

## MHC Social Innovation Initiative (SI<sup>2</sup>) for 2020

### The Opportunity

Mount Holyoke College seeks to “prepare the next generation of women leaders for life, profession, and service through purposeful engagement with the world.”<sup>1</sup> The Social Innovation Initiative (SI<sup>2</sup>) 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 SI<sup>2</sup>, 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.

### Funding Challenge

The SI<sup>2</sup> Seed Funding Challenge provides students an opportunity to advance an innovation project with catalytic funding for project planning activities. In summer 2020 students may compete for \$1000 Planning Grants for early stage projects or strongly conceived project concepts. Funds may be used for project activities and materials only.

**Important Note:** SI<sup>2</sup> adheres to prevailing Mount Holyoke policies regarding health and safety. Therefore, only *online* projects will receive funding in summer 2020. Planning proposals may seek support for projects that will ultimately be implemented online, and/or project development activities (e.g., research, strategic/business planning, partnership development, grant writing, prototype development, etc) that can be accomplished online.

### Key Dates for 2020

Draft Proposal:	5/29/2020 @ 11:59pm to <a href="mailto:klange@mtholyoke.edu">klange@mtholyoke.edu</a>
Application Deadline:	6/10/2020 @ 11:59pm to <a href="mailto:klange@mtholyoke.edu">klange@mtholyoke.edu</a>
Announcement of Winning Projects:	Week of June 15 <sup>th</sup> 2020

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<sup>1</sup> Mount Holyoke Strategic Plan 2011-2016.

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## How to Apply

Please refer to submission dates above. Required proposal components include: (1) project proposal; (2) budget (maximum one page;) and (3) statement of sustainability and partnerships. Please see **Attachment I** below for a proposal template.

## Program Guidelines and Resources

### *1. Foundation for Successful Proposals*

Mount Holyoke urges students to ground SI<sup>2</sup> 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. EOS coursework is appropriate to multiple themes. 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. MHC Resources for Social Innovation*

Mount Holyoke makes available a range of resources to help students develop skills in social innovation and entrepreneurship, including:

- The Entrepreneurship Coordinator;
- The Entrepreneurship, Organizations and Society (EOS) Minor and courses in entrepreneurship;
- Internships with social entrepreneurs and enterprises (including Under the Mango Tree, Aktivera, Nkwa Foundation, Kopernik, etc.) funded by Lynk/UAF;
- Opportunities to develop and test ideas through competitions (Pitch, Draper, Grinspoon); and
- The MHC Entrepreneurship Club.

### *3. Criteria for Funding*

SI<sup>2</sup> asks students to develop project proposals that meet criteria of impact, sustainability, and partnerships that to ensure impact and appropriateness.

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In order to receive Mount Holyoke seed funding, you must meet all 3 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 project 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 partners. (Please see below for appropriately handling communications with prospective partners.)

### ***4. Commitment to Partners***

SI<sup>2</sup> asks students to make a commitment to their projects whether or not they receive financial resources. While MHC students have often secured funding through 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. Funding Eligibility***

First years, sophomores, and juniors are eligible for SI<sup>2</sup> planning grants in 2020. (Mount Holyoke is committed to investing in students who are prepared to develop their projects over time. Additionally, bringing experience and ideas back to campus in the fall also has benefits for the MHC community. Therefore, seniors are not eligible for planning awards.)

Resources are limited and first priority will be to fund students who have not before had access to resources that might advance their social change projects.

### ***For More Information***

If students have questions about any of the above points, they are welcome to contact Rick Feldman, Entrepreneurship Coordinator and Visiting Lecturer in Economics ([feldman@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:feldman@mtholyoke.edu)) or Kirk Lange in the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives ([klange@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:klange@mtholyoke.edu)).

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## Attachment 1: Proposal Template

1. **Project name:**
2. **Project location (while online, please note where you and any partners are based) :**
3. **Time commitment for project activities in 2020\*:**
4. **Description of need or opportunity** (in one or more of these fields: education, environment/climate change, human rights/peacebuilding, poverty alleviation, and public health):
5. **Intended impact:**
6. **Specific activities to be carried out, with timeline:**
7. **Concrete measures of impact/project development for summer 2020:**
8. **Statement of sustainability:**
9. **Statement of partnership:**
10. **Budget\*\*:**

\*Note: funded students will sign an award letter and learning agreement before receiving funds from MHC.

\*\*Budget guidance will be supplied at the Information Sessions; Rick Feldman can provide specific guidance.