



2019 NATIONAL HUMANITIES CONFERENCE

Humanities PHD and Public Humanities Working Group Recommendations from Working Group Sessions 2016–2019



Website: phdpublichumanities.com

Contacts:

Mona Frederick
mona.frederick@vanderbilt.edu

Teresa Mangum
teresa-mangum@uiowa.edu

Between 2016–19, Mona Frederick (then Director of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University) and Teresa Mangum (Professor and Director of the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Iowa) convened the Humanities PHD and Public Humanities Working Group at the annual National Humanities Conference. The conference, cosponsored by the National Humanities Alliance and the Federation of State Humanities Councils, brings together humanists from a wide range of organizations, including colleges and universities, state humanities councils, scholarly societies, and humanities funders.

At our conference sessions over the past three years, participants in our group shared our experiments with public humanities graduate education and postdoctoral fellowships. What brought us together were shared convictions. We believe that the humanities are critical to solving the challenges we face—locally and globally. We have also listened to the many graduate students who long to put the values, methods, and insights of the humanities to work in addressing those challenges.

The group discussed experiments rooted in imaginative collaborations among universities; state humanities councils; cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, and theaters; civic organizations; and nonprofit, business, and technology sectors. The programs include institutes and certificates focused on publicly engaged teaching, learning, and careers; digital humanities projects that connect graduate students with community organizations; graduate internships and externships; postdoctoral fellowships in which recent PhDs adapt their skills and knowledge as researchers to cultural sectors beyond the classroom; and more.

As the culmination of our inspiring conversations, we have collectively produced this report. The report outlines what universities and graduate programs can and should do to support students, faculty, and public partners to translate the humanities into practice as scholars, leaders, and citizens.

We warmly thank all of the wonderful people who participated in our working group as well as our extended partners in organizations such as Imagining America, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the NHA's own #HumanitiesforAll project, the Whiting Foundation, the American History Association, and the Modern Language Association. These organizations have been leaders in envisioning and supporting public engagement for humanists. We also thank the NHA and the Federation for creating inspiring, generative spaces where we can connect, imagine, and advocate for the civic potential of the humanities.

We hope you will share the report widely and use it to prompt discussion of the leadership and structures we need to support public scholars in your world.

GRADUATE STUDENT TRAINING

- Address key terms—what do we mean by “public,” “community,” and “engagement”? Who are the audiences students seek to address, and why are they appropriate experts to do so?
- Promote idea that public engagement jobs are viable options throughout graduate student career
- Strongly recommend that all students take a public *methods* seminar
- Consider certificate programs that teach publicly engaged skills and methods
- Offer funded internships—summers and yearlong opportunities
- Make it easy for students to assemble diverse mentors in addition to faculty mentors, such as alumni, off-campus partners, etc.
- Connect training in digital humanities/public-facing humanities/public engagement projects and public scholarship
- Experiment with new kinds of writing, assignments, and “dissertations”
- Create more diverse “courses”—in addition to 3-hour seminars, 1-hour skills courses, short courses that last half a semester, courses taught out in communities, courses co-taught by faculty from different areas of expertise and/or co-taught with academic staff or community partners, courses in the “practice” as well as history and theories of the humanities

SKILLS GRADUATE STUDENTS NEED TO SUCCEED

- Program development and project management
- Ability to run effective, productive, action-oriented meetings
- Pedagogy for settings in and beyond classrooms—with campus centers for teaching
- Communications and social media training
- Practices of collaborative research and programming
- Translation of specialized knowledge and skills into terms larger publics can recognize
- Multimedia “writing” skills (including short public pieces, podcasts, short videos, etc.)
- Facilitating complex conversations, including hard conversations about inequities
- Cultural competency for diverse communities—whether the diversity is based on language, ethnicity, economic status, urban/rural differences, religion, age, etc.
- Budgeting, including matching literal budgets to workplans and budget narratives
- Preparing documents like MOUs and impact reports
- Connecting research to public work
- Clarifying 1) what projects need to include and exclude based on students’ needs and 2) how to get partners to share their constraints
- Ability to identify assets as well as needs
- Outcomes and assessment training

FACULTY TRAINING



- Address key terms—what do we mean by “public,” “community,” and “engagement”? Who are the audiences faculty have or seek to address, and why are they appropriate experts to do so?
- Cultivate “student-centered” practices, for example by helping students design individual plans with ImaginePHD (www.imaginephd.com) and other tools
- “Train the trainers” by preparing faculty

to be far more responsive and broad-minded in their roles as advisor, mentor, and coach

- Enrich faculty development opportunities with workshops led by experts in areas critical for publicly engaged teaching and research (and support of invested graduate students)—from workshops in course design to effective collaboration to creative assessment—and provide stipends to encourage faculty members to participate in gaining new expertise
- Hire seasoned publicly engaged faculty members
- Adapt promotion and tenure requirements to take into account publicly engaged work and clarify the important differences among public scholarship, community engagement, and *service*
- Seek advice and input from PHDs and MAs in key cultural organizations and the business sector, including alumni and others with interesting career trajectories
- Seek advice and input from PHDs and MAs in campus staff positions and include them in planning and co-teaching, directing internships, etc.
- Learn how to avoid constantly adding to graduate students’ work—and to recognize when earlier initiatives and demands need to be adjusted or omitted to make space for new practices

COMMUNITY

- Establish a community advisory board
- Develop strong relationships with state-based humanities councils and cultural organizations
- Ask community leaders to share their work with departments
- Host informal collegial gatherings involving off-campus and on-campus representatives
- Create links with rural as well as urban partners
- Provide funding to support collaborations with campus faculty, staff, and students



RESOURCES

Local

- Encourage institution-wide involvement
- Fund professional development in this area for graduate students, faculty, and staff
- Be sure there are experienced and trusted offices and professionals on campus to help initiate projects and manage relationships
- Offer ample funding explicitly marked for faculty development in a variety of forms of public-facing and publicly engaged practice in humanities teaching, learning, and scholarship

National

- Create a national network to share promising ideas, experiments, courses, and certificate programs
- Create a database of research about publicly engaged methods and scholarship in the humanities (to avoid constantly re-inventing the wheel), which could build on the National Humanities Alliance “Humanities for All” project and on the work of groups like Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life and the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) Public Humanities Network

