

# Teaching Circles Initiative – 2026-2027

## Call for Proposals – DUE May 1, 2026



The Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence (CTLE) calls for proposals from UHD faculty (tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure track, and adjunct) members who are interested in forming a CTLE Teaching Circle (TC) for the 2026-27 academic year.

### Teaching Circles Defined:

The goal of a TC is to bring together a group of instructors to explore a topic area or theme as it relates to best practices in teaching and learning. This goal is achieved by providing a supportive community in which members can experiment with new approaches to teaching and learning. A teaching circle will optimally consist of 3-5 members. All TCs will be paired with a larger community of individuals with a common goal or topic. The topic groups this year are as follows:

### Topic Groups:

- 1. Online Teaching Design & Delivery:** Teaching Circles in this group will focus on implementing and evaluating specific evidence-based online teaching and course design strategies. These might be strategies for effective online group work, utilizing instructional video, encouraging academic integrity, or creating an intuitive and well-organized course design. A review of the [Quality Matters Rubric](#) and the workshop topics offered by the [Online Learning Consortium](#) is a good way to identify other possible circle ideas in this topic group.
- 2. AI-Enhanced Teaching & Learning:** Teaching Circles in this topic group will explore how generative AI and related tools can be thoughtfully integrated into teaching and learning. Circles might focus on designing AI-supported assignments, developing guidelines for ethical and transparent AI use, or using AI to support feedback, tutoring, or content creation. Faculty may also investigate how AI is reshaping disciplinary practices and student learning expectations, as well as how to design assessments that emphasize critical thinking, originality, and process. Whether exploring AI as a teaching partner or as a subject of inquiry, we welcome innovative and practical approaches that support student learning in an AI-influenced academic environment.
- 3. Deliberative Dialogue & Civil Discourse:** Teaching Circles in this topic group will focus on fostering meaningful, respectful dialogue in the classroom, particularly around complex, controversial, or multifaceted issues. Circles might explore strategies for structuring deliberative dialogue, facilitating inclusive discussions, or helping students engage with diverse perspectives in constructive ways. Faculty may also examine how to design assignments and learning experiences that promote critical thinking, empathy, and evidence-based reasoning. Whether integrating dialogue into a single course or developing broader approaches to civic engagement and discourse, we welcome ideas that support thoughtful and productive classroom conversations.
- 4. Career-Connected Learning & Transferable Skills:** Teaching Circles in this topic group will focus on designing learning experiences that help students develop and articulate transferable skills such as communication, decision-making, professionalism, and technology use. Circles might explore ways to integrate real-world applications, project-based learning, internships, or industry-informed assignments into their courses. Faculty may also investigate strategies for helping students recognize and communicate their skills through reflection, ePortfolios, or micro-credentials. We welcome approaches that connect course learning to career readiness and long-term student success.
- 5. Innovative Course Design:** Teaching Circles in this topic group will develop, implement, and/or assess best practices and innovation in course design that support improved student engagement, motivation, and learning. These efforts might provide a foundation on which to organize a larger scale course redesign project, grant proposal, or scholarly publication. **TCs in this group should focus on integration of evidence-based teaching strategies into specific target courses to address specific challenges.**

**Benefits of Participating:** Each TC member will have the opportunity to experiment with new teaching and learning strategies and interact with colleagues who share an interest in a specific pedagogical question or issue. These TCs will be an opportunity to share best practices, collaborate within and across disciplines, network with colleagues, and possibly publish findings. In addition, active TCs will also have access to CTLE resources and funding for faculty stipends, and other TC related purposes such as attending a webinar, purchasing materials, cost for a QM course review, etc.

### **Responsibilities of TC Members:**

- Prepare for, attend, and actively participate in all TC meetings.
- Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a teaching strategy related to the Teaching Circle topic.
- As part of the final report due June 30, 2027, submit an individual deliverable such as a teaching activity description, peer observation approach, revised course syllabus, etc.
- Submit a reflection of their participation in the TCs and respond to a CTLE survey.

### **Responsibilities of the TC:**

- Using the approaches and tools described in your TC proposal, evaluate the effectiveness of a given teaching and learning strategy related to the TC topic in terms of student outcomes (e.g. learning, engagement, academic performance, retention, etc.).
- Facilitate or contribute to a discussion of TC specific tasks with the larger community of individuals associated with a specific topic group during monthly gatherings.
- Submit a preliminary report by March 1, 2027 on the results/artifacts from circle activities.
- Share their work with a larger audience, either on the UHD campus or at an external forum.
- Submit a final report by June 30, 2027 including the collective work of the individual circle members.

### **Responsibilities of the CTLE:**

- Provide and host workshops and training related to main TC topic groups.
- Provide resources and meeting space for TC activities.
- Provide funding for requested TC related training, materials, and professional development.
- List active circles on the CTLE website and highlight TC accomplishments.

### **Important Dates**

**Friday, May 1, 2026 at 11:59 pm: Deadline for proposals**

First Week of September 2026: Official TC meetings begin

March 1, 2027: Preliminary TC report due

June 30, 2027: Final TC report due

### **Proposal Submission Process:**

**Eligibility:** Any full-time or part-time instructor at the University of Houston-Downtown may participate. **If you are interested in renewing funding for an active teaching circle, it is important that your proposal address the results of the previous year and outline new goals or a rationale for continued focus on previous goals.**

**Collaborative Proposal:** Complete by recruiting a group of 3-5 colleagues and proposing the formation of a TC that fits within one of the topic groups described above. A team lead should be designated. Additional individuals can be added but it is recommended that teaching circles not get too large (less than 8-10). **Proposals should outline specific goals/tasks, deliverables, evaluation plan, and a detailed budget, as outlined below and on the proposal web form.**

**Budget:** The group application form includes a template budget that can be modified. The standard template includes a \$500 stipend for five TC members plus \$137.50 each for associated fringe benefits (27.5% of stipend) plus \$1,000 for TC related expenses. Applicants can modify this budget for their purposes while keeping the total amount less than or equal to \$4,000. **Stipend amounts** can be reduced or increased but **should not exceed \$750/year for team leads and \$500/year for team members.**

**Signatures:** All applications must be accompanied by a signature page with the signatures of all TC members, and the signatures of the department chair and dean for the college in which the team lead resides.

# Teaching Circles Initiative

## PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDE – 2026-27



**Deadline:** *Friday, May 1, 2026, at 11:59 pm*

**Proposal Web Form:** <https://forms.fillout.com/t/rpx38mXjbVus>

Use the web form link above to complete your proposal submission. In addition to providing some basic information about the proposed circle, you will also be required to upload the three documents outlined below. Templates for each are available at the links below or directly in the web form.

- 1. Proposal Narrative:** See the prompts for the narrative below and on the application web form. The separate template for the narrative can be downloaded here: [Narrative Template](#)
  - Provide a description of the proposed teaching circle, including a summary of teaching circle goals, activities, and deliverables. If this is a renewal of a previous circle, include the title of the previous circle (or note that the title is the same), and briefly describe what was accomplished previously and how this proposal builds on that work.
  - Describe your circle's plan to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a given teaching and learning strategy related to the Teaching Circle topic. What courses or student groups will be targeted? What are the expected student outcomes? How will these be measured?
  - Designate a team lead and define the responsibilities of individual members. (i.e. Which individual(s) will facilitate meetings and goal completion and how will this be done? This may be one or two individuals or the entire group.) Describe individual and group artifacts or deliverables that will be completed as a result of circle activities. Each member should be given a specific task or deliverable to submit with the final report.
  - Create a timeline outlining the completion of proposed tasks or goals.
  - Budget narrative. Organize this section by budget line item, providing justification for each expenditure. **NOTE:** Food purchases for faculty meetings are not an allowable expense for this fund source. Other exclusions may apply. Please email [ctle@uhd.edu](mailto:ctle@uhd.edu) with any questions about allowable expenses.
- 2. Budget Spreadsheet:** Download the [Budget Template](#) to create and attach a budget for your teaching circle activities. Justification or rationale for expenses should be included in the budget narrative section of the proposal narrative below.
- 3. Signature Page:** The completed [Signature Page](#) should be scanned and submitted as an attachment with the application package. Please obtain signatures well in advance of the proposal due date.