages 4-5 involve the design, implementation, and assessment of one or more interventions aimed at addressing the contributing variables.

A 5-Stage Process for Improving Student Learning and Success

Stage 1: Consider the DFW and equity gap data for PCCs in your department, school, or program. Select one or more PCCs and identify those who will be directly involved in the work.

Stage 2: Identify what you know and believe about student success in the course(s), and how you know this. The goals of this are two-fold: (1) Identify possible factors that could contribute to the DFW rate and/or equity gap; and (2) Identify data that are needed to identify other possible key factors.

Stage 3: Collect and analyze additional data to identify factors that most predict or correlate with high DFW rates and/or equity gaps.

Stage 4: Consider and select one or more interventions and develop implementation and assessment plans.

Stage 5: Implement and assess the intervention(s), review assessment data, and identify relevant next steps.

We invite applications from interested faculty. The application form and other information about the Grants Program begin on the next page.

Enhancing Student Learning and Success in Persistently Challenging Courses Grants Program

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Application Information

Application Deadline: Monday, April 10, 2023, to fctl@ferris.edu. We will notify you of the result of the review process by Monday, April 24, 2023.

Eligibility: Applications will be accepted from individual faculty; teams of faculty, staff, and/or students from individual departments, schools, or programs; and multidisciplinary teams. At least one of the applicants must be a faculty member (non-tenure track, tenure track, or tenured) who teaches the PCC of interest.

The Review Committee will give greater consideration to applications that involve a team of two or more; we also encourage you to consider how you may meaningfully engage students in this work. More information about the review process is found on page 9.

Application Requirements: While the application consists of multiple questions, you need only answer the questions that are relevant for your circumstances. Additionally, if your department head or chair or school director is not a part of the team submitting the application, please share your application with them and ask them to send an email of support to FCTL at fctl@ferris.edu. This email must be received by FCTL by the deadline.

Selecting a PCC: Prior to submitting your application, please identify one or more PCCs in your department, school, or program on which to focus. We have compiled lists of courses from the 2014-2022 academic years that align with the definitions of PCCs we have provided. The data were obtained from FSU's Office of Institutional Research & Testing and are not disaggregated by section or instructor; neither section numbers nor instructor names were included in the data we received. Please contact FCTL at fctl@ferris.edu to inquire if the course(s) you teach is (are) on the list.

If you are interested in working on a course that is not on this list of courses, please contact FCTL at fctl@ferris.edu prior to submitting an application.

FCTL's Support: The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning will provide financial support for this grants program. Examples of how funding may be used are found in the application. We will also support and engage with grant recipients through the relevant stages of the process.

Reporting Expectations: If your application is funded, you will submit periodic progress reports, including specific findings and analyses, as you complete each stage of the process.

Frequently Asked Questions: FCTL has compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions and responded to each on its website.

The application form begins on the next page.

Enhancing Student Learning and Success in Persistently Challenging Courses Grants Program

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Application Form

Applicants' Information

Please provide the information requested below for each person directly involved in the project.

Name: _____

College: _____

Department or School: _____

Program (if appropriate): _____

Name: _____

College: _____

Department or School: _____

Program (if appropriate): _____

Name: _____

College: _____

Department or School: _____

Program (if appropriate): _____

Name: _____

College: _____

Department or School: _____

Program (if appropriate): _____

Project Narrative: Self-Check

Please indicate the highest stage in the process you are currently in or have completed (see Stages below). We indicate, then, given the stage you identify, which Project Narrative section(s) to complete.

Stage 1: Consider the DFW and equity gap data for PCCs in your department, school, or program. Select one or more PCCs and identify those who will be directly involved in the work.

> • If you are at Stage 1, please complete Project Narrative Section 1.

Stage 2: Identify what you know and believe about student success in the course(s), and how you know this. The goals of this are two-fold: (1) Identify possible factors that could contribute to the DFW rate and/or equity gap; and (2) Identify data that are needed to identify other possible key factors.

> • If you are at Stage 2, please complete Project Narrative Sections 1 and 2.

Stage 3: Collect and analyze additional data to identify factors that most predict or correlate with high DFW rates and/or equity gaps.

> • If you are at Stage 3, please complete Project Narrative Sections 1, 2, and 3.

Stage 4: Consider and select one or more interventions and develop implementation and assessment plans.

> • If you are at Stage 4, please complete Project Narrative Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Stage 5: Implement and assess the intervention(s), review assessment data, and identify relevant next steps.

> • If you are at Stage 5, please complete Project Narrative Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

• Based on your response above regarding which stage of the process you are currently in or have completed, please complete the necessary section or sections that begin on the next page.

• If you are in a particular stage but have not yet completed it, please answer the section questions you are able to address.

Section 1.

List the persistently challenging course or courses you have chosen to work on and indicate for each which goal(s) you hope to address. Use the space below each course in the *Other* box to explain if you have one or more goals that require additional explanation.

Course Number: _____ Course Name: _____

Goal(s): Please check all that apply:

☐ Reduce DFW rate

☐ Reduce a gender equity gap

☐ Reduce a racial/ethnic equity gap

☐ Other (please explain)

Course Number: _____ Course Name: _____

Goal(s): Please check all that apply:

☐ Reduce DFW rate

☐ Reduce a gender equity gap

☐ Reduce a racial/ethnic equity gap

☐ Other (please explain)

Course Number: _____ Course Name: _____

Goal(s): Please check all that apply:

☐ Reduce DFW rate

☐ Reduce a gender equity gap

☐ Reduce a racial/ethnic equity gap

☐ Other (please explain)

Section 2.

If you are in or have completed Stage 2, for each course listed in Section 1:

    a.   Describe what you currently know and believe about student success in this course, and how you know and/or believe this (i.e., what evidence you have that supports what you know or believe).

    b.   What additional data are needed to help identify other possible factors that may contribute to the high DFW rate and/or equity gap?

Section 3.

If you are in or have completed Stage 3, for each course listed in Section 1:

    a.   What data have you collected?

    b.   Of the data you have, what have been analyzed?

c. Describe the results you have obtained.

d. If the data indicate one or more factors that most contribute to high DFW rates and/or equity gaps, what are the factors?

Section 4.

If you are in or have completed Stage 4, for each factor that you have identified in Question 3c:

a. What intervention(s) have you selected?

b. What evidence suggests the intervention(s) will be successful?

c. Describe your plan for implementing and assessing the intervention(s).

Project Budget (Optional)

Please provide an itemized budget and rationale for each item. Examples of what funds may be used for include stipends, student assistant(s), implementation costs, retreats, data analysis, and release time (FCTL will pay the replacement cost for someone to teach that course). Projects do not require matching funds and no budget limit has been pre-determined. Additional items may be added to the below. We recognize budget requests may include funds to pay faculty, staff, and/or students who are part of the team. In the rationale, please be sure to describe the work each person will do.

Item	Rationale	Est. Cost
	Total estimated cost	

Application Evaluation Criteria

We provide this information for your reference only. Committee members will use the table below to evaluate applications; there is no need for you to add information to the table. The evaluation is not based on a points system. While each aspect of the application is considered, the final assessment of an application is based on the aspects collectively.

Aspects of the Application	Reviewer Notes
A note to applicants: The application does not ask you to discuss the measures of potential impact below identified below; FCTL will complete this information. *Greater consideration may be given to applications with potential for more significant impact.* Measures of potential impact • Average annual enrollment: _____ • Magnitude of the equity gap (if relevant): _____ • Magnitude of the DFW rate (if relevant): _____	
A note to applicants: Greater consideration will be given to applications that involve a team of two or more. We value the inclusion of one or more students, so we encourage you to consider how you may meaningfully engage students in this work. Application is submitted by: ☐ A team of two or more that includes students ☐ A team of two or more without students ☐ One course instructor	
Responses to questions are clear, specific, thorough, and professional.	
If a budget is included, the rationale for each item is clear and compelling.	
An e-mail of support from the department head, chair, or school director was received by FCTL by the application deadline.	