REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FRESHMAN INQUIRY: THE NEXT GENERATION

BACKGROUND

Twenty years after its inception, Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) remains a national leader in experiential learning for freshman. Other colleges and universities continue to look to PSU and University Studies for general education innovation. In that spirit, we invite proposals for innovations that will inform the next 20 years of experiential, integrated, and transformational general education. UNST seeks to be responsive to changing student needs through a collaboration with faculty from across PSU’s schools and colleges who are passionate about the foundational skills and knowledge necessary for student success. Selected proposals will be developed throughout 2016-2017 with one pilot beginning fall 2016 and one in fall 2017.

Freshman Inquiry courses entail 15 credits of 100-level, inquiry-based, interdisciplinary learning communities of 36 students. Each course creates a yearlong community of learners benefitting from a relationship with a peer mentor who holds seminar sized discussion sessions. These courses provide students opportunities for community-based learning through a pedagogy of critical reflection while fulfilling the lower-division curricular experience of 4 credits of Arts & Humanities, 4 credits of Social Science, 4 credits of Physical Science, and 3 credits of Writing. All University Studies courses including FRINQ integrate four learning goals: critical thinking and inquiry; communication; the diversity of human experience; and, ethics and social responsibility.

PROPOSALS SOUGHT

The baseline requirement for all proposals is that they maintain the essential objectives and philosophy of FRINQ including the learning goals, interdisciplinarity, learning communities, and community engagement. Otherwise, the form, structure, and methodologies are open for exploring change and innovation. It is our goal to improve the retention of Freshmen.

Possible innovations may include, but are not limited to:

• Maximizing the role of the undergraduate peer mentor in the course.
• Creatively use scheduling and/or flexible seat time.
• Supporting under-represented students and multi-language learners.
• Integrating academics with student success through novel introductions of students to university culture, expectations, and discourses.
• Integrating advising.
• Utilizing inclusive pedagogy, such as universal design, to improve student persistence.
• Utilizing alternative or mobile learning platforms.
PROPOSAL PROCESS

We will be using a two-step proposal process to respect the time of proposers. Proposals will be assessed by a committee of faculty from across campus for potential contribution to student success, retention implications, academic benefits, academic evidence to support change, appropriateness to FRINQ goals and budgetary considerations. The top preliminary proposals will be asked to develop full proposals. Multi-disciplinary faculty in teams of 3 to 4 collaborators, who intend to teach the course, should develop proposals.

Preliminary proposals should contain:

1. Faculty names, departments, and email addresses.
2. Description and rationale of the proposed course redesign (600 words).
3. Explanation of how this course advances each of the four University Studies Learning Goals.
4. List of the four to six main learning outcomes for the course and a brief description of how the course meets each of them.
5. Explanation of how the redesigned FRINQ will improve retention of Freshmen.
6. An email from Department Chairs supporting the proposal.

From the preliminary proposals, those selected to develop a full proposal will receive funding as well as ongoing support from UNST to develop their ideas. Each team member will receive $5000 to develop and pilot the course. Faculty teams will participate in a minimum of four curriculum development meetings with the University Studies faculty development team in 2016-2017 as their projects develop. UNST will work closely with the proposing team to maximize the chance of the pilot’s success. Ultimately, the goal is to scale up quality innovations.

Full Proposals will contain:

1. Revised description and rationale of the proposed course redesign (600 words).
2. Explanation of how the redesigned FRINQ will improve retention of Freshmen.
3. Draft Syllabus with proposed reading list.
4. Description of the teaching methods and strategies that will be used in the class.
5. Description of the major assignments and methods used to assess student learning, including learning objectives.
6. Identification of budget, supplies, and support needs.
7. Identification of potential community and campus partners.
8. Identification of anticipated obstacles and challenges.
9. Email endorsement from Department Chairs and Deans acknowledging their support of the course.

TIMELINE

For fall 2016-spring 2017 FRINQ Pilot:

Pre-Proposals Due: April 15, 2016
Invitations for Full Proposals Announced: April 25, 2016

Full Proposals Due: June 10, 2016
Selected Courses Announced: June 17, 2016