

UTSA Connect & Thrive Faculty Mini-Grant

Spring 2025

Overview

Faculty-student interactions have long been identified as a high-impact practice in higher education influencing student persistence, success, and thriving (e.g., [Schreiner, 2010](#)). In fact, in a study conducted in Spring 2023, faculty-student connections were found to be one of the greatest predictors of student thriving at UTSA. The Connect & Thrive Faculty Mini-Grant Program is designed to increase overall student-faculty engagement outside of the classroom, enhance students' sense of connection and belonging to UTSA, and develop engaging relationships among faculty and students.

Mini-Grant Process and Funding

UTSA faculty may apply for **one mini-grant of \$1000 for Spring 2025**, which will be used to fund a variety of engagement activities to include but are not limited to the following:

- Visit a local art or music exhibit.
- Purchase extra-curricular/interest area material to review and discuss.
- Meet for refreshments or a meal to discuss discipline or interest-related topics.
- Engage in an outdoor activity related to the curriculum.
- Facilitate book club/discussion on current events or topics relevant to discipline/interest area.
- Organize speaker/panel around topics relevant to your field/interests.
- Host career networking activity with alumni and/or other faculty in your discipline.
- Host a game or movie night with refreshments.
- Participate in a community-service activity.

This award is open to all UTSA faculty regardless of academic title. The award is not currently open to Teaching Assistants or Graduate Student Instructors. *Faculty who have been awarded a 2024-2025 Connect & Thrive Faculty Mini-Grant are not eligible to be awarded another grant for Spring 2025.*

Program Requirements & Deliverables

If you are awarded a mini-grant, you are agreeing to the following requirements:

- Participate in an orientation hosted by Student Success and Academic Innovation prior to engaging with students in January 2025.
- Complete a Sense of Belonging module and reflection
- Create a small group, or *familia*, of at minimum 10 students to engage in discussions or activities you plan.
- Organize and engage students in meaningful interactions, events, or activities outside of the classroom at least 2 times within the Spring 2025 semester.
- Include an itemized budget for expenses (up to \$1000).
- Collect student engagement data at each of your events or activities and share those with program leads after each event.
- Complete a provided testimonial and feedback survey to share insights into the faculty experience facilitating a familia or small group.
- Attend two events hosted by Student Success and Academic Innovation (an orientation session and an end-of-year celebration) to share your experiences and connect with colleagues leading other familias.

Please be creative when proposing ideas! Priority will be given to applications that describe intentional interactions with first- and second-year, transfer, or first-generation students.

Application Review Process

Applications will be scored on the following criteria:

- Creativity of approaches to engage students
- Demonstrated understanding of the manners in which faculty-student engagement impacts student success and retention
- Potential positive impact of proposed activities
- Clarity and feasibility of plan
- Completeness of responses

Application

To apply, [complete the Connect & Thrive Faculty Mini-Grant online application](#) by 11:59pm on **Sunday, November 17, 2024.**

Preview of questions included in the online application form:

Part I: Applicant Information

- Applicant's name, UTSA email address, college
- Class(es) you are teaching during Spring 2025
- Department chair's name and acknowledgement of approval to apply

Part II: Application Questions

1. Explain the role faculty play in student success. How can engaging interactions and activities outside of class make an impact on the lives and success of students?
2. Given the role that faculty play in student success, what is your plan to engage with students outside of the classroom? Please provide the following information for at least two planned activities you would offer this Spring 2025.
 - What is your overall goal or purpose for your activities? How will the activities foster faculty-student connections?
 - How many students do you expect to participate in each activity or overall (please specify)?
 - Activity descriptions and semester offered
3. Describe the students you will aim to engage. Priority will be given to applicants connecting with first- and second-year, transfer, or first-generation students. How will your planned engagement activities/events positively impact them?
4. Include three behavioral objectives (e.g., "Describe the impact that local art and artists may have on their communities").
 - At the conclusion of the year and after engaging in the proposed activities/events, student participants will be able to:
5. How will the mini-grant funds help support your proposed plan? Make sure to provide an itemized budget.
 - Note: Applicants will have opportunities to upload optional supporting documents in the application.

Part III: Acknowledgement of Requirements and Obligations

Questions?

Attend the optional information session on Friday, November 8, 2024, 11:00am to 12:00pm on Zoom. Register via the link on [the website](#).

For more information, please email StudentSuccess@utsa.edu.