

REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

PROGRAM FOR JUNIOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The OSI International Higher Education Support Program invites Concept Proposals for projects aiming to contribute to the HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching

The deadline for submitting the applications for the projects starting in the summer of 2011 is
20 September 2010

PROGRAM OUTLOOK AND GOALS

The **International Higher Education Support Program (HESP)** promotes the advancement of higher education within the humanities and social sciences throughout the region of Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union and Mongolia.

The **HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching (ReSET)** aims to develop and support teaching excellence in the humanities and social sciences at the undergraduate university level. The program promotes a **systematic rethinking of the meaning of the undergraduate learning experience in support of building free and open societies**, the defense and enlargement of freedom of inquiry and development of programs of undergraduate learning offering the educational experience that brings up independent and original thinkers.

ReSET projects establish a framework for **long-term regional and international collaboration of university academics** who share a commitment to advance and enrich undergraduate teaching in a specific academic subject. While the projects address a variety of topics, fields and regional needs, they are united by the **approach** that focuses on:

- developing reflexivity and innovation in undergraduate teaching;
- critical rethinking of the subject drawing on the most current international scholarship and bringing the original scholarly perspectives into the classroom;
- collaborative structure for peer exchange and learning among the regional and international faculty.

ReSET supports the **exploration and introduction of new fields of studies** and **revision of subject areas that are central to the undergraduate curriculum** and have a bearing on the approaches to teaching and learning in the entire disciplines. Collaborative exploration and creation of knowledge within the ReSET projects, as well as in the participants' classrooms, may require reconsidering the **faculty's and the students' relations to each other and to knowledge**. Rather than providing for the knowledge transfer, ReSET aims to equip teachers for intellectually productive engagement with students. ReSET wishes to support scholars who return to classrooms where knowledge approved by an authority is not being delivered, but where knowledge is being created by the community of learners, where students' experiences and aspirations matter, where authority is not established but questioned, so that students make their own conclusions regarding the meaning of the phenomena explored and issues discussed. ReSET acknowledges that the current undergraduate student population is the primary force that shapes the future of the respective societies, and wishes to equip them with the sense of responsibility and the tools of intellectual work to assume that position.

Rooted in the concept of **continuous development and self-renewal of university academics**, ReSET creates opportunities for qualified and dedicated regional and international faculty to make a substantial contribution to the revision and advancement of teaching and learning and fosters their leadership in the process of educational change in the region.

PARTICIPANTS, ACTIVITIES AND ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

ReSET projects bring together groups of **junior university faculty from the region (participants)** and international teams of **resource faculty**; all academics involved in the projects have current teaching affiliations with the **undergraduate degree programs in the humanities and social sciences**. Resource faculty are recruited for their qualities as “master teachers,” expertise on the subject and involvement in international scholarship. Long-term commitment of the participants and core resource faculty to the projects is essential.

Project activities focus on **development and practice of scholarly teaching** through **critical and creative inquiry into the state of the art of the scholarship and curricula** in the chosen subject area. Participants and resource faculty engage in a continuous multi-year program, which includes regular seminar sessions (typically summer seminars of 2-3 weeks in length, and shorter intensive and small group meetings in the interim) and inter-session project activities tailored to the project's teaching and curriculum development agenda and the needs and capacities of the involved colleagues. ReSET projects are driven primarily by the **needs of the participants' classroom teaching** and inspire and enable **immediate connection between the work within the project and the teaching practice of the project participants** and provide means of active academic collaboration and peer feedback among the participants and resource faculty.

ReSET projects originate within the region's university community and actively enlist its support; all ReSET-funded activities are hosted in the region. A project is, as a rule, developed by an international team of resource faculty, under the leadership of an Academic Director from the region, and with support of a region-based host academic institution. The project participants become actively involved in the planning and direction of the project as it proceeds past the initial stage.

The projects, as a rule, **address specific topics or thematic areas** rather than entire academic disciplines. Especially encouraged are proposals of projects focusing on interdisciplinary exploration of a given subject and new and critical perspectives on traditionally defined subjects and disciplines. In its approach ReSET **does not support training for non-academic professionals** or engagement with the **applied subjects** and areas mainly oriented toward professional training, or projects focusing on training in generic teaching skills or techniques. ReSET work is based on the idea of **inseparability of content and method** in teaching.

ReSET SEMINARS AND ReSET CHALLENGES PROJECTS

To accommodate the diversity of needs and current expertise in teaching and curriculum development in different subject areas in the region, and the backgrounds of the potential project participants, ReSET provides support to projects in two formats – ReSET Seminars and ReSET Challenges Projects.

ReSET SEMINARS support the development of teaching and curricula in subject areas central to the undergraduate learning in the humanities and social sciences. The Seminar participants engage in **critical rethinking of the foundation and current scholarship and state of the art in teaching and curricula in the subject and develop approaches to teaching that are critical and innovative in both content and form**. The ReSET Seminar projects

- work to establish and critique the **theoretical and methodological grounding of the subject** through the review of key concepts, classical texts and latest advancement in scholarship;
- develop active association with **current scholarly debates** and challenge the existing orthodoxies in the academic subjects locally, regionally and internationally;
- bring about change in undergraduate classroom through **creative revision of approaches to teaching**; focus on enhancing the students' capacities for critical synthesis and independent inquiry;

The ReSET Seminar projects build up collaborative teams of 25-30 junior faculty from the region who engage in intensive learning and debate on the subject and reflection on teaching philosophies and practices, and bring the outcomes and experiences of their on-going work in ReSET to their undergraduate classroom, with guidance and in collaboration with the international resource faculty.

HESP offers support for the ReSET Seminars projects for up to three consecutive years.

HESP invites the participants, resource faculty and organizers of the **past ReSET projects committed to further, in-depth collaboration**, as well as other academics with significant experience in curriculum reform and development of teaching in the region, to contribute to the ReSET Challenges Projects.

ReSET CHALLENGES PROJECTS involve groups of academic colleagues who, building upon their significant experiences in development of university teaching and curricula in the region, endeavor to generate change in the undergraduate education on the regional level by focusing on **particularly new or challenging subjects and systematic review and overhaul of the curricula**. The ReSET Challenges projects

- work to advance and **revise the methodology of learning and teaching in the discipline** through active international collaboration and scholarly engagement of the participating academic peers, and by challenging insular and outdated patterns in curricular design and application of scholarship in teaching;
- promote the debate on the issues of scholarly teaching, design of university curricula and advancement of learning in the chosen subject area on a broader national, regional and international level, generate resources and methodologies for discussion and dissemination in the wider regional academic community, in effort to **maximize and sustain the impact on the level of departments and institutional curricula**.

The ReSET Challenges projects support flexibly structured programs of intensive interaction within the groups of 15-20 regional faculty participants and international resource faculty working as academic peers during, on average, two consecutive years. The priority is given to the projects that aim to contribute to the development of **areas of specialization** in the undergraduate curriculum in the humanities and social sciences.

The projects are encouraged to use **English as the working language**. The ability of the participants to work with academic resources in the English language is essential for direct access to the most current scholarship and participation in international academic debate.

APPLYING TO ReSET

HESP invites academic institutions and groups of academics with demonstrated potential for and commitment to promoting teaching excellence in the humanities and social sciences in the program's target region to submit **Concept Proposals of multi-year ReSET projects** aiming to start in the summer of 2011 or during the 2011-12 academic year. The project organizers are encouraged to choose the format (ReSET Seminars or ReSET Challenges Projects) and develop project designs that are most relevant to the nature and scale of issues and tasks in the development of undergraduate teaching in the targeted subject area and the capacities of local academics. Concept Proposals must be prepared following the **Guidelines** available from the HESP office and at www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp. The submissions should be made electronically, before the **deadline of 20 September 2010**, directly to HESP to reset@osi.hu. The Concept Proposals should not exceed 3,000 words in length.

Upon the review of the Concept Proposals by the ReSET Academic Advisory Committee, the authors of the Concept Proposals that best respond to the goals and priorities of ReSET will be invited to submit **full project applications**. The final decisions on project funding for 2011 will be based on the review of the full project applications and communicated to the applicants before 15 January 2011. HESP's funding is commensurate with the nature and geography of the project activities; project organizers are encouraged to solicit cost-share contributions from other (non-OSI) sources.

HESP staff is available for consultation on matters of the program priorities and application procedures in advance of the deadline for Concept Proposals submission.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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