**SYMPOSIUM PLANNING GUIDE**

**Obermann Center for Advanced Studies**

Congratulations on your award! We all look forward to working with you for the next two years.

The Obermann Center is one of the only units on campus that provides both funding and staff support for conferences. Among those services—

* Programming and scheduling advice
* Maintaining the budget
* Arranging conference rooms, reserving hotels, making travel/airline arrangements, paying honoraria, arranging catering
* Creating marketing and communications materials including a website, posters, press releases, and more
* Recruiting co-sponsors and campus and community partners
* Assisting you in drafting grant applications for other campus funding

**TWO YEARS IN ADVANCE**

**Narrative**

Write a clear, accessible, one-page narrative description of the conference topic including:

* its value to the campus and other audiences
* outcomes you anticipate,
* items (like keynote speakers) that demonstrate why you need funding (if seeking further funding)
* keynotes you hope to invite and what excites you about their work
* why you are the right people to lead this effort
* why this is the time and place for the event.

You can use this as the basis for several grant applications to leverage Obermann symposium funds and to gain programming partners.

**Outcomes**

Defining outcomes is becoming ever more critical. These might include

* Collaborating on a collection of articles or special issue of a journal
* Developing a significant web publication together
* Laying the groundwork for a deep, lasting collaboration
* Defining an emerging field—and disseminating the discoveries

**Date**

Establish a date for your event (avoid football season and religious holidays).

**Budget**

Develop a budget with us that demonstrates precisely the costs you expect to incur and the funds you hope to collect. If you are applying for other grants, award committees want to see that expenses are necessary, that their funds will be used appropriately, and that there is no evidence of “double dipping.” They also want real impact, so showing you have funding from Obermann proves your proposal has already been vetted. With our help, be sure each provider gives you a *written copy* of charges and changes. Major costs will include—

* Honoraria
* Travel and hotel for speakers
* Receptions, coffee/snacks, and meals
* Salary for Graduate Assistants
* Room costs
* Technical support

**Obermann Graduate Special Topics Class**

We hope that you will agree to lead a one-hour short course to prepare students to participate fully in the conference. (We provide extra research funds for faculty who do so.) The course needs to be on the books ~18 months in advance.

**18 MONTHS IN ADVANCE**

**Apply for additional funding** for high profile speakers, graduate research assistants, public/cultural events such as exhibitions and artists, tech and web support, and documentation. Some sources include:

* **Provost’s Ida Cordelia Beam** Apply for one or two speakers in collaboration with multiple departments—excellent way to engage diverse faculty, to extend impact of a visitor, to fund prestigious scholars or performers.
  + Due to DEOs in January—one year in advance (up to $10,000): <http://provost.uiowa.edu/ida-cordelia-beam-distinguished-visiting-professorships-program>
* **OVPR Arts & Humanities Initiative (AHI) Major Conference Grant or Major Project Grant** 
  + Deadline: Early October (up to $30,000): <http://research.uiowa.edu/internal-funding-initiatives-ifi>
* **International Programs Major Projects Award** (if appropriate topic)
  + Due in November ($12,500): <https://international.uiowa.edu/faculty/ip-funding/major-projects-awards>
* **Provost’s Global Forum** (if appropriate topic)
  + Due in February—one year in advance ($20,000) <http://international.uiowa.edu/funding/provosts-global-forum>
* **Humanities Iowa Mini Grants and Major Grants** (for events designed to appeal to non-specialist public)
  + Due in May and October (up to $20,000): <https://www.humanitiesiowa.org/grants/grant-guidelines>
* **Letters requesting co-sponsorship** to all relevant departments and units (CLAS, Grad College)
  + Be clear if you are seeking financial support or a partnership that will increase awareness of the event. If departments act as co-sponsors in any way, they should be required to publicize it to their faculty/students.

**Other Campus/Community Connections**

* **Lecture Committee**—This UI committee takes applications and suggestions on a regular basis without a set calendar, though we suggest you reach out to them as early as possible. They are interested in big name speakers who will appeal to the whole campus.
* **Hancher/Englert/FilmScene**—It’s worth asking if they would consider bringing in a major performer whose work connects with your topic (or a film) coordinated with your event. Again, as much lead time as possible.
* **Digital Scholarship & Publishing Studio**—They may have advice or resources to help document the event.

**Invite Keynote Speakers**

Invite and confirm your speakers as soon as possible. Many high-profile scholars accept only a limited number of invitations each year. In the letter of invitation (we can provide samples), state specifically:

* The amount of the honorarium you can offer (plus travel + hotel)
* The dates the speaker would need to be in Iowa City
* All activities expected of the speaker; for example, in addition to delivering a keynote lecture of 30-45 minutes, are you expecting the speaker to allow you to publish the paper, visit one or more classes, meet with a faculty seminar?
* Request for acceptance, including agreement to fulfill expectation (e.g., allow you to publish a version of the conference paper)
* Follow up with a logistics letter—we can provide this for you (hotel, travel, etc.); request for bio and headshot; title of talk; food allergies

Technically, the “contract” is between the speaker and the Center. We suggest that the Director co-sign the letters, and the correspondence be sent through or copied the Obermann Center’s Director of Operations. Please ask invited guests to respond to or copy Obermann so that we can build them into the budget for you.

**Create Preliminary Schedule for the Symposium**

* **Additional panelists**

Most symposia are organized around invited speakers. If you do wish to issue a CFP, prepare a flier to circulate at conferences and via email.

* **Reserve Spaces for Event**
* For a conference of 100-150, you’ll likely need:
  + One large room for plenaries
  + 4-6 small rooms for sessions (only if you plan multiple panels/sessions)
  + Spaces for lunches
  + Space for reception (probably first night)
  + Space for banquet (if that is part of your plan) or small dinners
  + Space for any special events
  + Consider using other interesting buildings for receptions/dinners to introduce conferees to your campus or community.
* Contact the UI library (especially Special Collections), art museum, Pentacrest museums, Hancher, etc. to see if they would like to plan related exhibits or activities.
* Be sure to check whether you'll need to pay extra fees for museum guards or janitorial service, etc.

**Communicate with Possible Campus/Community Partners**

Via a “town hall meeting” that we can help to organize, share plans for the symposium, including goals and preliminary speakers. Invite campus and community partners with a shared interest, such as libraries, non-profits, arts organizations, Gen Ed Lit, to learn about your plans and consider ways which they might coordinate events with you.

**Advertise graduate course**

**ONE YEAR IN ADVANCE**

**Reserve Space**

* **Hotel -** Obermann will reserve hotel rooms
* **Secure rooms for symposium events** - Obermann will secure agreed upon spaces.

**Seek departmental funding** (usually $100-500 and/or promise of adding to calendars and departmental promotion through newsletters, emails, etc.)

* Write letters to all departments and units requesting specific funding amounts.
  + Include "benefits" to department and its faculty and grad students.
  + Include budget with larger budget requests.
  + Be specific about how these funds will be used.
  + Include poster and call for papers.

**Invite Colleagues**

* Obermann can send a campus-wide “save the date” email.
* Send personal emails to the people you most want to attend (on and off campus).
* Don’t bombard people, but do not assume one notice will be sufficient.
* Create a FB page and/or Twitter feed to update people as you sign on major speakers.

**Website creation and management**

* Begin work on web site about a year in advance and have it ready for public viewing about 9 months in advance.
* Include:
  + Speakers’ bios
  + Schedule (which can become more specific with time)
  + Resources page—bibliography, related websites, etc.
  + About page with your mission and bios of the conveners
  + Maps – If you are using multiple venues and have many out of town guests.

**Marketing Strategy**

Obermann will assist with all aspects of marketing. What is most needed from the symposium directors are:

* Help in locating a strong image that will serve as the identity of the symposium.
* Accessible language – both an abbreviated 1-2 sentence version and a paragraph – that describes the symposium and provides a sense of why you’re doing this, who it’s for, how you’ll be covering the topic, when it’s happening, and where it takes place.
* Ideas for contacts you have on campus and beyond in the media. It is best to reach out to Iowa Public Radio, WorldCanvass, and Iowa Now at least a half year in advance.
* Student involvement – Directors have engaged their students via asking them to contribute to social media and creating video, book reviews, and other forms of responses to the core texts/themes of the conference.

**Catering**

Obermann will arrange catering. Much of this work will be done in the months prior to the symposium, but father out please indicate any ideas for special meals or locations and keep gathering information about panelist/keynote’s dietary needs.

**Tech and other Equipment**

* Budget in a tech specialist to be on hand during the conference to help set up every panel and solve panels
* Check the tech in all of your spaces. Schedule in time for a tech run through in the weeks prior.
* Make clear tech requests to all of your guests and give them a firm deadline.

**3-6 MONTHS IN ADVANCE**

Obermann Director of Operations will:

* coordinate ticket purchases with Meacham
* have all hotel rooms should reserved
* have all rooms for presentations and social events reserved
* catering ordered

Obermann communications team will:

* have website up to date, including related events that are being organized by community/campus partners
* arrange for photographer and/or videography if you want that service (factor into budget and be sure the latter feels necessary)
* have media plan in place including scheduled op-eds (usually written by symposium co-directors), advertising in local press, notified local press contacts, social media blitz, poster finalized (co-directors assist with creating list, especially of off-campus recipients)

Invitations

* invite local dignitaries—dean, VP, etc. especially someone who helped pay for the conference—to open the conference or offer a greeting at the banquet – *joint work of co-directors and Obermann Director*
* invite colleagues to serve as moderators and/or respondents - *co-directors*
* send personal email reminder to colleagues in the Midwest who might consider traveling to Iowa City - *co-directors*

Program

* Obermann will create the conference program based on the schedule. Co-directors contribute acknowledgement text. This is completed ~one month prior to the symposium.
* Obermann will send tentative program to panelists and moderators for corrections and as a reminder.
* Create “in-house” schedule that includes picking up speakers at hotel, students to assist with tech, airport times, etc. - *joint work of co-directors and Obermann Director*

**2-3 WEEKS IN ADVANCE**

* Obermann will create welcome packets and drop at hotel just before conference.
* Do you want nametags or table tents?
* Send out instructions to moderators about the format and their responsibility to keep panelists to their time.
* Send out one more request for AV if you've got the patience!
* Op-ed is ready and published.
* All-campus email notification goes out.
* Posters are hung and mailed (2-3 weeks)
* double check room reservations, AV orders, and catering
* create signs directing people to the conference site if necessary

**1 –WEEK AHEAD OF CONFERENCE**

* Obermann sends out welcoming email to visitors confirming arrival times, pick up arrangements, hotel reservation, etc.
* Co-directors plan welcome speeches—being sure to thank everyone under the sun who contributed money or services.
* Run through of the week with co-directors, Obermann, and any student assistants – use the “in-house” schedule. Consider smallest details such as:
  + How to get audience to sit toward the front
  + Who will make sure speakers have water
  + Who will keep track of time.

**At the Conference**

* Have trusted students on hand to address emergencies. Don’t try to do this yourself—you’ll be busy welcoming people and you’ll want to go to sessions too.
* Ideally, you’ll also have a tech person on site.
* Have students and others who are using social media to promote and report on the conference in real time.
* Make sure the photographer gets photos of the co-directors and invited guests.
* Get headcounts of keynote presentations or other large events, such as performances.

# Follow-up

* Cash out budgets with Obermann.
* Director of Operations collects all the funds and issue honoraria and payments.
* Write thank you notes to all the contributors, financial and volunteer.
* Reports to grants awarding offices.
* Plan de-brief meeting with Obermann staff.
* Provide summary report to Obermann including highlights, accomplishments, quotes from attendees, personal testimonials, and numbers.