

VUMC Limited Submission Opportunity

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation: 2024 Creating Equitable Pathways to STEM Graduate Education

Applications due April 23, 2024

VUMC: *These instructions are for VUMC investigators. VU investigators should apply through [InfoReady](#) and address any questions to VU-LSO@vanderbilt.edu.*

VUMC may submit **one Letter of Inquiry** as lead institution to the 2024 [Creating Equitable Pathways to STEM Graduate Education](#) program from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

The Higher Education Program at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation is continuing its investment in Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and in the establishment of partnerships between MSIs and graduate programs at other colleges and universities. Sloan's Creating Equitable Pathways to STEM Graduate Education grants will engage the expertise of MSIs—and the unique experiences of their faculty and students—to model effective systems and practices that remove barriers and create opportunities for equitable learning environments in STEM graduate education so all students can thrive. Grant awards will support sharing MSIs' institutional know-how on equitable undergraduate and graduate education, as well as modeling that know-how to create systemic changes that enhance pathways from MSIs to master's and doctoral degree programs in **astronomy, biology, chemistry, computer science, data science, Earth sciences, economics, engineering, marine science, mathematics, physics, and statistics** at partner institutions.

Awards will also open pathways to students and faculty at partnering institutions to learn at and from MSIs and collaborate on systemic changes that have the potential for even broader impacts. While Equitable Pathways grants will directly fund activities that eliminate barriers to pathways between MSIs and their partnering institutions, Sloan is particularly interested in supporting partners that are committed to widening pathways to master's and doctoral degree programs in the covered fields for students from MSIs and from other colleges and universities that currently have weak, if any, pathways to STEM graduate education.

The foundation thus invites letters of inquiry (LOIs) for both new and the continuation of previously Sloan-funded projects that seek to dismantle systemic barriers and create sustainable MSI pathways to graduate education in the stated disciplines. Compelling LOIs will result in the invitation of a full proposal.

Proposed projects may take multiple forms, including, for example, planning activities on MSI campuses that set the stage for new pathways between MSIs and graduate programs at partner institutions, which may be other MSIs or institutions with graduate programs in the covered STEM fields. Another example could be projects that establish or scale existing, mutually

beneficial partnerships between undergraduate and graduate programs at two or more institutions.

In addition to establishing seamless pathways, projects need to address policies, processes, and practices that reinforce existing systems that are barriers to student access and success in graduate education. These projects could include efforts to examine or redesign graduate recruitment, admission policies and processes, mentoring practices, departmental climate, or other gatekeeping (or gateway) structures to and through STEM graduate education. **Since the barriers to equitable pathways do not end once students are admitted to graduate programs, the Foundation is looking for evidence that projects will promote and enhance existing efforts to reduce and eliminate policies, procedures, and institutional climates and cultures that prevent students from successfully attaining a graduate degree.**

All projects must have at least one MSI partner. When two or more institutions are the proposed grantees, **it is preferred that the primary PI be housed at the MSI to create a direct connection between MSI expertise and project leadership.**

Grant Types & Amounts

Three types of grants will be funded:

1. Planning grants to support two or more institutions to conduct internal reviews of existing barriers to student success and for analysis and planning for future partnership(s) (up to \$75,000 for up to 1 year);
2. Seed grants to two or more institutions that seek to formalize an existing partnership(s) and launch one or more pilot initiatives (up to \$250,000 over 1-2 years); and
3. Implementation grants to two or more institutions that allow for the augmentation or scaling of existing partnerships/collaborations (up to \$500,000 over 2-3 years).

PI Eligibility

Lead investigators from submitting and partner institutions should be at the full, associate, or assistant professor level, a department chair, or in an administrative role with high connectivity to academic positions. Such individuals should come from nonprofit two- or four-year institutions, or organizations that serve higher education professionals or institutions.

The selected nominee will submit the LOI to the sponsor by July 1, 2024. If invited by the Sloan Foundation to submit a full proposal, the due date will be October 4, 2024.

See the full [program page](#) for more information.

Internal Application Instructions

Anyone interested in being considered to submit VUMC's proposal must submit the following (in a single PDF) to LSO@vanderbilt.edu by **5 p.m. on April 23, 2024:**

Indicate to which funding path you are applying: planning, seed, or implementation.

1. Brief project description including summary budget (2-page max); Briefly address the following:
 - a. **Significance.** What is the specific problem(s) the project is aiming to solve on your campuses or through your organizations – and how do you know these are problems?
 - b. **Project Activities.** What is the nature and scope of the planned activities for the project? (Include which individuals/institutions will be primarily responsible for which activities)
 - c. **Project Team.** How is the project team well-suited for this project? (Address how the parties are also suited for collaboration)
 - d. **Partnerships.** How will the project ensure mutual benefit across the participating institutions? What is the history of collaboration with participating institutions, or with MSIs at large?
 - e. **Additional Sources of Support.** What other sources of support can the project leverage to ensure its success?
2. Letter of support from department chair/center director;
3. NIH Biosketch or abbreviated CV (5-page max)

Any questions about this opportunity or the LSO process may be directed to LSO@vanderbilt.edu.