

## REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

### PROGRAM FOR JUNIOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The **International Higher Education Support Program (HESP)** promotes the advancement of higher education within the humanities and social sciences throughout the region of Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union and Mongolia.

The **HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching (ReSET)** aims to develop and support teaching excellence at the undergraduate university level. The program establishes a framework for the long-term regional and international collaboration in areas important to the region's undergraduate humanities and social sciences curricula. ReSET projects respond to diverse subjects, fields and regional needs and share an approach based on:

- developing reflexive scholarly and innovative undergraduate teaching;
- critical rethinking of the subject, drawing on the most current international scholarship;
- a collaborative structure that fosters peer exchange and learning among the regional and international faculty.

Rooted in the concept of continuous development and self-renewal of university academics, ReSET creates opportunities for qualified and dedicated regional and international faculty to make a substantial contribution to the revision and advancement of teaching and learning in their subjects and fosters their leadership in the process of educational change in the region.

### PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AND ACTIVITIES

ReSET projects bring together groups of **junior faculty participants from the region** and international teams of **resource faculty**; all participating academics have current teaching positions at the **university degree programs in the humanities and social sciences**. Resource faculty are recruited for their qualities as “master teachers,” expertise on the subject and involvement in international scholarship. Long-term commitment of the participants and core resource faculty to the projects is essential.

The program activities focus on **development and practice of scholarly teaching through critical and creative inquiry into the state of the art of the scholarship and curricula** in the subject areas of particular importance to the undergraduate learning. Participants and resource faculty engage as academic peers in a continuous program which includes regular seminar sessions (typically summer sessions of 2-3 weeks in length, and shorter intensive and small group meetings in the interim) and inter-session project activities tailored to the project's agenda and the needs and capacities of the involved colleagues.

ReSET projects inspire and enable **immediate connection between the work within the project group and the teaching practice of the project participants** and establish a framework for active academic collaboration, peer review and feedback among the participants and resource faculty.

**ReSET projects originate within the region's university community** and actively enlist its support; all ReSET-funded activities are hosted in the region. A project is, as a rule, developed by an international team of resource faculty and project directors with support of a designated host academic institution in the region. The project participants are actively involved in the planning and direction of the project as it proceeds past the initial stage.

**ReSET SEMINARS PROJECTS** foster the development of scholarly teaching in subject areas central to the undergraduate curricula through generating **critical rethinking of the foundation and current scholarship and of the state of teaching and curricula** in the subject in the region. The ReSET Seminar projects

- work to establish and **critique the theoretical and methodological grounding of the subject through the review of key concepts, texts and approaches** and challenge the existing orthodoxies in the academic subjects locally, regionally and internationally;
- bring about change in undergraduate classroom through **creative revision of teaching in light of the most progressive scholarship and approaches to learning**, and enhancing the capacities for critical synthesis and inquiry of faculty and students;
- create collaborative teams of 25-30 junior faculty participants from the region and international resource faculty, who engage in intensive learning and debate on the subject matter, reflection on teaching philosophies and experiences and practical experimentation with the outcomes of project work in the undergraduate classroom.

HESP offers support for the ReSET Seminars projects for up to three consecutive years. The priority is given to the projects that aim to contribute to the development of **areas of specialization** in the undergraduate curriculum in humanities and social sciences.

HESP also invites the participants, resource faculty and organizers of the **past ReSET projects committed to further, in-depth collaboration**, as well as other academics with significant experience in curriculum reform and development of teaching in the region, to contribute to the ReSET Challenges Projects.

**ReSET CHALLENGES PROJECTS** involve smaller groups of academic colleagues who, building upon their significant experiences in development of university teaching and curricula in the region, endeavor to generate change in the undergraduate education on the regional level by focusing on **particularly new or challenging subjects and curricular areas in need of substantial revision**. The projects

- work actively to advance the methodology of learning and teaching in the discipline through active international collaboration, challenging traditionalist patterns in design of curricula and application of scholarship in teaching, and active scholarly engagement;
- create venues and stimulate the debate on the issues of scholarly teaching and development of learning in the chosen subject area on a broader national, regional and international level, generate resources and methodologies for discussion and dissemination in the wider regional academic community, in effort to **maximize the impact on the level of departments, institutions and national curricula**.

The ReSET Challenges projects support flexibly structured programs of intensive interaction within the groups of 15-20 regional faculty participants and international resource faculty working as academic peers during, on average, two consecutive years.

The projects are encouraged to use English as the **working language**. The ability of the participants to work with academic resources in the English language is essential for direct access to the most current scholarship and participation in international academic debate.

## ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

The projects, as a rule, address specific topics or thematic areas rather than entire academic disciplines. Especially encouraged are proposals of projects focusing on interdisciplinary exploration of a given subject and new and critical perspectives on traditionally defined subjects and disciplines.

ReSET does not support training for non-academic professionals or engagement with the applied subjects and areas mainly oriented toward professional training, or projects focusing on training in generic teaching skills or techniques.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

HESP invites region-based academic institutions and groups of academics with demonstrated potential for and commitment to promoting teaching excellence in the humanities and social sciences in the target region to submit **Concept Proposals of multi-year ReSET projects** aiming to start in the summer of 2010 or during the 2010-11 academic year. The project organizers are encouraged to choose the format (ReSET Seminars or ReSET Challenges) and develop project designs that are most relevant to the nature and scale of issues and tasks in the development of undergraduate teaching in the targeted subject area and the capacities of local academics.

Concept Proposals must be prepared following the **Guidelines for Applicants** available from the HESP office and at [www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp). The submissions should be made electronically directly to HESP to [reset@osi.hu](mailto:reset@osi.hu) and not exceed 2,000 words in length.

## THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING THE CONCEPT PROPOSALS IS 10 SEPTEMBER 2009

Upon the academic review of the Concept Proposals by the ReSET Academic Advisory Committee, the authors of the Concept Proposals that respond to the interests and priorities of ReSET will be invited to submit full project applications. The final decisions on project funding for 2010 will be based on the review of full project applications and communicated to the applicants before 20 December 2009.

HESP's funding is commensurate with the nature, geography and length of the project activities; project organizers are encouraged to solicit cost-share contributions from other sources.

HESP staff is available for consultation on matters of program priorities and guidelines for application at the contact information below.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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