

# Arts, Humanities and Anthropology (AHA) in the World at UC Merced

## A. Executive Summary of Initiative

In 2020, UC Merced will be a model for conjoined and interdisciplinary arts, humanities and anthropological (AHA) research and education nationwide. Faculty research and academic programs will feature border-crossing work engaged with the whole campus, the local community and the wider world. While centered in “Culture, Community and Identity,” research in arts, humanities and anthropology at UCM addresses all five major themes of the 2009 Strategic Academic plan. In 2020, the AHA faculty will remain organized as one bylaw group supporting multiple disciplinary undergraduate majors and interdisciplinary majors and minors, a single Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group, research through the Center for the Humanities, and sponsorship of performing and visual arts in the community. The AHA faculty are a coalition of individuals from many intellectual backgrounds whose shared affinities cross disciplines, approaches, and recognized interdisciplinary fields. In 2020 we envision ourselves as a faculty of 75 to 90 (a proportion of the total faculty commensurate with AHA size at peer institutions) with space that fosters continued collaborations. The reviewers of the first round of the submission concluded: **“Overall, it is the opinion of the reviewers that the University should strongly support this effort to continue focus on and interdisciplinary arts, humanities and anthropology program that emulates programs at top universities.”**

## B. Definition of Thematic Area

### B.1. Does it fit in one of the nine defined Themes?

The AHA proposal fits entirely and naturally in both Theme 1 (Disparities: Equity, Diversity, Social Inequality) and Theme 2 (Cross-cultural Studies and Cultural Production). Indeed, one hallmark of AHA research and teaching is that it highlights the necessary integration these two themes. AHA scholars recognize that inequality always influences the content and circulation of cultural production, and likewise, that particular forms of inequality are themselves products of specific historical eras, cultural formations, and interactions between cultures. **Theme 1 and Theme 2 are the PRIMARY THEMES of the AHA proposal.**

Additionally, AHA research is relevant to all areas of inquiry at the university. For instance, AHA research can elucidate the historical development of modern science. AHA research can offer invaluable insights about why engineering innovations succeed or fail outside the lab. AHA researchers may utilize data science to understand spatial and temporal variations of human activity. And so on. **A robust AHA capacity is essential to the success of EVERY THEME identified by the SAF Working Group.**

#### *B.1.a. Is this a more sharply defined theme within one of the nine Themes?*

The particular hallmark of the AHA group is its focus on research that is **border-crossing, community-engaged, and globally oriented**.

*B.1.b. Is this an area of research and scholarship that cuts across more than one Theme?*

See above.

B.2. Is it part of a different Theme?

See above.

B.3. Are there other SAF Initiatives that might contribute to this Theme?

AHA faculty work with colleagues in many areas, and **every area of the university will benefit from resources allocated to AHA**. That said, our closest affiliates include:

- *The UC Merced Library*. The Library and AHA affiliates collaborate on projects, and AHA students and faculty are core users of library resources.
- *Center for the Study of Comparative Inequalities | Women's, Gender, Sexuality Studies*. Inequality is a central focus of the AHA framework, and several AHA faculty members are among the proponents of the CSCI proposal. WGS Studies is predominantly an AHA area at most research universities.
- *Center for the Study of Education | Health Research at UC Merced | Public Health at UC Merced | Healthy Development | Engaged Transformation of Poverty | Blum Center*. It is impossible to effectively study community well-being and its challenges without reference to AHA methods and the substance of AHA knowledge.
- *Merritt Writing Program | Writing and Reading Center*. Effective student writing, and research about student writing, is a central concern of AHA scholars and educators. Writing instruction is typically a job opportunity and expected competency for AHA graduate students at research universities. We expect AHA graduate students to work in the Merritt Writing Program in the future, and we expect undergraduate writing instruction to be integrated with AHA courses.
- *Sociology*. This is the social science discipline with the closest kinship to AHA.
- The SAFI First Round reviewers noted a potential point of connection to CHASE. We consider that, along with many other proposals from the first round, to be relevant to some AHA research, but less central to AHA's priorities overall than those listed here.

## **C. Intellectual Components of the Initiative**

C.1. Why is this area important?

Interdisciplinarity is the hallmark of the AHA approach at UC Merced. All of our faculty and graduate students read work from every one of our disciplines, and all of us utilize each other's frames of understanding. The interdisciplinary stance of AHA fields is well expressed in the current issue of the

journal of the interdisciplinary humanities *Occasion* ([arcade.stanford.edu/occasion\\_issue/volume-6](http://arcade.stanford.edu/occasion_issue/volume-6)). An interdisciplinary orientation in the AHA fields helps to illuminate grand challenges, since the task of humanists, artists and anthropologists is to explain and express cultural complexity and contingency. Our brief is the human condition as it has existed at all times and at all places, and our insights apply to problems also addressed by scientists and engineers. AHA addresses Grand Challenges that are central to the mission of a research university:

- How do social power, exploitation and hegemony function, from intimate to social scales, and how do individuals and groups resist and restructure power?
- What are individual and collective identity? What kinds of communication across identities create new and hybrid identities, while other kinds of interactions reify difference?
- How do states and other entities control territory, what are the limits of their power to do so, and how do people, goods and ideas cross borders?
- What are creativity and transcendence? What do people find valuable, meaningful, sacred or beautiful, and what do they find ugly, worthless, profane, or distasteful?
- How does the human experience vary over time and across space, shaped by various structures of power and hierarchy, and how are slow processes of change disrupted by contingent events?
- How do humans interact with other life forms and the inanimate world in ways that are exploitative, sustainable, or resilient?

Scholars of the arts, humanities and anthropology address these challenges using methods that include fieldwork, description, narrative, hermeneutics, qualitative and quantitative analysis, curation, and an orientation toward ethics and politics. In addition, the work of making art – writing, painting, music, drama, and dance – connects theory to practice.

## C.2. What are the current key areas/achievements in this field, and those going forward?

In 2020, with 75 to 90 faculty members in the AHA fields, we will be positioned to maintain research excellence, support a graduate program of international repute, and educate undergraduates in core disciplines of the liberal arts. At build out, in addition to robust disciplines, AHA will have thematic interdisciplinary clusters in:

- *Regions, eras, and languages*: Global Asian Studies/Asian Languages and Literatures, Global Early Modern Studies, Latin American Studies/Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures, and World Languages and Literatures
- *Methods*: Ethnography, Archaeology, Digital Humanities, Geography and Spatial Analysis, Museum/Heritage Management, Performance Studies, Community Engaged Research, Public Humanities, and Sociolinguistics
- *Analytical frameworks*: Empires/Borders/Transnationalism, Environment/Food/Agriculture, Human Rights, Medicine/Health, and Religious Studies
- *Social identities*: Ethnic Studies, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Working-Class Studies.

A 75 to 90-member AHA faculty is adequate for critical mass in our current programs, and in addition will permit us to support:

- New Undergraduate Programs: GASP will submit an application for major status within the year. Additional new undergraduate programs will develop organically from existing programs and faculty. Organized as a single group, AHA faculty and teaching assistants can easily serve multiple degree programs, with many courses cross listed between programs. Some of the thematic strengths referenced above may become undergraduate minors or majors. We will also develop an Interdisciplinary Humanities undergraduate major parallel to the Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group and similar to the Stanford Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities major.
- New Graduate Programs: We will sustain growth in the Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group to a total size of approximately 135-180 students (1.5:1 to 2:1 student to faculty ratio). As part of that process, we will develop a self-paying fifth year coursework-based MA program geared to UCM undergraduates. The fifth year program will enable our brightest undergraduates to develop their intellectual skills and prepare them to apply to top ranked Ph.D. programs or jobs that require M.A. degrees. UC Merced will thereby become known as a pipeline for outstanding first generation and diverse college students to enter professions and graduate education in AHA fields. We estimate admitting a class of approximately 10 students per year to the MA program.

#### D. UCM's Role

##### D.1. The UCM Campus's unique position in this particular field

AHA at UC Merced is unique in its unified interdisciplinary organization for hiring, strategic planning, and graduate education, in its orientation to the "World at Home, At Home in the World" intellectual rubric, and in its attention to public and community oriented scholarship. This is fully spelled out in the proposal for the Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group (IHGG), which has recently been approved by CCGA, and which is attached to this submission as an appendix. The remainder of this section summarizes key points from the IHGG proposal, which guides our present vision and growth plan.

##### *D.1.a. Current strengths on campus in this area*

AHA, and the IHGG Program in particular, orients itself to the UC Merced 2009 Strategic Academic Vision, and in particular adopts the UC Merced guiding principle of **"The World at Home/At Home in the World"** as its signature focus. Our location in Merced inspires this programmatic concentration, which guides and structures the IHGG curriculum and mission in two ways.

1. Merced is a global crossroads. Although it is a small city, its population has always been constituted by immigrants from around the world. Home to an Air Force Strategic Air Command base during the Cold War, Merced was situated squarely within global geopolitics. Today, Merced's agricultural products circulate on a global market, while, as a semi-arid farming region and a part of the California water system, Merced is immediately affected by the impacts of global climate change. IHGG students may or may not take Merced as the object of their research. Instead, they will use Merced (a place like numerous entrepôts, battlefields, trade routes and other kinds of locales past and present) to exemplify the idea of the crossroads destination. The crossroads concept educates students about how to approach questions at

scales ranging from the global to the local, and how to move with facility among these spatial frames. We are also using this notion to guide our faculty growth.

2. We are committed to socially engaged education and research. We also use **The World At Home/At Home in the World** to communicate the perspective that scholarship exists in and for the larger world, and thus, graduate education can lead to many career paths. Our students and faculty look to various forms of social engagement in their research, their teaching, and their articulation of the university's mission. They study the various ways in which humanities scholarship engages with the public, including writing for non-academic audiences, museum studies, and community based scholarship. They have curated documentary photographic exhibits, explored digital versions and material versions of museum artifacts, examined the historical impacts of past climate changes, conducted ethnography to understand barriers to healthcare access, and studied and produced music and theatre in a performance context.

The IHGG program has two opening day specializations that reflect the current intellectual strengths of AHA at UC Merced.

- The Multicultural Luso-Hispanic World (MLHW). Latina/o, Latin American and Iberian Studies is an interdisciplinary concentration that examines the linguistic, literary, social, and cultural continuum of peoples and communities in the United States and in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries, including Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and all the hispanophone countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, it encompasses the cultural production in the Spanish and Portuguese languages from areas and countries such as Morocco, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, and Macao. Students explore topics and themes related to these populations from an interdisciplinary perspective which links the approaches of the humanities, fine arts, and social sciences with special attention to such themes as colonialism and post-colonialism, race, ethnicity and nation, identities, border crossing, transculturation, diasporas and migrations.
- Transnational Americas Studies (TAS). The Transnational Americas Studies concentration offers multidisciplinary approaches to studying the connections between migration, identity, culture, and economy with a geographic focus on the radiating links between California, the North American West, the Americas, and their Pacific and Atlantic connections. We welcome students with research foci based in the Americas, Pacific Rim, or Atlantic World in archaeological, historical, and contemporary contexts. We offer students the opportunity to investigate the intersectionality of race, gender, class, space, and cultural production as they dovetail with contests regarding belonging, boundaries, nations, politics, and citizenship. The M.A. and Ph.D. concentrations in Transnational Americas Studies create a framework within which to connect material, representational, and discursive analytical methods to bear on both academic production and civic engagement. Merced and the Central Valley are located at a geographic, cultural, and economic crossroads. Rather than a fringe area, Merced and the Central Valley have been critical nodes in layered and overlapping human migrations and interrelated economic, spatial, and cultural transformations during pre-colonial times and since the nineteenth century. Consequently, UC Merced offers an ideal vantage from which to explore in

multidisciplinary ways notions of intersection, power, history, language, migration and movement within California and the Americas, and throughout the Pacific and Atlantic worlds.

*D.1.b. Potential research areas of expansion*

See C.2 above. The likely next three areas of specialization in the graduate program as we reach critical mass in additional areas, reflecting AHA priorities, will be **World Heritage**, **Performance Studies**, and **Global Asian Studies**.

D.2. How will investment in this area make UCM distinctive among research universities?

See D.1 above.

**E. Faculty Participation: What bylaw units and grad groups might participate, and how?**

A strength of AHA at UC Merced is the thorough integration of multiple robust institutions that organize the same group of faculty for synergistic purposes. As a **bylaw group**, for hiring, tenure and promotion, strategic planning, and curriculum oversight for over a dozen undergraduate majors, minors, and programs, we are organized into the **History and World Cultures** unit. For **graduate education**, we are organized into the **Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group**. As a **research center and public programming unit** we are organized as the **Center for the Humanities**. The Center for the Humanities is a staffed unit that has recently received a \$2 million private gift, and its activities are documented at <http://crha.ucmerced.edu>. A pending CFH grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities is attached as an appendix to this submission.

**F. Special Programmatic Needs**

The AHA group requires a building or a complex of adjacent and physically integrated buildings that supports the interdisciplinary, and community-facing aims and needs of our large and diverse group while supporting our continued collaboration. Crucially, we want to be able to perform our many functions in spaces that are efficiently designed and optimized to our needs and that allow for serendipitous and casual meetings in lounges, hallways, and cafes. While we are not proposing any large-scale concert halls or theater spaces on the campus, we need basic performance spaces for teaching and rehearsal. Beyond these, we will seek to reinforce town-and-gown connections by using downtown spaces for student and guest performances. This vision requires an excellent transit link, as well as clear, explicit and adequately funded agreements for collaboration between UC Merced and community-based arts presenting entities. Specifically our needs include:

- A performing arts and exhibition building that includes a public museum and gallery, a café, and theater, music, and dance spaces that support teaching and research as well as extra-curricular and social student functions. The museum/gallery, at 15000 sf, would be used to display artworks and artifacts, but also library exhibitions, science and engineering projects, or almost anything that a course or campus club would want to propose—thus establishing the building as the public face of

not only the arts but also the University as a whole. It would also serve as a teaching gallery that makes collections available to faculty and students across campus for courses and to create study exhibitions. The museum/gallery includes divided exhibition spaces, staff offices, secure storage, exhibition preparation workshop, as well as an interactive education room for the UCM communities and the general public. This building's spaces (soundproofed as necessary) would support interdisciplinary approaches to the arts by leveraging pedagogy, research, public performance and student activity together. This building should include, in addition to the 15000-sf museum/gallery: **(1)** music practice rooms: 4 individual, 8 keyboard, 2 medium group: 840 sf total, **(2)** two ensemble practice rooms that can double as seminar rooms, 900 sf total, **(3)** one dedicated dance rehearsal space, 1200 sf, **(4)** a combined piano and video/music production lab with individual stations for up to 20 students, 1000 sf, **(5)** an 80-seat black box theater with requisite backstage areas that could double as a film theater and teaching space for art history, film studies and drama classes, **(6)** a combined music and dance studio that could allow dancers to collaborate with live musicians, with storage space for musical instruments, **(7)** a 2500 sf ballroom that could serve for large ensemble rehearsals and for social dancing, **(8)** two fairly substantial dressing rooms that would serve the black box theater and the ballroom, doubling as changing rooms for dance studios, **(9)** A shop space for set building, either adjacent to the theater, or in accessible studio space in the adjacent building, **(10)** classrooms with flexible seating supporting movement-based pedagogy which would double as rehearsal spaces for student groups and as green rooms or dressing rooms when multiple performances are taking place in the building. These classrooms would be equipped with data projectors, sound systems, and motorized black-out shades so that they can serve as useful teaching spaces for courses in music, art, performance, film and other studies in the arts.

- An art, archaeology and biological anthropology building or wing with ventilation, plumbing and safety features appropriate to teaching and research in these fields. This space should include: **(1)** Four 1800-sf fine art studios , each with proper ventilation, built-in cabinetry and sinks, and the ability to adequately darken the room for instruction, i.e. slide presentations **(2)** eight 725-sf anthropology research damp labs with built-in workbenches, sinks, and snorkel hoods; one 900-sf research lab with a HEPA air filter system; and one shared 300-sf wet lab with a fume hood, **(3)** two 1000-sf anthropology teaching labs to accommodate 20 students each with lay-out and work space, and one adjacent 500-sf shared washing and storage area with built-in cabinetry, a workbench, and sink, **(4)** one approximately 500-sf of outdoor space adjacent to the anthropology teaching lab and arts studio with retractable sun/weather shade, **(5)** storage areas for musical instruments, anthropological teaching materials, artworks, and arts supplies.
- A digital media cluster that includes: **(1)** a 6000 sf digital media lab, recording studio, digital heritage lab and digital humanities lab suite with light proofing and sound proofing as appropriate, **(2)** a 1000 sf language lab, **(3)** a digital humanities/digital heritage/digital media teaching lab for classes of up to 40 students.
- Offices, study spaces and seminar rooms including: **(1)** faculty, staff, lecturer, and graduate student offices adequate for the personnel we have specified, **(2)** a Center for the Humanities suite that includes a suite of 12 offices for a total of 1,560 sq. ft. of office space for: five offices for staff

members (610 sf total), one reception / shared student office (130 sf), two offices for visiting faculty fellows (260 sf total), two offices/studios for artists/writers-in-residence (260 sf total), one shared office for two postdocs (150 sf), one shared office for three graduate fellows (150 sf) and also includes an adjacent seminar room of approximately 600 sf, **(3)** a small auditorium to seat about 90, with a projector, screen, sound, movable chairs, podium, and small storage room for equipment and chairs, **(4)** 10 seminar rooms, conference rooms and scholarly activity rooms seating 20-60 people for meetings and lectures, **(5)** an AHA administrative suite with staff space for advising, academic personnel, purchasing, and other needed functions, and **(6)** quiet shared study space for undergraduates.