

Improving Undergraduate Education and Teaching at MIT: A Call for Preliminary Proposals

Currently, the landscape of higher education is experiencing extraordinary pressures and changes. Across higher education, Generative AI is driving reconsideration of both pedagogy and content. At MIT, the forthcoming recommendations from the Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Program could create a variety of new considerations of our education.

To meet the challenges of this moment, we are adapting the timelines and processes for the [Alex and Brit d'Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education](#) and the [Education Innovation Funds for Teaching and Learning](#). **The deadline for submitting a preliminary proposal for either grant this year is *January 30, 2026*.** More information is provided below.

This year, these funds are looking for large-scale proposals intended to make a substantial and sustainable impact on undergraduate student learning and education. These projects may include (but are not limited to):

- developing AI-aware pedagogy;
- creating, implementing, and assessing sustained use of evidence-based pedagogy;
- revamping critical subjects and/or restructuring course sequences to better support majors' transition to upper level subjects; or,
- achieving program learning outcomes and addressing other local challenges.

For these large-scale proposals to make a substantial impact, the goals must be sustainable and effect broad local changes. There will be a strong preference for groups (department or multi-departmental) or proposals from small teams. Single PI proposals are welcome if they meet the other criteria. Projects will be awarded by the individual fund with which it is most closely aligned.

Support

Experts in the MIT Teaching + Learning Lab (TLL) are poised to support projects of this scale. One model of particular interest to the d'Arbeloff selection committee is the use of Departmental Action Teams (DATs) to support improvements in undergraduate education through either curriculum revision (what is taught) or pedagogical changes (how it is taught). A DAT is a working group (4 to 8 members from faculty, staff, and students) that is created by a department with the goal of making meaningful, positive and sustainable change. You can read more about this model later in this document and on the [TLL site](#).

Multi-year projects are strongly encouraged, with a suggested timeline outlined below.

- Year 1: development and/or refinement of goals; development of relevant pedagogy and curriculum; and, planning for assessment in collaboration with TLL (assessment) and Open Learning (implementation, if appropriate).
- Year 2: implementation of planned changes to pedagogy and/or curriculum developed in Year 1 and an initial assessment of outcomes.
- Year 3: Iteration and extension of Year 2 changes to pedagogy and development, based on initial assessment; Development of plans for sustainability.

Requests for continuation of funding for a second and third year will be reviewed annually on a case-by-case basis. Decisions will be based on progress reports and plans for future efforts. Funded proposals that meet the goals for the previous year, make continued progress, and that can articulate a reasonable plan for the upcoming year will be considered for an additional year of funding.

Process

There is a multi-stage review process for initial funding.

- Stage I. Submission of a brief (no more than 2 pages, PDF format) high-level preliminary proposal outlining the proposed work, rationale, opportunities and risks, resources needed and some ideas for assessment
- Stage II. Selected projects will be invited to work more closely with TLL and others to develop a more detailed final proposal
- Stage III. Full proposals, with narrative, budget, detailed assessment of impact

AY2025-26 deadlines:

Funds can be used for faculty release time or summer salary, stipends for graduate students to help develop curriculum, and UROPS.

- January 16, 2026 (11am - 12pm EST) - Webinar for interested participants to learn more about the DAT model; Register [here](#)
- January 30, 2026 - Stage I: Preliminary proposal due to cdfunds@mit.edu.
- Mid-February - Stage II: Invitation to discuss in detail/develop final proposal with TLL and others
- March 20, 2026 - Stage III: Final proposal due to cdfunds@mit.edu.
- Mid-April - Funding decisions disseminated for use in FY27

More information on the funds can be found on the [funds website](#). Please contact funds staff at cdfunds@mit.edu with general questions. For questions specific to DATs, please contact tll-dat@mit.edu. Thank you for your interest in improving undergraduate education at MIT.

Curriculum Development Funds from GUE

MIT is fortunate to have funding to support undergraduate education and experience from two sources, for the [Alex and Brit d'Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education](#) and the [Education Innovation Funds for Teaching and Learning](#).

Alex and Brit d'Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education

The d'Arbeloff Fund for Excellence in Education has been an important catalyst for innovation in MIT's undergraduate curriculum. The Fund was established in 1999 with a generous \$10 million donation from Alex, '49, and Brit, SM '61, d'Arbeloff while Alex served as chairman of the MIT Corporation. This fund was established to support larger-scale ambitious MIT faculty-led projects designed to strengthen undergraduate education and enrich the academic experience of our undergraduates.

Proposals for projects that improve the quality of teaching and enhance learning experiences through creative curricular and pedagogical initiatives are typically accepted each fall. They are reviewed by a committee chaired by the Vice Chancellor for Graduate and Undergraduate Education and composed of deans or their faculty representatives from each School and from the Schwarzman College of Computing at MIT.

Education Innovation Funds for Teaching and Learning

These funds, formerly known as the Alumni Class Funds, are supported by the Classes of 1951, 1955, 1972, and 1999. They are intended to launch innovative educational projects, particularly for undergraduate education. Funding is intended as seed money for new, "high risk" initiatives that encourage creative curriculum and teaching changes, improve the quality of teaching, and enrich the learning experience, including the imaginative use of technology and applications.

MIT faculty and teaching staff are encouraged to think creatively and collaboratively about undertaking a curricular or pedagogical innovation. The committee welcomes projects that will:

- make a novel or creative contribution to MIT's educational excellence,
- test ideas about effective education including ways in which innovative pedagogies can facilitate learning and teaching within the MIT residential educational system,
- demonstrate the special and specific value of a residentially based education, and/or
- improve student-faculty engagement and/or student self-efficacy.

Departmental Action Teams

One model of particular interest to the d'Arbeloff selection committee is curricular and/or pedagogical improvements through Departmental Action Teams (DATs), facilitated by members of the MIT Teaching + Learning Lab (TLL).

A Departmental Action Team (DAT) is a working group of 4 to 8 faculty, staff, and students that is created by the department (and guided by an external facilitator from TLL) to achieve the following goals:

- Create sustainable change around a broad-scale issue related to undergraduate education, with the focal issue developed collaboratively with input from relevant stakeholders in the department
- Collect multiple forms of evidence to inform decision making about the focal issue
- Recognize and adapt departmental structures and culture to achieve positive and meaningful change in undergraduate education
- Explicitly attend to long-term sustainability when making changes in the department

A core feature of the DAT is that the working group (and other relevant stakeholders) collaboratively develop the focus of the project to improve undergraduate education; examples include changes to the curriculum (e.g., restructuring a course sequence), pedagogy (e.g., increasing collaborative learning or broadening student participation in class), or culture (e.g., building a sense of belonging among students). Staff in the TLL will bring their expertise in educational research, evidence-based teaching, and organizational change to facilitate working groups and create an environment in which DAT participants are likely to achieve success.

DATs support their participants not only in making meaningful, positive change in their department, but also in developing their capacity to sustain the project and continue leading change in the future.

This DAT initiative is being led by Drs. Ruthann Thomas and Raechel Soicher. Additional information on the Departmental Action Team can be found at <https://tll.mit.edu/departamental-action-teams/>. Reach out to tll-dat@mit.edu with any questions.