



Coalition of
Urban Serving Universities

**The APLU/USU Innovation Challenge Pitch at the APLU Annual
Student Success 3.0: Innovations in Student Advising**

*Supported by (in alphabetical order) Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Great Lakes Higher
Education Guaranty Corporation and Lumina Foundation*

Request for Proposals – Due: September 16, 2015

The Challenge

Higher education is in a state of flux. Public research universities must find ways to contain costs while delivering high quality education to an expanded and more socially and economically diversified student body. Higher proportions of non-traditional students, including adult learners, parents, and those working full-time challenge the traditional teaching and management procedures of universities. While there is much work to be done, the evidence points to a growing number of innovations that are increasing student success and eliminating the achievement gap. Data-driven proactive advising is one of the most effective of these innovations and a fundamental infrastructure to ensure student success. Providing reliable and timely guidance to keep each student on a path to successful completion of a degree is particularly important to first-generation learners.

Is your institution improving advising or leveraging your advising system to make a visible leap in student progress? Do some general measures exist that indicate your innovation will advance student success? Are you hoping to scale an advising-related pilot approach that has proven impact but currently only at a small size or for a narrow deployment (e.g. a single department)?

The Innovation Pitch

At the APLU annual meeting, APLU/USU will host a fun and engaging session in which six institutions, chosen through a competitive process described below, will pitch their innovative approach to student advising to an independent panel of judges to try and win up to \$165,000 to further scale up their efforts. Although the session is competitive, we hope that it will be enjoyable and stimulate innovate thinking across USU and APLU. The session is supported by (in alphabetical order) Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation and Lumina Foundation

The Innovation Pitch Challenge session is based on the television show Shark Tank ([click here to watch the trailer](#)). In the show, a set of billionaire “sharks” listen to pitches from entrepreneurs and inventors, and decide which concepts to support.

Six participants will present a 5 minute "pitch" of their approach to a panel of seven independent judges from philanthropy, higher education and subject matters experts. **All pitchers will be required to attend a one day workshop on October 20, 2015 in Washington, DC (travel expenses are covered)** to help them perfect the art of their pitch as part of the process. Judging criteria includes:

- Clear and easy to understand
- Has potential to advance the success of non-traditional, disadvantaged and/or underrepresented students at levels of scale and close the achievement gap
- Can show general metrics of success for the innovation and have a plan for continued measurement of success for (e.g. identify outcomes related to student success that would be anticipated as a result of implementing/scaling the innovation)
- Potential for mobilizing change at an institutional level, ideally at a regional one (or at the level of the higher education sector) with clear goals for scaling the innovation
- Strong likelihood of achieving the stated goal within a specified time period
- Adaptable to other institutional contexts
- Collaborative both across campus and between campus and community
- Significant (addresses a clear need) with the potential for broad impact/ability to scale
- Leadership engagement

At the end of the session, judges will select up to three participants to receive funding to advance their innovative practice. **The first prize is a guaranteed \$100,000.** The judges will have an additional \$60,000 to allocate at their discretion. The audience will also have the opportunity to vote for their favorite. The winning institution from the audience vote will receive \$5,000.

We use the U.S. Department of Education's definition of innovation as a "process, product, strategy or practice that improves (or is expected to improve) significantly upon the outcomes reached with the status quo options and that can ultimately reach widespread effective usage." Innovations in advising refers to new approaches, strategies, policies, processes, projects or practices that either advance the current advising approach or were leveraged by the advising system to advance student success. They can employ tech or non-tech approaches. Some examples of innovations might be, but are not limited to, activities such as:

- New ways of engaging or organizing administrators, advisors and/or faculty
- New ways of engaging, monitoring and/or connecting to students or connecting/engaging students with each other
- Education, business or community partnerships created to advance or leverage its potential
- Integration of academic, co-curricular, financial and/or career advising
- Integration of new or existing services to take them to a higher level
- Shows how next generation advising will evolve
- New tools for student support that are generated by the advising system
- New tools to empower student self-direction
- Use of data, technology or other tactics to create/further degree acceleration strategies

How to Apply

Pitchers will be selected through a competitive process. **Step one is to submit a proposal to Shari Garmise (sgarmise@aplu.org) at APLU/USU by September 16, 2015.** The proposal must answer the questions listed below in the proposal narrative and provide the support materials also detailed below.

A conference call will be held on September 4, 2015 at 3:00 pm EDT to go over expectations and answer any questions. Call in information is:

Dial-in number: (805) 399-1000

Participant access code: 451947

To be considered, submitting universities must first meet the following criteria:

- Have an existing data-driven proactive advising system in place for a minimum of a year, with some type of alert systems in place, which can be student or advisor directed.
- Uses data collaboratively across multiple offices.
- The innovation needs to be in an experimental or pilot stage, or very recently implemented (within the past 6 months). If experimental, then general measures of success must be available for the innovation (i.e. student success-related outcomes that would be anticipated as a result of implementing/scaling the innovation). If piloted, then some metrics of the outcomes from the pilot that demonstrates success. The innovation can be a planned phase two of an existing implementation.
- It must be a new idea or a significant variation on another approach. It cannot be replicated from another university.

Proposal Narrative

- 1) Maximum five pages
- 2) Briefly describe your advising system (address submission criteria above, maximum one paragraph)
- 3) Describe the practice that will be pitched
 - a. How does the practice fit into the university's long-term student success vision?
 - b. Assess the potential for the practice to advance the success of non-traditional, disadvantaged and/or underrepresented students and close the achievement gap.
 - c. What's its current status (pilot, informal activity) on your campus and what are the plans to scale it? If you have not devised a plan for scaling, then what do you believe it would take to scale?
 - d. What evidence is available that indicates that this practice will be successful (summarize evidence here, add any detailed tables to the appendix). How will you measure success and evaluate the practice?
 - e. Who manages or will manage the practice, and what collaborations (on-campus and with the community) are in place or will be needed for your practice to be successful?

- f. What role is university leadership taking or will need to take to ensure the success of your effort?
 - g. How adaptable will this practice be to other places?
 - h. What institutional challenges have been overcome or will need to be overcome to ensure the success of your effort?
- 4) Who will make the pitch? (*Note: The pitcher must be available to attend the October 20 pitch training session in Washington, DC – expenses covered*).

Support Materials (Appendix-maximum 10 pages)

- 1) Letter from the President/Chancellor indicating support for the practice and how the practice fits into the leader's vision for student success.
- 2) Success metrics. The evidence available demonstrating effectiveness of the practice. This does not have to be overwhelming (e.g. piloted with X students, or in the summer session, or one classroom), but there must be some general measure of effectiveness that could be anticipated as a result of implementation or scaling. Numbers can be supported by strong theory and/or case narratives.
- 3) Evidence of collaboration (letters of support, a past MOU, team materials) anything that shows this will not be an isolated program, centered in a single department, office or classroom.

An advisory committee including association, higher education and relevant experts will evaluate the proposals and select six pitchers.

Once selected, **pitchers are required to attend a full day pitch training workshop on October 20, 2015 in Washington DC (travel expenses are covered)**. The pitch challenge will take place on Tuesday, November 17 from 9:00 to 11:30, the closing plenary session at the APLU annual meeting in Indianapolis (travel and expenses for this are **not** covered). No other session at the annual meeting will take place at the time of the competition, which will also be live-streamed. The participants will make their pitch to seven judges, including one judge from each sponsoring foundation and four others from higher education institutions and other relevant experts.

Pitch Training (Required)

The six pitchers are required to attend a one (1) full-day workshop where they will receive training on what goes into a 5-minute talk, including video examples, formats and other considerations specific to Shark Tank-style pitches. During the training, they will develop individual plans for their individual pitches and will also do a brief video practice, receive feedback on delivery, and detailed feedback and assistance in developing individual pitches. Participants will be able to learn about visual and verbal aspects of their pitch, and best practices for both. They will also receive tips on addressing a large audience effectively, and on how to plan their pitch for both in-person delivery and for video (since it will be live-streamed).

Speakers also will be briefed on how the 1:1 coaching process will work going forward. *NOTE: Participants will hear about one another's plans for the pitch, but won't hear their completed pitches during this session.*

After the training, each pitch participant will have two hours available with the coach by phone and/or email to perfect their individual pitch.

Winner Obligations

Pitch prize(s) must be invested in the innovation pitched. Conditions for this investment (e.g. any restrictions on funding use) will be spelled out in an agreement with APLU. Winners will also be required to provide a report in May, 2016 detailing how the money was used and the status of the project.