

The Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme

■ Annual Report 2015-16

Overview and Summary

Provost Steinmetz announced a discovery theme in the humanities and arts in February 2015, appointing Vice Provost Michael Boehm and Vice Dean Susan Williams as co-leaders. He committed \$2.5 million in permanent, annual rate funding, stipulating that it could be used to hire tenure-track faculty and to support programming. He also committed \$2.5 million in one-time cash for grants and programming over a five-year period.

During its first year, the Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme allocated almost \$2 million in short-term grant programs and identified an inclusive process for identifying long-term investment areas. Our efforts were organized around three goals established by the provost:

1. Build intellectual community among faculty within the College of Arts and Sciences and across the university

- Our summer 2015 faculty fellows program brought together five faculty members to gather contextual information and engage in strategic planning.
- Eight “Mobile Coffee” events engaged faculty from across the university in conversations about the role of the humanities and the arts in society.
- Our Best Practices Travel program provided funds for interdisciplinary groups of faculty to learn from the successes of other institutions and universities.

- Through social media and a bi-weekly newsletter, we are improving communication and providing new opportunities for exchanging ideas.
- We have engaged with more than 50 units and 100 faculty members, and are actively involved in facilitating partnerships across campus.

2. Deepen student engagement in the humanities and the arts

- We augmented funds to the Division of Arts and Humanities’ Graduate Research Fund, enabling our graduate students to travel around the world to conduct research and present at conferences.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

- Through a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities – which we co-wrote and provided cost-share for – we are rethinking humanities PhD education.
- We received funds from the American Council of Learned Societies to bring a cohort of humanities postdoctoral fellows to Ohio State in fall 2016, beginning a process that will enable us to identify and report on best practices for their continued development while filling gaps in our undergraduate curriculum.
- We worked with the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) to pilot a digital storytelling experience for students that highlights our humanities and arts departments.

3. Increase Ohio State's national recognition and distinction in the humanities and the arts

- A \$1.1 million grant to the Division of Arts and Humanities called for pilot projects that will advance our three overarching goals while

identifying signature areas of study within the division. These areas will be considered for future investment by the College of Arts and Sciences and help us determine long-term focus areas for the Discovery Themes initiative.

- Through a 25 percent increase in the Arts and Humanities Small Grants program, we provided funds for faculty travel, manuscript publication, performances, and exhibits
- Our departmental block grant program augmented and highlighted areas of excellence in the Division of Arts and Humanities. Our program manager worked with Ohio State's Office of Sponsored Programs and Office of Foundation Relations to strengthen arts and humanities proposals and provide increased resources for faculty
- Through a grant to the English department's Project Narrative, we partnered with the Infectious Disease Discovery Theme focus area to pilot applied storytelling projects to assist faculty in describing their research to the public

By the end of 2016-17, we plan to identify at least one topical area of permanent focus based on the 1.1 million pilot programs in the Division of Arts and Humanities and several facilitated focus groups with faculty across the university. We anticipate launching our first faculty searches in 2017-18. We will also continue to offer postdoctoral fellowships, grants, and support for rethinking humanities PhD programs. We believe that the strategic conversations and short-term programs we have launched will ensure the long term success of the initiative.



Key Strategic Questions

What is our area of focus?

Before we can answer this question, we have to address the following questions:

1. How can we arrive at an answer in a transparent and inclusive way?
2. Should we focus on the application of the humanities and arts to grand challenges of global significance, or should we focus on the centrality of the humanities and arts to studying such challenges and educating students who will contribute to solving such challenges?
3. Should we focus on “one big thing” or have several foci?

These questions arose during some of our Mobile Coffee events and other meetings. The co-leaders, along with Arts and Humanities Divisional Dean Peter Hahn, have worked with two faculty facilitators to think about how to use research-based techniques to bring together groups of faculty to discuss them. Holding such facilitated discussion sessions will help us be transparent and inclusive.

How can we include the performing and visual arts, including the planned Arts District, in this discovery theme?

The performing/visual arts and humanities have many areas of overlap and potential integration. The unification of the arts and humanities into one College of Arts and Sciences was motivated in part by a desire to promote such integration. This Discovery Theme has the potential to advance that goal. For this reason, we have included the arts in our planning and are continuing to seek out areas of cross-collaboration. We expect this question to be sustained through the life of this theme, especially as Ohio State develops the Arts District along High Street.

How can we support both the Division of Arts and Humanities and the university?

We have placed a special emphasis on the division—the heart of our endeavor—in our first year. At the same time, this theme, like all of the Discovery Themes, is meant to be cross-cutting and a resource to the rest of the college and university. We have therefore also made funding available to faculty and staff beyond the division. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning has created a list of college and university faculty who have collaborated with

divisional faculty. As we continue to develop our areas of focus, we will invite these and other individuals from outside the division to contribute to the dialogue and ensure that the theme will have university-wide impact.

How can we use this theme as a springboard for reaffirming—both within and beyond the university—the continuing importance of a liberal arts education to job-readiness for our graduates?

Studies show that a liberal arts education—one that provides broad knowledge of the wider world as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest—is essential for preparing students “to deal with complexity, diversity, and change,” regardless of degree.¹ Yet there are also public perceptions that a liberal arts education, particularly with majors in the humanities and arts, is not immediately relevant to job readiness in the twenty-first century.

The Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme offers an opportunity to engage in this important debate. In order to continue the conversation, we built a digital library with relevant articles and initiated a “Mobile Coffee” series that brings together faculty, staff, and students to discuss these questions. In future years we will elevate these critical conversations to the national level by incentivizing faculty who write on these topics in the national media.



¹This wording is taken from a definition provided by the Association of American College and Universities, a professional organization that is committed to liberal education in the 21st century. See <https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education>

Activities and programs

Summer 2015 - spring 2016

Goal 1: Build intellectual community among faculty within the College of Arts and Sciences and across the university

Faculty Fellows

In July and August 2015, five faculty fellows joined our leadership team to provide advice and conduct specific projects. Here are the specific results from each fellow:

- **Angus Fletcher, Associate Professor, English: Promotional Video.** Professor Fletcher created an outline and script for a brief promotional video to celebrate the humanities and the arts at Ohio State. He is continuing to work on this promotional video, which will be professionally produced and is receiving input from chairs from across the Division of Arts and Humanities. The video is slated for release in late fall 2016.
- **Susan Melsop, Associate Professor Design: External Media Scan.** Professor Melsop created a repository of articles about the role of the humanities and the arts in higher education and society generally. This work was the foundation of our comprehensive digital library.
- **Margaret Newell, Professor, History: Summer Faculty Leaders Applications.** Professor Newell consolidated and summarized the ideas of the applicants to our faculty fellow program, creating a compelling roadmap for some of our short-term funding efforts. She also prepared a list of strategic questions for our team based on these documents, which we continue to reference as we move forward.
- **Lisa Shabel, Associate Professor, Philosophy: External Scan.** Professor Shabel worked closely with Institutional Research and Planning to identify several “best practices” universities that are seeing substantial growth in humanities and arts majors. We are using this data to guide faculty visits to these locations through our “Best Practices Travel” program.
- **Norah Zuniga Shaw, Associate Professor, Dance: Internal Scan.** Professor Zuniga Shaw interviewed key university “connectors” and analyzed data to produce a short list of collaborators outside of the Division of Arts

and Humanities who would be excellent partners for this theme. We are continuing to use this list to engage individuals outside of the division in our strategic efforts.

Mobile Coffee Program

In November 2015, we launched our first Mobile Coffee conversations in two events at the Faculty Club on main campus. Beginning in 2016, we awarded grants to departments, centers, and units who would host these events on a regular basis. Our goals for this program are: 1) to observe best practices conversations and connections; 2) to bring faculty together to discuss important topics; 3) to augment and provide space for existing dialogues on the humanities and the arts in higher education.

Events to date:

- **February 9: “Contributions of Africana Studies to Productive Dialogue and Solutions,”** hosted by the Department of African American and African Studies Community Extension Center.

Three Ohio State guest faculty/panelists contributed to a lively discussion about the role of Africana Studies in addressing current societal issues. **Results:** Event brought in a high number of external participants, as well as Ohio State staff and faculty, leading to a unique opportunity for community connections.
- **February 9: “Open Meeting: Science, Technology and Society,”** hosted by the Steering Committee for Science, Technology and Society Studies.

Joan Herbers, Professor of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology, convened individuals from across campus who are interested in this topic, with the objective of forming connections and moving toward greater collaboration. **Results:** With feedback from this open meeting, the Steering Committee is moving forward with working groups representing five areas within the broader framework of Science, Technology and Society.

- **February 25: “Digital Scholarship and Data in the Arts and Humanities,”** hosted by the Research Commons. The Research Commons hosted a conversation with faculty, students, staff, and librarians on the resources the Research Commons can provide to humanists and artists working in the digital realm. **Results:** The Research Commons provided a comprehensive list of what was discussed and actions items for moving forward.
- **March 31: “Library Spaces as 21st Century Hubs for Experiential Learning,”** hosted by the Office of Student Life. Dr. Patty Cunningham led an enriching discussion of literacy in the 21st century and the roles that students and faculty can play in local library systems. **Results:** The group brainstormed ways of getting faculty and students involved in the work that Dr. Cunningham and her students are doing. Dr. Cunningham is moving forward on many of these suggestions.
- **April 29: “Blending Expertise: Exploring the Symbiotic Relationship between Art, Science, and Sustainability,”** hosted by the Center for Applied Plant Sciences. Professor Ken Rinaldo presented as a part of the Center for Applied Plant Sciences (CAPS) weekly Seminar Series. Professor Rinaldo’s presentation explored the symbiotic relationship between art, science and sustainability. An overview of many of his projects provided an in-depth demonstration of how nature and scientific research have inspired much of his work. **Results:** This unique presentation served as an opportunity for an interdisciplinary group of researchers and students to consider the creative potential of science.
- **May 19: “Jo Radner: Burnt into Memory: A Performance and Talk-Back Session with Jo Radner,”** hosted by the Center for Folklore Studies. **Results:** Participants discussed ways to convey humanities research to public audiences in conjunction with a performance based on oral history research.

Fall 2016 Events:

- **September 1: “Global Humanities Careers Roundtable,”** hosted by the Office of International Affairs
- **September 14: “Environmental Humanities and Education for Sustainability,”** hosted by the Humanities Institute
- **October: “Exploring Differences, Voicing Respect,”** hosted by the Ohio State Newark Campus, Departments of English, Geography, Sociology, History and the Office of Multicultural Affairs

Social media conversations

One crucial priority for the Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme’s first year was to increase and enhance communication to faculty, staff, and students. An early challenge was the realization that these internal constituencies were not uniformly informed as to the goals and purpose behind the Discovery Themes as a whole. In partnership with Arts and Sciences Communications and the Office of Academic Affairs’ Marketing and Communications team, we therefore increased our communications to spread information and updates.

The following describe our success to date. Many of our efforts to create content and track data are recent.

- **Website and digital library**
 - Updates: Events and news items updated regularly, pages on programs and digital library resources are clearly defined
 - Monthly page views: 687
 - Average time on page: 01:45
 - Next steps: Block grants available via online forms, eventual overhaul of layout and design once focus areas are identified
- **Professionally-produced video**
 - Updates: Dr. Angus Fletcher from the Department of English is currently working with chairs to secure archival material for promotional video highlight the humanities and the arts at Ohio State
 - Next Steps: Dr. Fletcher will work with s77, a local film production company, to complete the video by Fall 2016
- **Facebook**
 - Updates: Page created with the purpose of discussing the role of and national debates about the humanities and the arts in higher education and learning about opportunities to continue the conversation at Ohio State
 - Members: 115
 - Posting frequently: 4-5 articles per week
 - Next Steps: Continue to grow and promote the page
- **Twitter**
 - Updates: Regular posts using the Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme hashtag
 - Average impressions per tweet: 220
 - Average engagements per tweet: 2.5
 - Next Steps: Continue sending out regular tweets

• Mail Chimp

- Updates: Began sending out bi-weekly newsletter with events and news items in February of 2016
- Number of subscribers: 132
- Average “Opens”: 51.4%
- Average url “Clicks”: 10.3%
- Next Steps: Continue newsletter after a summer hiatus

Fostering Connections

While our social media and web efforts have been successful to date, face-to-face interactions and ambassadorial work were another important component of our outreach efforts. In August 2015, we appointed a program manager, Bethany Dickens, who helped coordinate these efforts. Before leaving the university in May 2016, she met with the following units across the university on behalf of the Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme.

Units marked with a (*) are currently collaborating with us on a project or completed a project with us in the past year, or will shortly work with us on a project.

- Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design
- African American and African Studies*
- Alumni Association
- Anthropology*
- Arts Administration, Education, and Policy
- Arts Initiative/Urban Arts Space
- Center for Applied Plant Sciences*
- Center for Folklore Studies*
- Center for Slavic and East European Studies*
- Classics*
- Comparative Studies*
- Dance*
- Design*
- Digital Union*
- Discovery Theme Focus Area in Data Analytics
- Discovery Theme Focus Area in Foods for Health
- Discovery Theme Focus Area in Infectious Disease**
- Discovery Theme Focus Area in Sustainable and Resilient Economy
- East Asian Languages and Literatures
- Economics
- English***
- Evolution/Ecology/Organismal Biology
- Film Studies
- Fisher College of Business*
- Food Innovation Center
- French and Italian
- Germanic Languages and Literatures*

- Graduate School*
- History
- History of Art*
- Humanities Institute*
- Office of International Affairs
- John Glenn School of Public Affairs*
- The Center for Latin American Studies
- Linguistics**
- Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies
- Music**
- The Ohio State University at Newark*
- Ohio State Alumni Association
- Office of Distance Education and eLearning
- Philosophy***
- Physics
- Political Science
- Research Commons*
- Center for the Study of Religion*
- Center for the Study of Teaching and Writing
- Second-Year Transformational Experience Program*
- Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures*
- Spanish and Portuguese
- Office of Research
- Office of Student Life
- Theatre
- Office of Undergraduate Research
- University Press*
- Wexner Center for the Arts
- Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Collaborative project highlights:

- The Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme program manager served on the Steering Committee for an initiative in Science and Technology Studies.
- We facilitated a collaboration between an undergraduate communications student and the Department of Linguistics. Through the Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP), the student produced a video highlighting the Linguistics program at Ohio State.
- Through a grant to the English department’s Project Narrative, we partnered with the Infectious Disease Discovery Theme focus area to begin piloting applied storytelling projects to assist faculty in describing their research to the public.
- We facilitated the application of an Ohio State faculty member in Classics to the inaugural Whiting Foundation fellowship in the public humanities, working closely with the Office of Research to ensure a strong application.

Goal 2: Deepen student engagement in the humanities and the arts

Augmentation of the Arts and Humanities Small Grants Funds

As part of our ongoing mission to support faculty and graduate student research and creative activity, we augmented by 25% funding for the College of Arts and Science's Arts and Humanities Small Grants program, including the Graduate Research Small Grants Program during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Through this program, over 140 graduate students have travelled to over 60 cities, including 25 cities outside of the United States.

Humanities PhD training and career development

As Ohio State strives to support multiple career pathways for graduate students, we are allocating one-time programming funds to support a planning group that is rethinking humanities PhDs and humanities postdoctoral education. These discussions enable Ohio State faculty, staff, and students to plan for changes to humanities graduate education that reflect changes in the workforce. More and more humanities PhD students are seeking opportunities to learn skills that will make them competitive outside of academia. Our postdoctoral fellowship program also reflects these trends, emphasizing outreach to the public sphere and cultivating best practices for fellows.

Our investments into rethinking humanities graduate education include:

- Providing cost-share and administrative support for a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities that provides funds for planning changes to PhD humanities programs.
- Supporting a graduate workshop hosted by an Ohio State English alumna, Paula Chambers of the Versatile PhD.
- Providing support to faculty leading these discussions.

Our investments in postdoctoral fellows in the humanities include:

- In collaboration with the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), funding four postdoctoral fellows in the areas of ancient near eastern studies, Islamic art history, computational linguistics, and global science and technology studies, beginning in fall 2016.
- Reporting on lessons learned from the fellowships and working with ACLS to produce best practices.



Goal 3: Increase Ohio State's national recognition and distinction in the humanities and the arts

\$1.1 Million Grant for Pilot Projects

While the Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme is a university-wide endeavor, we recognize the centrality of the College of Arts and Sciences' Division of Arts and Humanities as we determine our areas for long-term investment. To that end, we scheduled a series of meetings with groups of chairs in November and December of 2015. In addition Mike Boehm met with chairs in the division individually to receive their feedback. Finally, we considered the input of our faculty fellows and divisional leadership.

Based on these conversations, we granted the Division of Arts and Humanities a \$1.1 million grant to accomplish the following goals:

- Advance our three core goals: engage students, build intellectual community, and enhance Ohio State's national reputation
- Highlight areas of signature scholarship to guide areas of investment for the college, and inform focus areas for the Humanities and the Arts Discovery Theme

In June 2016, the division awarded the \$1.1 million to a select group of eleven pilot projects that will begin in the 2016-17 academic year. Led by cross-disciplinary groups of faculty, these projects are focused both on understanding specific social issues (migration and placemaking; black citizenship; human rights; the environment; technology and culture) and on how we use study of the ancient world; contemporary art; the emergence of number; and narrative and story-telling to provide the critical, historical and analytical perspectives to understand and represent the problems of today.

Augmentation of the Arts and Humanities Small Grants Funds

As part of our ongoing mission to support faculty research and creative activity, we augmented funds for the College of Arts and Science's Arts and Humanities Small Grants program, This constituted a 25% increase and enabled a greater number of faculty to benefit from the program.

As of July 31, 2016:

- Ninety-three faculty members have attended conferences and conducted research in more than 35 countries spread over six continents
- The program has facilitated the preparation of twelve manuscripts and eight creative projects

The College of Arts and Sciences recognizes the importance of this fund and has streamlined the application process for the 2016-17 academic year.

Block Grants Program

Based on feedback from our faculty fellows and in conjunction with the Connect and Collaborate initiative through the Office of Outreach and Engagement, we also initiated two block grants program during our first year: Best Practices Travel grants and Block Grants for programming. With these grants, we are highlighting existing areas of faculty excellence within the Division of Arts and Humanities while also stimulating dialogues on the future of the humanities and the arts at Ohio State. To date, these grants have funded:

- **"The Critical Study of Religion and the Future of the Humanities"** hosted by the Center for the Study of Religion and the Departments of Comparative Studies, English, and History.
- **"A Public Celebration of Philosophy at Ohio State"** hosted by the Department of Philosophy.
- **"The Myths of the Academy" Symposium** hosted by the Department of Classics.
- **The Barnett Symposium on Creative Cities: Global Trends, Local Action** hosted by the Department of Arts Administration, Education, and Policy.

We look forward to funding more of these programs through our new online portal and bringing greater visibility to Ohio State's excellence in the humanities and the arts.