



**National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230**

NSF 12-106

Dear Colleague Letter - WIDER (Widening Implementation and Demonstration of Evidence-based Reforms)

In the summer of 2012, the National Science Foundation intends to issue a new Program Solicitation called WIDER (Widening Implementation and Demonstration of Evidence-based Reforms). WIDER aims to move improved undergraduate STEM education instructional practices and curricular innovations to scale. The program will support research on how to achieve widespread sustainable implementation of undergraduate instructional practices leading to improved student outcomes in STEM at academic institutions through demonstration models. The program will call on institutions to target their instructional practices in undergraduate STEM courses as well as the teaching practices in many STEM departments. The goal is to change practice across the institution, not simply in one or two courses. Proposals also may support improvements in students' educational experiences not tied to specific courses, such as effective advising, mentoring, or use of cohorts. In addition, WIDER will serve as a pilot program for building valid processes for gathering documentation about STEM instruction and student outcomes. The Foundation will be seeking proposals that employ innovative strategies, develop dynamic partnerships, and implement catalytic approaches toward achieving this goal.

The purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter is to alert you to the upcoming WIDER opportunity as well as to encourage submission of Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) proposals or supplemental funding requests for existing awards for the following types of activities:

1. **Activities to conduct planning workshops or conferences.** NSF encourages activities that will bring together intellectually distinct communities to develop the conceptual planning for WIDER activities through conferences or planning workshops.
2. **Catalyst self-assessment projects to document the current use of evidence-based instructional practices in STEM undergraduate curricular and co-curricular programs.** Institutions that seek to undertake institution-wide, evidence-based reforms should first understand what change is required, which is often informed by data collection and analysis, surveys and review of institutional policies and practices. A successfully completed catalyst project could serve as a springboard for embarking on a full-scale WIDER project. A wide range of activities could be undertaken as part of a catalyst project but we particularly encourage academic institutions to measure their current use of evidence-based instructional practices, and/or to provide evidence about the state of effective instructional practice. STEM instructional practices can be broadly defined by the institution to include formal in-class or in-lab time as well as co-curricular strategies such as cohorts, internships, and research experiences. The STEM fields include all of the disciplines supported by NSF (including the social, behavioral, and economic sciences), as well as STEM undergraduate instruction for non-STEM majors.

EAGER proposals or supplemental funding requests to existing awards for catalyst projects are expected to include information on the extent to which the institution already documents and tracks the use of evidence-based instruction in STEM undergraduate programs, the outcomes that emerge from such analysis, and plans for how the supplement will be used to document such practices in the future. Plans for the catalyst activities should include the measures that the PI proposes to use to provide documentation of evidence-based practices. The EAGER proposal or supplemental funding request also should include a working and an

operational definition of what the institution considers "evidence-based instructional practices," which may be modified as a result of the activities proposed.

MECHANISMS OF SUPPORT

Proposers may request funding for WIDER planning activities via several mechanisms: **supplemental funding** to existing awards, **Early-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER)**, or **funding for conference/workshops**.

Proposers may immediately submit a request for **supplemental funding** to any existing award that targets undergraduate education by prefixing the title with "WIDER: Supplement:" Supplemental funding requests should be submitted via FastLane no later than **July 30, 2012** to ensure consideration in the current fiscal year. Additional information about requesting supplemental support is contained in Part II of the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) available at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_1.jsp#IE4

Researchers may also immediately submit **EAGER** proposals to undergraduate programs in the Directorate for Education and Human Resources and prefix the title with "WIDER: EAGER:" Proposals must conform to the guidelines for preparation of EAGER proposals as specified in Part I of the PAPPG (http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_2.jsp#IID2). Please note that an EAGER submission should satisfy the EAGER submission guidelines and is limited to a total budget of **\$300K** for a maximum of two years. Such proposals should be submitted no later than **July 30, 2012** to ensure consideration in the current fiscal year.

Instructions for preparing proposals for conferences and workshops can be found in Part I of the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG) available at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_2.jsp#IID8.

The Division of Undergraduate Education also anticipates release of a **new program solicitation for the** support of larger, longer duration projects that will exploit the goals of the WIDER program.

Questions concerning these opportunities should be addressed to the following program directors: Maura Borrego mborrego@nsf.gov, Myles Boylan mboylan@nsf.gov, Jody Chase lchase@nsf.gov, Jessie DeAro jdearo@nsf.gov, Ed Geary egeary@nsf.gov, Claudia Rankins crankins@nsf.gov.

Joan Ferrini-Mundy
Assistant Director,
Education and Human Resources