Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) at Mount Holyoke College: 
Purpose, Guidelines and Resources

Program Purpose

Mount Holyoke seeks to “prepare the next generation of women leaders for life, profession, and service through purposeful engagement with the world.” CGI U is an opportunity for students to engage with the world in ways that are impactful, ethical, and sustainable, and to develop skills in leadership and innovation. Under CGI U, students are invited to address global challenges (in the fields of education, environment/climate change, human rights/peacebuilding, poverty alleviation, and public health) – whether experienced by communities locally or internationally, or on the Mount Holyoke campus.

Program Guidelines and Resources

1. Mount Holyoke urges students to ground CGI U project proposals in thorough analysis, building on (a) academic coursework as well as (b) close knowledge of a community and its context.
   a. Academic coursework provides an understanding of mechanisms for social change, the complexity of global challenges, and the structures that enable and constrain both novel and traditional approaches to change. Students considering projects related to poverty alleviation may want to consider coursework in the Development Studies Nexus, for public health they may want to look to the 5 College Program in Culture, Health and Science, and so forth. Community Based Learning (CBL) courses include theory and application.
   b. If a student proposes a project outside of her home community, she should have an understanding of that community and its stakeholders through a CBL fellowship, study abroad, a research project or internship, or other sustained engagement.

2. Mount Holyoke makes available a range of resources to help students develop skills in social innovation and entrepreneurship, including:
   • The Entrepreneurship Coordinator;  
   • The Non-Profit Organizations Nexus and courses in entrepreneurship;
   • Internships with social entrepreneurs and enterprises (including Under the Mango Tree, Kakute, Kopernik, Sesame School, etc.) funded by Lynk/UAF;
   • Opportunities to develop and test ideas through competitions (Pitch, Draper, Grinspoon); and
   • The MHC Entrepreneurship Club.

3. CGI U asks students to develop project proposals (“Commitments to Action”) that meet the criteria of newness, specificity, and measurability. MHC asks that you simultaneously think about the sustainability of your project and partnerships that will ensure its appropriateness and impact.

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1 Mount Holyoke Strategic Plan 2011-2016.
In order to receive Mount Holyoke seed funding, you must meet all 5 criteria. Applications for MHC seed funding must include a sustainability and partnership summary (described below).

MHC believes that social innovation projects should strive for sustainability – particularly in terms of project impact and sustained commitment to community, but also ecological. Please describe your goals in this regard and specific steps you will take to ensure sustainability. Even if the implementation phase of your project will be time limited, the committee would like to see evidence of your intention to effect long-term impacts. The review committee also believes that partnerships (with community members, relevant organizations, and/or other social innovators) will be critical for your success. Change is a collaborative effort, requiring the participation of many. Your summary should name your Commitment partners, briefly describe their respective roles, and the current status of the partnership (e.g., prospective, discussions begun, collaboration plan solidified). Where possible, we would like you to provide letters of prospective support from project partners. (Please see below for appropriately handling communications with prospective partners.)

4. CGI U asks students to make a “Commitment to Action.” They should be prepared to make that commitment whether or not they receive financial resources. While MHC students have sometime secured funding through CGI U and MHC seed funding mechanisms, this is not guaranteed. Therefore, communications and relationships with (prospective) partners should be framed carefully. Prospective partners must be informed that funding is not guaranteed before they are asked to invest time in planning, writing letters of support, or dedicating their own – often scarce – resources. (Some partners, who have competed for grant or start-up funding before may understand this uncertainty; but students should not take this for granted.) Students might consider developing a primarily plan for action that can be carried out without funding, and a second enhanced (or operational) plan that can be carried out in the event funding is secured.

5. Only first years, sophomores, and juniors will be eligible for seed funding and for funding from MHC for attending the CGI U convening at UC Berkeley. Mount Holyoke is investing in students who are prepared to tackle project implementation full time during the summer following the CGI U convening. Bringing experience and ideas back to campus in the fall also has benefits for the MHC community. (Seniors are graduating and typically beginning full time employment so are not in a position to carry commitments forward in these ways.).

6. Students who have received funding from MHC for CGI U previously are not guaranteed subsequent funding. Resources are limited and first priority will be to fund students who have not before had the opportunity to participate in CGI U.

If students have questions about any of the above points, they are welcome to contact Kirk Lange in the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives via email (klange@mtholyoke.edu) or phone (x2072).