

Request For Proposals (RFP): Trine Experience Projects

***Disclaimer:** Please note that this is a **simulation** for a class activity. This is **NOT** a real RFP. Trine and Dr. Brooks are not responsible for or affiliated with this simulation. Please do not submit your final proposal to anyone other than your instructor!*

Background Information and Scenario

Trine University is experiencing a period of unprecedented growth. From the renovation of Ford Hall to the Furth Center for the Performing Arts to the basketball and hockey arenas, the campus has transformed itself. Student enrollment has, also, been increasing.

With growth comes growing pains, and President Earl Brooks and the Trine University Board of Trustees are committed to making sure that the student experience remains excellent even in the midst of transition.

To that end, they are soliciting proposals from students that identify problems or areas for improvement in the current student experience and propose creative ways for addressing them. They are interested, especially in programs that will bring about long-term change.

NOTE: The funding for these proposals is not sufficient to cover the hiring of additional staff or building additional facilities. While proposals may involve purchasing equipment or augmenting existing facilities, the committee is looking for **creative** ways to improve the campus experience for students. Think outside the box!

NOTE: There is \$20,000 total in the fund. It is not necessary, or even encouraged, that your proposals use all \$20,000. That is simply the maximum amount of money available. Remember that the more money you ask for, the more serious your problem should be.

Formatting Guidelines:

Except where otherwise noted use the following format:

- **Sections:** Each section should appear on a different page.
- **Headings:** 14 pt. Times New Roman font, bolded, and left justified.
- **Subheadings:** 12 pt. Times New Roman font, italicized, and left justified
- **Body text:** 12 pt. Times New Roman font, plain, single-spaced.
- **Paragraphs:** Add a space between each paragraph. Do not indent paragraphs.
- **Images, Graphs & Figures:** Center these on the page with text above and below. Do not use text wrapping. Provide a caption below each image with a figure number and a title. For example:
Figure 1: Students' Satisfaction with Depot Food Service
- **Page numbers:** Page numbers should be centered at the bottom of the page. There should be no page number on the title page. The executive summary should begin with the Roman numeral ii. Arabic numbering should begin on the page with the problem description.

- **Citation Style:** Use Chicago Style, Author-Date format, as is preferred by those in the physical and natural sciences. For more information about how to use Chicago style, follow this link: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Structure of Proposal:

Your proposal should have the following sections, in this order.

Title Page

The title of your proposal should be centered in 16-point font. The names of your group members should be below that, in 12 pt. font and centered.

Executive Summary

Review the requirements for an executive summary in the textbook. In 300 words or fewer, write an executive summary for your proposal.

Table of Contents and Table of Graphics & Figures

These should be formatted according to the guidelines on pages 352-355 of your textbook. In class, we will review the MS Word functions that will create a table of contents and table of graphics and figures for you. You will be strongly encouraged to use these features, since they will better prepare you to use them for your engineering design reports later in your academic career.

NOTE: Since the integration of graphics and figures with text is a key part of technical communication, you are required to include **at least four** clear, communicative graphics, images, figures, or schematics in your proposal. These images must be clearly referenced and explained in the text and make appropriate use of contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity. Some ideas for meeting this requirement are as follows:

- Graphical representations of data that you have gathered through surveys of your fellow students. Does the data show a clear trend that will enhance your argument? If so, consider including a graphic.
- Graphical representations of data you have gathered from secondary research.
- Pictures, maps, or schematics of areas of the campus that will be affected by your program. In the past, students who have argued for updates of exercise equipment have taken pictures of broken equipment. Groups that have organized races or events have included maps of the route or area.

The ideas above are not exhaustive. Please consult with your instructor about appropriate ways to integrate graphics and figures into the text.

Problem Description

Your problem description should do the following in this order:

1. Define the problem you are going to address and the affected population (all students? Athletes? Freshmen? Commuters?). Define any key terms necessary to understand this problem.
2. Argue decisively to an audience of administrators that this problem is affecting Trine students and, as a result, the university, in a negative way. Remember that while administrators care about students personally, they must also be concerned with many of the following practical matters:

- Student retention (ensuring that students who enroll as freshman persist until graduation)
- Student recruitment (on campus, this means ensuring that prospective students who visit want to come)
- Student achievement (graduation rates, job placement rates, and so on all effect the academic reputation of the school)
- Student engagement with campus and faculty (students who are engaged are more likely to stay, to recommend the school, and to give money back when they graduate)
- Student health and safety (safety hazards risk lawsuits; unhealthy students are unable to achieve academically)
- The university's reputation (innovative programs and events can be used to market the university positively – community outreach programs are especially useful in this regard)

Though the list is not exhaustive, these are the things you should keep in mind as you make your argument.

You should make your argument using the following kinds of evidence:

- Surveys of students
- Observations (carefully recorded) of the problem or issue
- Interviews with faculty, staff, community members, or students familiar with the problem
- Published research examining the negative effects of this or a similar problem at other universities.
- When appropriate, research of industry practices and/or programs at other universities. For example, if you were looking at food service issues, you might research cafeteria capacities at other, similarly-sized universities. Or, if you were examining pedestrian safety, you might look at federal and state guidelines for speed bumps and crosswalks to see if Trine is in compliance.

NOTE: The more money you plan to spend, the more you will have to focus on financial issues in your problem statement. If you are spending, for example, \$38,000, you should detail the *cost* of this problem to the university.

Proposed Solution & Rationale

In this section, do the following in order:

1. What do you plan to do? In a paragraph or two, provide a brief overview of how you plan to solve the problem or problems you've identified above.

2. Argue decisively, to an audience of administrators, that the program you are proposing *will* solve the problem you have identified. In this section, you should rely extensively on research. You might address any or all of the following questions:

1. Has this type of program or intervention solved this same problem or addressed this same issue somewhere else (preferably somewhere similar to Trine)? Use published research to support your findings.
2. Does the targeted population of students like, want, or express interest in the intervention or idea? Use surveys and/or interviews to support this argument.
3. Do the people who might be in charge of implementing your program or idea think it is feasible? Effective? Appropriate? Interviews would be helpful here.

4. Are you expanding upon an already successful program? Talk to people around campus about their results.
5. Will this program allow us to offer something that other regional universities don't? Research what is available at Ball State, IPFW, Albion, etc. If this makes us unique or competitive, say so.

NOTE: The best proposals will use *several* different types of evidence to prove that their plan is a good one. The best proposals will also *closely* link their evidence to the problem they intend to solve.

Proposed Tasks:

Show that you are organized by listing and describing all of the individual tasks that will have to be completed in order to implement your program. The first proposed task should be the first thing you do when you receive approval. The list of proposed tasks should be formatted like this:

1. *Recruit student leaders to serve on the depression support committee.* We will post fliers around campus, send out all-student emails, and use Facebook to encourage students to come to a call-out meeting about the group. Additionally, we will contact the presidents of various clubs and academic organizations to inform their members about the call-out meeting.

Timeline:

Create a table or a Gantt chart illustrating when each of the tasks will be completed. Instructions for creating Gantt charts can be found on pages 306-308 of your proposal.

Budgetary Needs:

List the resources that you will need for this project and how much money they will require.

Your budget should be extremely detailed and structured in the same way as the table of contents. Review the sample proposals for examples of properly formatted budgets. Remember that the more information you have, the more convinced your audience will be that you will spend their money wisely.

Evaluation:

How will you evaluate the success of your project? In this section, you should do the following:

1. Write a subheading for each part of your program. Obviously if your program only has one part, you will not need multiple subheadings. But if, for example, if your program involves buying comfortable seating for the LINK and facilitating a science fiction reading group your subheadings would look like this:

Improvement of LINK seating

Science Fiction Reading Group

2. Under each subheading, provide your definition of success and explain why you have chosen that definition. For example, do you expect a certain number of participants? A certain score on a post-test? A certain percentage of students saying that they are satisfied? An increase in retention numbers? Why have you chosen these criteria?
3. In the second paragraph under each subheading, explain in specific detail how you will measure whether your program was successful. For example, you might keep track of the number of people using the chairs and also compare satisfaction with these chairs to the satisfaction survey you conducted earlier. For the reading group, you might count the number of participants, interview the leader and survey the students.

References:

Include a list of references in Chicago author-date style.

Appendices

If you create any original materials for your proposal, such as handouts or fliers, you might consider including them as an appendix. In addition, the questions and results from surveys you've designed would go in this section as well.