George & Carol Bauer Leaders Academy
Leadership Curriculum Initiative Grants: Faculty Recipients

About the grants

Bauer Leaders Academy grant recipients develop a new course, or add material to an existing one, that helps students think critically about purpose and leadership. Funding comes in partnership with the Bauer Leadership Center at Olin Business School: up to $2,500, with an optional second year of funding. Faculty from any discipline and any WashU School may apply.

Grant recipients

Bauer Leaders Academy in partnership with Bauer Leadership Center has funded twenty-three courses across three cohorts.

2026–2027

Faculty	School	Course	Brief description
Theresa Anasti	Brown School	Management and Leadership of Organizations (SWLN 6000)	Students free-write on what leadership means at the start and end of the semester, moving from a list of traits toward leadership shaped by context, relationships and lived experience. End-of-semester feedback measures how relevant the course is to their careers and how prepared they feel for ethical challenges in social work.
Dennis Chang	School of Medicine	Gateway Curriculum Threads (M81-400)	Medical students build relational leadership skills, including authenticity, voice, help-seeking, listening and power-aware collaboration, across the three phases of the Gateway curriculum. Validated surveys and reflective prompts at the start, after each phase and at the end of the course measure growth in their confidence and practice in clinical and team settings.
Cal Halvorsen	Brown School	Social Work Practice with Organizations & Communities (SWFN 5006)	Students take on leadership through community-based research projects, with new course content on theories of change, logic models, strategic planning and advocacy. Beginning- and end-of-semester assessments of students' comfort in leadership roles and familiarity with these skills, along with feedback from community partners, measures growth.
Meghann Pytka	McKelvey School of Engineering	Introduction to Engineering Entrepreneurship (ENGR.3290.01)	Engineering students develop purpose-driven leadership and an entrepreneurial mindset through team projects, customer discovery, prototyping and presentations to community and industry stakeholders. Growth is measured through pre/post leadership assessments, ABET teamwork rubrics, peer evaluations, guided reflections and stakeholder feedback.
Alison Rico	Brown School	Leadership in Mental Health	Students build core leadership competencies in strategic decision-making, advocacy and trauma-informed practice, growing their confidence to shape organizational culture, address workforce burnout and lead equitable mental health initiatives. Impact is measured through reflections, activities and pre/post evaluations organized around the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model: reaction, learning, behavior and results.

2025–2026

Faculty	School	Course	Brief description
LaVeasey Carter	McKelvey School of Engineering	First Year Foundations for Engineers (ENGR 120)	To ease the stress and anxiety that often rise in students' first year, first-year engineers begin each weekly small-group meeting with reflective and gratitude journaling, starting from the purpose statement they wrote at orientation. Student leaders from campus organizations also host leadership roundtables during the semester, and pre/post surveys will measure whether students keep journaling after the course ends.
Zachariah Ezer	Arts & Sciences	Introduction to Playwriting (L15 Drama 351)	Students learn the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process, a method for giving and receiving feedback in which the artist guides which questions and comments are useful. Success shows when students take full control of the room as "artist" and feel confident saying "no," even to their instructor.
Lisa Gilbert	Arts & Sciences	Capstone Seminar in Educational Studies (EDUC 4999)	The required capstone for most Educational Studies majors adds pre- and post-surveys on students' view of themselves as changemakers in education, plus regular leadership reflections. A final project brings together students' experiences meeting educational leaders and completing a service-learning project at a school or education nonprofit.
Zhao Ma	Arts & Sciences	US-China Relations from Conflict to Engagement, 1949–2016 (EALC 3600)	Students trace U.S.–China relations from the Communist revolution and the Cold War through diplomatic normalization and economic engagement, examining how these shifts shaped domestic politics, regional stability and global affairs.
Heather McPherson	Arts & Sciences	Modern Humor Writing (L13 305)	Students reflect on the purpose of humor writing, from a pre-semester reflection through analyses of the intention and impact of each piece they workshop, recognizing that what they write can help or harm. At the end of the semester, they draw on all their reflections to write a personal "mission statement" for how they will create and consume humor.
Staci Thomas	Olin Business School	Management Communication (B53 MGT 201)	Student teams use strengths-based leadership in rotating leadership roles while building solutions for corporate clients, with client feedback, peer evaluations, team reflection reports and digital portfolios measuring how well they apply it. Pre- and post-course surveys, developed with the Bauer Leaders Academy, will track growth in students' leadership confidence, self-awareness and capability.

2024–2025

Faculty	School	Course	Brief description
Billy Acree and Betsy Sinclair	Arts & Sciences	The Stories that Win (L32/L38 Span 3008)	Students use computational text analysis to study the structure and content of origin stories, from politicians, CEOs and university presidents to iconic brands, small towns and nations. Reflecting on leadership styles and their effectiveness is a crucial part of the course.
Amy Gais	Arts & Sciences	Freedom and Resistance in African American Political Thought (L32 Pol Sci 3326)	Success will be measured through a custom leadership question added to the university course evaluation and student self-assessments at the start and end of the semester, showing how students' views of leaders in American history change over the course. In the final self-assessment, students also reflect on their own leadership in their communities, connecting course material to their place in the world.
Jennifer Harping	Brown School	Beyond Boundaries Seminar	The required first-year seminar of the Beyond Boundaries program builds values-based leadership through reflections, case studies, group projects and a two-part values assignment, all assessed with a rubric based on the WashU Model of leadership. The same rubric follows students through the program's later years, including an end-of-second-year assessment and an optional interdisciplinary capstone.
Elizabeth Hunter	Arts & Sciences	Immersive Story Studio (L15 Drama 390)	Students complete Wielkiewicz's Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (LABS), a short 28-item survey on hierarchical versus ecological models of leadership, on the first and last days of class. The scale suits students with or without leadership experience, which makes it a good fit for a course open to first-year and graduate students alike.
Steve Malter	Olin Business School	Small Business Initiative (B35 MGT 401S)	Faculty-led discussions on the purpose of the course lead students to write down and discuss their own purpose with their teams. A final reflection asks students to evaluate that purpose and how it maps to their academic and professional goals.
Erin McGlothlin	Arts & Sciences	Ampersand: Representation of the Holocaust and Literature in Film (L61 FYP 2851)	The course and its two-week study trip to Germany and Poland deepen students' ethical reflection on the Holocaust and on the dilemmas today's readers, viewers and visitors face, such as viewing images of suffering or visiting memorial sites as tourists. Students develop their own ethical principles for contemporary situations, shown through weekly worksheets, a final reflection project and blog entries during the trip.
Trevor Sangrey	Arts & Sciences	Ampersand: Bed Time: Knowing the World Through Objects (L81 EALC 1200)	Team-taught with Zhao Ma and Yamile Ferreira, this year-long course has first-year and graduate students investigate and restore an antique Chinese wedding bed, exploring intimacy, health, ethics and cultural exchange across East Asian, Euro-American and Latin American perspectives. First-year students build leadership and teamwork skills by curating a public museum exhibition, mentored by graduate students who develop their own toolkit for leading and teaching.
Anthony Smith	Arts & Sciences	Ampersand: The Biology of Cancer Part I (L41 BIOL 144)	Student impact will be measured through a competency self-assessment guide, based on AAMC and ACHE frameworks, that students update throughout the semester, a "vocational meter" tracking their readiness and confidence in a healthcare path, and course evaluations, surveys, and four years of advising that follows them through their post-graduate plans. Introduced in a first-year Ampersand program with strong pre-health interest, this competency-based approach gives new students a practical framework for connecting classroom learning to future healthcare careers that they can carry throughout their time at WashU.

Faculty	School	Course	Brief description
Abram Van Engen (English) and Peter Boumgarden (Olin)	Arts & Sciences and Olin Business School (co-taught)	Beyond Boundaries: Markets and Morality (I60 Beyond 161)	Students explore purpose, both in the novel and in their own lives, through three weeks of discussion on A Gentleman in Moscow. The quality of their papers and their engagement with these themes will show how well the assignments work.
Grace Waitman	Arts & Sciences	College Writing 1: Dreams and Nightmares (L59 CWP 113)	Students write a narrative about themselves as writers and revise it through reflections over the semester, exploring how self-beliefs shape their decisions, actions and growth. A pre- and post-test of their beliefs about writing, self-efficacy and growth mindset, plus a final reflection paper, will measure how those beliefs change.
Cheryl Wassenaar Savage	Sam Fox School	Capstone II (F10 Art 462)	Students map their interests, strengths and values, then write and present a Creative Life Manifesto describing their purpose as artists, present and future. In its second year, the module moved into a new Advanced Art Seminar for BA and second-major Studio Art students, culminating in a public exhibition
Elizabeth Windle	Arts & Sciences	Argumentation (L13 Writing 312)	The final proposal assignment asks students to articulate their own sense of the purpose of higher education. Its impact will be measured through a custom course evaluation question, a peer evaluation of each student's proposal, and feedback from a visiting faculty member who attends the presentations.