RFP for dB-SERC Departmental or Cross-Departmental Faculty Learning Communities

An important goal of the Discipline-Based Science Education Research Center (dB-SERC) is to foster Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) in Natural Science departments at the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). Each FLC is envisioned to promote close collaboration among faculty within a particular department or across various departments interested in teaching and learning focused on a particular theme. FLCs can also support implementation of evidence-based educational strategies currently underway. We envision that the departmental or cross-departmental FLCs will convene weekly, fortnightly or monthly for lunch meetings to discuss teaching and assessment strategies relevant to that FLC’s goals. dB-SERC will cover the expenses for pizza during these FLC meetings and supplementary materials such as books or other supplies deemed necessary for the FLC discussions.

It is intended that the FLCs will increase faculty members’ familiarity with evidence-based teaching strategies (e.g., via reading of relevant literature and discussions about adaptation and implementation) and support faculty interested in implementing the strategies that the FLC focuses on. For example, a FLC may be focused on effectiveness of a flipped format of teaching. During FLC meetings, faculty interested in flipping their classes can meet to discuss literature on this strategy and how it can be implemented or is being implemented in a course (e.g., discussions of course goals and appropriate framing of the course for students, structure of the course, format and delivery of lecture videos, in-class activities, assessment strategies etc.).

dB-SERC is currently accepting proposals (one page maximum) for establishing FLCs for fall 2014 and/or spring 2015. The proposal should include the names of a chair, co-chair (or vice chair) of the proposed FLC and the faculty members who will participate in the weekly meetings (minimum of 5 faculty members including the chair). The chair and vice-chair must be a full-time Pitt faculty member. The proposal should also discuss how the establishment of the FLC will help the faculty members involved. The chair of the FLC will be responsible for writing a one page report at the end of each semester discussing the extent to which the goals of the FLC have been met. The chair of the FLC will also be responsible for ensuring that the faculty involved in the FLC convene regularly and for managerial things such as ordering food and submitting the receipts to dB-SERC for reimbursement. The dB-SERC Postdoctoral Teacher Scholar and Assessment Consultant, Alexandru Maries, will attend at least one FLC lunch meeting.

Please submit your proposal (no more than one page) to dbserc+proposal@pitt.edu with the title and proposal details (including budget justification for any supplementary material needed). The proposal will be evaluated on a first come first serve basis on the following criteria (no more than two departmental FLCs will be funded for pizza lunch in a given semester but there is no restriction on cross-departmental FLCs):

- Potential impact with respect to advancing evidence-based teaching and learning for the FLC members involved;
- Clarity of the FLC plan; and
- Intended short-term outcomes for the FLC participants as well as potential long-term outcomes that impact teaching and learning beyond the time frame of the FLC.