

## **From Valley Crossroads to Global Vistas: Endowing Humanities Research and Outreach at UC Merced**

### *Introduction*

The UC Merced Center for the Humanities seeks a \$300,000 NEH Challenge Grant to endow a new program: “From Valley Crossroads to Global Vistas,” inspired by UC Merced’s location in the San Joaquin Valley. This capacity-building program falls within the framework of NEH’s “Bridging Cultures” initiative and will:

- 1) ensure the vibrancy of humanities research through the **Merced Fellows Program** for faculty and visiting fellows
- 2) create a collaborative community among humanities scholars via the **Merced Seminar in the Humanities**
- 3) build local and regional community relations through a **San Joaquin Valley Heritage Lecture**
- 4) offer a **Curatorial Fellowship** supporting both research and public humanities

Our partnerships with the UC Merced Library, Art Gallery, and Blum Center for Developing Economies will allow us to leverage institutional resources while also having a campus-wide impact. Over the past year, we have been consulting with the Chancellor, the Office of Research, and the Office of Development and Alumni Relations on a proposal that will allow us to effectively raise the required 3:1 match, for a total endowment of just over \$1 million and one year of bridge funding for 2018-19, which will support the programs we propose here.

### *Context*

UC Merced, the newest campus in the University of California system, opened to students in 2005. It currently has 6,200 students, of whom 358 are graduate students; the campus expects to have 10,000 students in 2020, with 10% graduate enrollment. We are a Hispanic Serving Institution with a uniquely diverse student body (43.9% of our undergraduate students are Hispanic; 26% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 6.3% African-American). Over 60% of our students are Pell-eligible, and over 60% speak a language other than English at [home](#).

Merced itself, at the center of an agricultural county, has been marked by high rates of poverty and unemployment and low levels of [educational attainment](#). It was hard hit in the foreclosure crisis, and still had an unemployment rate of 15.9% as of January 2014. While it is less than 100 miles from Silicon Valley, the San Joaquin Valley has a largely agricultural economy. The University is slowly changing that: it is now one of the largest employers in Merced. Since 2000, the university's economic impact on the San Joaquin Valley has totaled close to \$1 billion; statewide, almost \$2 billion. Faculty are involved with a variety of arts and religious organizations, as well as non-profits. Former students have opened a range of businesses, from tutoring to coffee houses. Since the University opened, school performance in Merced has improved.<sup>1</sup> In addition, more than three times as many high school students from the Central Valley are now applying to the University of California, and attendance rates have also increased to come closer to those in other areas of the state. While there are vibrant cultural institutions in Merced, they are small, and we expect that one long-term result of the University's presence will be the expansion of these organizations through both the expansion of population and the engagement of students, faculty, and staff.

The San Joaquin Valley of California is a rich agricultural region, which has long been a site of cultural exchange. Even before settlers began to take land from the native Yokuts, Miwok, and Monache peoples in the nineteenth century, the San Joaquin valley was a crossroads – demonstrated both by the region's linguistic diversity and archeological finds. From the Mexican land grants of the 1840s onwards, settlers built a farming economy that is now central to US food production. Waves of internal and foreign migration since then have created a rich ethnic and racial tapestry. Internal migrations have included African-American communities established to avoid Jim Crow as well as Okies leaving the dust bowl; international immigrant groups include Portuguese dairy farmers from the Azores, Japanese tree-fruit farmers, Basque shepherds, Chinese railway workers, Punjabi engineers, Yemeni, Pilipino, and Mexican farm workers, and Armenian and Hmong refugees. The Castle Air Force base in Atwater, adjacent to Merced, also brought international residents to the area. In that sense, the faculty, staff, and students now coming to the new UC campus are only the latest of many waves of migration to the region. This history of migration has made the

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<sup>1</sup> Merced County Board of Education, Annual Report 2012, p. 7.

San Joaquin Valley both a cultural crossroads and a global microcosm.

The initial vision of the campus focused on interdisciplinary research and teaching, an approach that has been retained in the Humanities. The Humanities faculty at the University – organized into a single academic unit, Humanities and World Cultures – have taken the characteristics of the San Joaquin Valley as a framework for our new graduate program in Interdisciplinary Humanities. We are located in a crossroads community, and we seek to train graduate students to think about the various crossroads – material, cultural, historical, and metaphorical – that the humanities illuminate; at the same time, our interdisciplinary program creates new intellectual crossroads. Designing a new doctoral program has made it possible to re-imagine doctoral training, so that the focus is on developing humanities scholars who are intellectually flexible; in addition to its interdisciplinary structure, the program requires all students have experience in the public and/or digital humanities.

### *Center for the Humanities*

In 2009, the campus established The Center for Research in the Humanities and Arts, part of the UC Humanities Network, to support faculty research and collaborations; in 2013, following a generous private gift of \$2 million, it was renamed the Center for the Humanities, and added community outreach to its mission.

The Center for the Humanities has as its mission “stimulating individual and collaborative research and scholarly work,” exploring “human experience and human consciousness, as well as the cultural products – art, literature, music, material culture – that record, reflect, and express them.” It also “supports the exchange of intellectual and creative ideas and activities among faculty, students, and the broader regional community.” As part of the University of California Humanities Network, the Center receives funds from both a system-wide program and campus funds; the Dean of the Graduate Division has also committed funds to support Graduate fellows. The generous anonymous gift we received in 2012 allowed the Center for the Humanities to develop signature programs: the Merced Seminar in the Humanities, Merced Fellows, Distinguished Lectures, Collaborative Working Groups, public outreach programs, exhibits, and conferences. The gift was designed as proof-of-concept, with an obligation to find ways to make the model sustainable.

The Center is part of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, and reports to the Dean of the School biannually. The Dean appoints the Director of the Center, and the Dean and the Director together appoint an advisory committee of four faculty who judge grant applications, decide on research themes in consultation with the faculty, and advise the Director on strategic planning. The advisory committee includes faculty from all of the Humanities fields, and always includes at least one untenured faculty member. In consultation with the Faculty Advisory Committee, the Director will also be appointing a Community Advisory committee this year, whose task will be to advise the Center on community engagement, strategic planning, and fundraising. The Center currently has one full-time staff member, the Assistant Director, Christina Lux, and we will add an Administrative Assistant this summer. We have a part-time student worker and a ¼ time Graduate Student Research Assistant.

The core of our programs, the Merced Seminar in the Humanities, which launched this year, is funded for four years; it includes two post-doctoral fellows, two graduate fellows, and four faculty fellows. The seminar, which meets bi-weekly, is organized around a two-year research theme; about half the speakers are internal, and half are external. In this way, the seminar enables us to bring new voices to campus, and so broaden our conversations. Thus, for instance, we have had two speakers this year who engaged in different ways with media studies, an area in which few of our faculty work: Susan Kaiser of UC Davis spoke on “Disrupting the Urban-Rural Hierarchy in Fashion and Television,” and Sharalynn Orbaugh of the University of British Columbia spoke on “Post-human Philosophy made Visual: Anime as an Affective Technology.” Both papers increased our attention to visual culture, and to the various contexts that shape both its production and reception.

In addition to the Seminar, the Center annually sponsors a Distinguished Lecturer in the Humanities, who spends 2 days on campus, giving a public lecture, attending classes, and doing a seminar for faculty and graduate students; we sponsor collaborative work groups and conferences, and provide some small individual research grants.

### **Significance and Impact of Proposed NEH-Funded Program**

The NEH Challenge grant will allow us to endow four pillars of the program, “From Valley

Crossroads to Global Vistas.” This program builds on our current experience with the Merced Seminar in the Humanities and will strengthen both the research and outreach missions of the Center. The endowment will ensure the sustainability of the following activities: the San Joaquin Valley Heritage Lecture (\$10,000 annually); Merced Humanities Fellows, including a Faculty Fellow (\$11,000 annually) and Visiting Fellows (\$10,880 annually); guest speakers for our seminar program (\$7,000 annually); and a Curatorial Fellow (\$5,000 annually). In addition, the grant will provide bridge funding (\$43,000) for these programs for 2018-19, following the end of our current four-year gift. The scholars who come to campus through these programs and the materials we develop will contribute to the ongoing conversation on campus and in the wider community that seeks to understand cultural encounters – their nature, the new cultural artifacts they stimulate, and their political and intellectual significance – in different times and places.

Crossroads, and the encounters they enable, have always been a central theme of the Humanities, whether through tracing literary or visual influences, or examining cultural connections. One form of crossroads is literal, like the ones we find in the San Joaquin Valley: physical encounters of people brought about through migration, trade, or war and conquest. Such encounters create cultural crossroads – places where the interactions of people from varying cultures create rich new cultures. Most examples of this, whether Rome in the first century, Samarkhand and Bukhara on the Silk Road in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, 13<sup>th</sup> century Cahokia, 15<sup>th</sup> century Cuzco, 18<sup>th</sup> century Paris, and 20<sup>th</sup> century New York, have been urban hubs, so rural areas like the San Joaquin valley are unexpected sites of cultural encounter and mixing. Crossroads can also be imaginative, when we link different texts with each other, or encounter new people and places through texts and images. This rich set of possibilities means that as scholarly interests shift, “From Valley Crossroads to Global Vistas” will pick up new resonances, and relate in ever-changing ways to both the broader scholarly conversation and the life of the San Joaquin Valley. The theme allows us to use our location as an inspiration without being confined to it. Humanities scholars are increasingly aware of the ways in which culture – in both its artistic and anthropological senses – is the product of encounters, real and virtual, peaceful and violent, between peoples, ideas, and practices. The history and population of the San Joaquin valley makes that immediately visible and relevant to our faculty, staff, students, and community.

At the same time, the programs we plan not only reflect on crossroads, but also create new intellectual crossroads. By creating spaces for intellectual encounters – among scholars, and between scholars and the public, the programs the Center offers will create spaces which themselves contribute to the construction of new knowledge and the enrichment of our understanding. Amid all the concern about the fate of the humanities, one of the clearest messages is the importance of humanities scholarship that is broadly legible. With its framework for interdisciplinary conversation, the Center helps scholars engage with those outside their normal disciplinary homes. By giving scholars at the beginning stages of their careers the opportunity to present scholarship to a broader public, it seeks to embed that outreach in their professional trajectories. Thus the programs we support will not only produce outstanding scholarship, but also make that scholarship accessible outside the academy.

Our experience, even in one year, has shown both the significant impact of deep interdisciplinary conversation and the hunger locally to place ourselves in the world. For instance, the Merced Seminar in the Humanities, which began this year, is notable for the depth and range of the interdisciplinary conversation: our current fellows range from a graduate student working at the boundaries of anthropology and cognitive science to a philosopher interested in natural law and convention. Visitors have routinely commented on the quality of the questions and discussion, and the ways in which the seminar has helped widen and sharpen their own work. Since the Merced Seminar began last fall, the responses from visiting scholars who have presented have been uniformly positive. As Professor Noah Guynn of UC Davis writes of the seminar, it was

A tremendously distinguished, intellectually vibrant community of scholars who were conducting academic research at the highest level and hosting intellectual programs that were authentically and rigorously interdisciplinary. The feedback I received on the paper I shared with the Center fellows was generous, detailed, and rich with implications. I returned to my research with renewed enthusiasm and a far clearer sense of the direction it would need to take in order to reach a broad audience in the humanities.

James Brooks, of the School for Advanced Research, wrote that,

The intellectual exchanges with Merced's faculty and the Center's fellows renewed my energy and

enthusiasm for interdisciplinary scholarship in ways that exceed similar experiences at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture at the College of William and Mary. My audience included Shakespearean scholars, students of Latin American literature, archaeologists, poets, and historians, and each contributed insights that have since proven illuminating to my manuscript.

In designing the seminar, we were inspired by the experience of the UC Riverside Center for Ideas and Society, described by Professor Georgia Warnke in her letter, which has found that collaborative interdisciplinary conversation led *at the minimum* “to important innovations in individual faculty’s and departments’ teaching and research.” Interdisciplinary dialogue over a sustained period of time contributes to excellent disciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship.

While the seminar supports scholarly excellence, the Heritage Lecture shares outstanding scholarship with the community. By placing this event downtown, we open it to a broader audience. In recent years, we have on several occasions hosted one event from a conference we have sponsored at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center. So, for instance, the first night of the 2012 conference on the *Popol Vuh!* featured a standing-room only lecture at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center by Michael Coe, Professor Emeritus at Yale University; the audience of over 200 included students, local artists, symposium participants, and a wide range of community leaders. The opening of our recent conference on the Black Arts Movement was also held at the Multicultural Arts Center, in conjunction with an exhibit of photographs and artwork from the movement. The audience for the conference, approximately 400, included leading members of Merced’s Black community, as well as students, artists and community leaders from San Francisco and throughout the Valley. As Laura Phillips, the Director of the Arts Council notes, these events – where we have reached our largest audiences – have also been among *their* most successful, and have helped them build new audiences. These were one-time events; the Valley Heritage lecture, an annual event, will build a bigger audience as it speaks to local pride in, and curiosity about, our rich history. Its location downtown will also provide a gateway to the Center and the University for those who are not yet connected to us.

The plans for programs funded by the NEH are thus built on our current experience, but focused by

the theme “From Valley Crossroads to Global Vistas.” The relations of these programs to each other create another set of intersections: both outward facing, with a public lecture, and inward facing, with the fellows and seminar series; the curatorial fellowship is both, providing the opportunity for research that also makes material from our collections more accessible.

San Joaquin Valley Heritage Lecture (\$10,000)

The Center will annually sponsor a lecture, to be held in downtown Merced, focusing on some aspect of the Valley’s heritage. It might focus on a particular community or event within the Valley, but it may also focus on the places from which the many communities of the Valley came; it could also have a comparative focus. It will serve as a reminder of the remarkable global mosaic that has helped build the Valley we know today, and the complex cultural, historical and social processes that have helped make it what it is. In addition to the public lecture, the speaker will give a paper in our seminar, thus tying our community outreach with our academic conversations.

By focusing both on the Valley itself, and the places from which Valley people came, the lecture will allow us to embed the humanities in the community. It will also enable us to place the discussion of the ethnic heritage of the Valley within historical and cultural frameworks, making visible the multiple encounters that have contributed to the history of the different peoples of the Valley. Such an event will serve local heritage groups, students at UC Merced (who themselves represent many of these heritage communities), and local teachers who incorporate materials on local heritage communities in their classrooms.

Merced Humanities Fellows (Faculty and Visiting) (\$21,880)

The Merced Humanities Fellows program will support a faculty fellow and visiting fellows. It will allow us to bring Visiting Fellows to campus for anywhere from 4-15 weeks. We will provide workspace, a small fellowship stipend, and library privileges. The program will also support one resident UC Merced Faculty Fellow each year, providing a course release for one semester so they can focus on a research project. Merced Fellows will contribute to our intellectual community by participating in the seminar series and brown bag lunches, and by giving one public lecture during the course of their fellowship. They will be joined by one



or two graduate fellows, who are funded with existing grants.

This program benefits both UC Merced and faculty from other universities across the nation and the world. It provides us with new interlocutors as we engage in our research and teaching, while also providing support for the scholarship of faculty from around the nation and world. The mutual exchange, by which we learn from them and they from us, makes the seminar an intellectual crossroads, and is at the core of the Center's focus on conversation and collaboration across disciplinary cultures. We are excited about the connections this program will allow us to build both nationally and internationally to further collaborative work in the humanities.

#### Speakers for Seminar Series (\$7,000)

The endowment of the seminar series includes funding to bring at least 7 outside speakers to the seminar each year: we pay a small honorarium of \$250, and while travel costs vary, travel and other expenses average \$750. These speakers are critical to ensuring the seminar's long-term survival. Universities that have such seminars – the Davis Seminar in Historical Studies at Princeton, or the Agrarian Studies Seminar at Yale – have found that such ongoing conversations make vital contributions to the development of a shared intellectual culture. The seminar is a crucial piece for building a vibrant and collaborative conversation across the humanities; this endowment will ensure that the conversation continues across disciplines. Our current limited-term gift provides proof of concept for such a seminar, with presentations that have ranged from “Personification and the Political Imagination of A *Midsummer Night's Dream*” to “Protest Songs in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” While the Lecture is directed to the public, the Seminar is directed primarily to faculty and graduate students. Its goal is to both help us develop a shared intellectual vocabulary and to provide ongoing intellectual stimulation for the faculty, so that in the middle of meetings and teaching, they have a chance to think about issues outside their own work that may provide new insights and foster unexpected collaborations.

#### Curatorial Fellow (\$5000)

Finally, we seek to build the research capacity of the campus, as well as its capacity for outreach, by

providing funds for a curatorial fellow who will work with the growing collections of the UC Merced Library and Art Gallery. The curatorial fellow – normally a summer appointment for a graduate student, but potentially also a visiting scholar – will work with material in one of the collections; among the outcomes of this work will be an exhibit – on or off campus, or even digital. For instance, the Art Gallery has just received a gift of photographs by Pirkle Jones and Ruth-Marion Baruch; some of these were the focus of [an exhibit](#) in Fall-Winter 2013-14, curated by graduate and undergraduate students working with Professor ShiPu Wang. The students selected the works, wrote the labels, and hung the photographs. The collection, which documents California from the 1950s to the 1990s, is of historical as well as aesthetic interest; the photos that were part of Black Power/Flower Power, for instance, illustrate the Bay Area as a crossroads between radical politics and hippie culture. The Library is also in discussions with Mark Arax, a well-known California journalist, and member of the Armenian diaspora community in the valley, to serve as custodian of his interview tapes, and to digitize them to make them easily accessible; the collection includes a set of interviews with Black Okies, who moved from Ada, Oklahoma, where they lived in indentured servitude, to the valley. The campus is also working with the Merced Irrigation District (MID) to preserve, digitize, and make its records available. These records provide a crucial archive for local history at a time when our Governor has declared a state of emergency due to drought; our Spatial Analysis and Research Center (SpARC) and graduate students will work to create historical GIS maps, so that current policy makers can better understand the water history of the valley. While Native peoples had been hunter-gatherers, the MID records show the region as a crossroads between agricultural practices, from the ranching that dominated the first half of the twentieth century to the more intensive tree-fruit and nut farming that dominates today. These two collections would provide a major source for the study of the history of agriculture and water policy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. All these collections provide resources both for research and exhibits. Their significance lies in both the rich materials for research they provide, as well as in enabling students to gain experience in libraries and exhibition planning that may lead to future careers.

At the moment, while the UC Merced library has been actively creating digital collections, it has one major archival collection, the papers of [Wilma McDaniel](#), the Okie folk poet. In a model for the way we hope

to work with such collections in the future, the collection was catalogued by students, working under the supervision of Professor Jan Goggans and Jim Dooley, the Head of Collection Services. There was a Library exhibition of papers from the [McDaniel archive](#) in 2009, and Professor Goggans used the material as part of a collaborative research project on “Art and Culture in the San Joaquin Valley,” which led to a second exhibition in Fall 2013, which we co-sponsored at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center, called “Central Valley Threads.” The work students did as paid researchers under the supervision of a scholar and library professional, like the curatorial work of students in the Art Gallery, demonstrates the way UC Merced has built student research and apprenticeship into the structure of the University. The Art Gallery exhibits have all been curated by students as part of a course on museums and museum studies; several of the undergraduates have gone on to pursue Museum Studies or Public History degrees after graduation. The curatorial fellowship will retain this practice, working with the library to support students as they gain professional experience. The McDaniel Collection, along with the Pirkle Jones gift, as well as the projects with Mark Arax and MID, helps illuminate Valley crossroads both in terms of culture and peoples, migration, and agricultural practices.

#### ***Relation of NEH Program to Current Programs and Future Development***

The program proposed for the NEH Challenge grant, as we have indicated, is built on our current programs. In addition to the features we have already mentioned, our current programs are broadly focused both toward collaborative work and public humanities. For instance, both the graduate and post-doctoral fellows of the Merced Seminar in the Humanities are expected to develop either a public humanities project or a digital humanities project in order to extend the visibility of humanities scholarship beyond the boundaries of the university. One of our post-doctoral fellows, Dr. Omotayo Jolaosho, is developing a digital exhibition based on analysis of over 80 hours of video from her research on the role of performance in political protest in South Africa. Our second post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Eli Jelly-Schapiro, will bring an exhibition of artwork by veterans to the Merced Multicultural Arts Center next fall, and organize both talks by artists and programs for local veterans. A graduate fellow joining us next year, Rhea Riegel, will develop a curriculum unit for the Merced High Schools tied to the Common Core; Paola DiFranco, one of our current

graduate fellows, offered a day-long interactive exhibit in April on how virtual and 3-D experiences change museum education.

In addition to the seminar, the Center provides a small number of individual research grants of up to \$2,000; we usually fund 6-8 of these each year. Cristián Ricci, who received grants from us for his work on Moroccan writers, has also recently received an NEH fellowship for his research on writers from Equatorial Guinea; our research grants were central for supporting research travel for his book, *¡Hay moros en la costa!*, which was just published in Spain. Ruth Mostern has received two grants from us for her work on the Yellow River in China and is a co-PI on a recently awarded NEH Digital Humanities Startup Grant; our grants supported work on her book, *Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern: The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960-1276 CE)*, which was published by Harvard University Press in 2011. Our grant to Robin DeLugan for research on “Emerging National Memories” in El Salvador, Spain, and the Dominican Republic allowed her to successfully pursue additional grants from the American Philosophical Society and UC’s Center for New Racial Studies.

Our conferences have included two (in 2010 and 2011) that focused on Global Orientalism: the work of this conference has had such echoes that it has become a global event, with conferences in the last three years in Morocco, [Russia](#), and [Japan](#). Another, on the “*Popol Vuh!*” in 2012 brought together archeologists, ethnohistorians, epigraphers and literary scholars to discuss the Mayan creation story: more than 150 people attended. Most recently, we co-sponsored a major conference on the Black Arts Movement, with more than 400 people in attendance, featuring not only a wide range of participants from the movement, but also scholars who are studying its impact.

Our funding for collaborative workgroups has recently established groups focusing on African and African Diaspora Studies; Digital Humanities; and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Each of these draws together faculty from across the campus: the African and Diaspora Studies group includes scientists who work on issues of soil and water, along with historians, literary scholars, and anthropologists: it has generated a collaboration between a historian and a soil scientist that may lead to further grant proposals on issues of water. An earlier workgroup grant on “Caves and Cognition,” led to a collaboration between

Professor Holley Moyes and several faculty in cognitive science; not only did it generate a conference on “Caves and Cognition: Exploring the Cave Experience from Multidisciplinary Perspectives,” but it also led to an essay on “Places of Imagination: How Darkness Affects Magical Thinking,” to be published in an Oxford University Press volume on light in anthropology; Professor Moyes also has an essay collection under contract with the University of Colorado Press based on the conference on the *Popol Vuh*.

We support many other humanities activities; for instance, our Graduate Student Research Assistant serves as Editorial Assistant for [\*Trans-Modernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World\*](#), an open-access journal edited by Professors Ignacio Lopez-Calvo and Cristián Ricci. We co-sponsor a wide range of lectures; this year has included one by Kathleen Cleaver (held in conjunction with an exhibit at the Art Gallery), as well as a seminar and reading by the literary scholar and author Bruce Holsinger, and a lecture by the Persian Art Historian Firuza Abdullaeva Melville. We co-sponsor the annual Human Rights Film Series, held in February; since 2007, attendance has grown steadily as the series has raised campus and community awareness about national and international human rights struggles and triumphs. By showing recently released documentaries selected from the Human Rights Watch Traveling Film Festival and bringing at least one filmmaker to campus, the film series is a vehicle for building ties between our young campus and the local community. Screenings are followed by a vibrant discussion of the particular human rights concern. We also co-sponsor the Chicano Literature Series, which has, over the past 9 years, brought 37 writers to campus. Our informal brown bag lunch series welcomes faculty, staff, and students to informal presentations about faculty research. The Chicano Writers Series and the Human Rights Film series draw an audience from both the town and the University.

Over the next five years, the Center plans to continue the development of this model, which supports graduate, post-graduate, and faculty research and community engagement in an integrated way. The ongoing presence of post-doctoral fellows, graduate fellows, and faculty fellows in an interdisciplinary conversation provides an intellectual center for the humanities. The programs we have outlined will be furthered by the development of two separate spaces for the Center.

First, the campus is about to break ground on the Classroom and Office Building II, which will

include not only a large digital humanities lab, but a suite of offices that will be used by the Center, housing staff, post-doctoral fellows, graduate fellows, and visiting fellows. The building also has a conference room and a scholarly activity room for more informal conversations. COB II is expected to open in Spring 2016.

The endowment we will raise to meet the NEH Challenge grant will leverage our ability to build support for our vision of outreach to the community. We are doing this in two ways. The simple one is that we are beginning to plan more with the Merced Multicultural Arts Center to bring events there: we expect to host brown bag lunch talks there next year, with faculty and fellows offering informal discussions of their work. In the longer term, and more ambitiously, we are also developing a partnership with the UC Merced Library and the Blum Center for Developing Economies to create a downtown Merced center for UC Merced programs. The campus is chronically short of space, whether for parking or meeting, making the campus (which is at the outer edge of town) less than welcoming to community members wishing to participate in campus events. The downtown site would have exhibition space for library collections and UC Merced research, as well as meeting rooms and an auditorium to host talks for the community. By partnering with two other entities, we will establish the centrality of the Humanities to life at UC Merced and the community; it would itself be a crossroads, between town and gown, between humanities scholarship and anti-poverty work. In particular, by placing the humanities in close collaboration with the Blum Center—most often focused on engineering solutions to world poverty – we will provide opportunities to explore the social, cultural, and political forces that shape poverty both in the San Joaquin Valley and the world. This new space would enable us to have a wide range of public events at an easily accessible site.

The funds raised through the NEH matching grant will fund only one part of these ongoing plans – those related to making our core programs sustainable. By funding a core set of programs that both reflect on and create crossroads, the endowment will enable us to work with others on these larger projects. In developing this proposal, we have built on our current experience, but added a broad thematic focus that aligns with the focus of the faculty and graduate program.

### *Impact*

Our programs have four interlocking goals. First, we aim to support vibrant and significant research

in the humanities through the Merced Fellows Program, and through the Curatorial Fellowship. Second, we seek to build a culture of collaboration and inter-disciplinarity through the Merced Seminar in the Humanities. Third, we will build and strengthen relationships with the community and region through the San Joaquin Valley Heritage Lecture. In addition, the Curatorial Fellowship supports access to Library and Gallery collections through public humanities projects.

In consultation with Dr. Laura Martin, Director of Institutional Assessment at UC Merced, we have developed an assessment plan keyed to each of these four goals that includes process, impact, and outcome evaluations, as appropriate. Our assessment will focus on the significance of the programs for the research and teaching of participants, as well as its impact on the community. We will do this as follows:

#### Merced Fellows

We ask Merced Fellows, as well as the post-doctoral fellows and graduate fellows who participate in the seminar, to write a reflective evaluation on the impact of the fellowship on their own work, both their current projects and future plans. Such evaluations will allow us to assess the ways in which the dialogue fostered by the seminar has helped to create new approaches to the familiar problems in all our fields.

One year after the end of the fellowship, we will also survey participants to identify the number of current and planned publications and presentations resulting from the fellowship; internal and external grant applications resulting from fellowship; new institutional partnerships resulting from the fellowship, and new interdisciplinary research collaborations resulting from the fellowship. In addition, we will ask participants to submit copies of all publications that are developed during their fellowship for our archives.

#### Merced Seminar in the Humanities

We will annually conduct a survey of seminar participants on the impact of the Merced Seminar; the survey will address 1) new research methods discovered that can be applied to their own projects 2) new theories encountered that can be applied to their own projects 3) new research collaborations that emerged from the seminar 4) new ideas for conferences, exhibits, or programming that emerged from the program 5) plans for either collaborative teaching or incorporating new ideas into existing courses 6) change in sense of community among humanities faculty from beginning to end of fellowship period.

### San Joaquin Valley Heritage Lecture

In addition to collecting attendance data, we will conduct focus groups with faculty, community members, and students to explore the impact of the San Joaquin Valley Lecture. We will also keep track of new collaborations with the community that emerged from it, as well as donors who are identified as a result.

### Curatorial Fellowship

The Curatorial Fellow will write an report on their work, focusing both on the research goals met and the exhibit project undertaken. We will collect data on the audience for exhibits. We will also track job placement for all students who serve as curatorial fellows.

While these assessment practices will provide an outline of the impact of our work, more broadly, the long-term impact of the work of the Humanities will be shown by the ways in which the Humanities play a central role in the life of both the campus and the town. This is less amenable to measurement, but our goal is to make the Humanities part of discussions about the issues that face the San Joaquin Valley in particular, and the global community in general. Whether we are talking about refugees, the impact of global warming, or the diffusion of public health knowledge, the Humanities offer both a sense of how these issues have been addressed in other times and places, and also the human and cultural dimensions of these issues; the Center thus becomes a meeting point between current concerns and academic knowledge. For instance, a one-day symposium we recently co-sponsored, “Thirty Years of Mass Incarceration,” was attended by attorneys from the Merced County Public Defender, who were grateful for its intellectual framing of the issues they deal with on a daily basis.

The Humanities are not just utilitarian, however. On campus and in the community, the humanities bring people together to consider what it has meant and continues to mean to be human. Our individual journeys and connections create a set of personal crossroads that have enriched our lives and those of the multiple communities of which we are a part.

### *Long-Range Plans and Resources*

As the newest branch of the University of California, UC Merced is committed to continued scholarly excellence as a research university. The University has an unusually strong tradition of shared



governance, which ensures faculty control of the curriculum and personnel practices; outstanding research is a central criterion for faculty appointment and promotion. This, if nothing else, will ensure the continuing excellence of Humanities research at the University.

Because the campus is new, the Humanities faculty is relatively small, though it is growing along with the university. We currently have 33 faculty members supporting planned or existing undergraduate majors in Anthropology, English, Global Arts Studies, History, and Spanish; we support undergraduate minors in Writing and Arts. We offer a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Humanities.<sup>2</sup> The current faculty is expected to grow to at least 75 by 2020.

UC Merced is currently developing a Strategic Plan to guide its growth through the next 6 years. That plan includes both physical expansion – additional office, classroom, and research space, as well as facilities for students – and a determination of areas of strategic focus. The campus is supported in this by the University of California Office of the President, which is developing a Memorandum of Understanding that will ensure adequate financial support for the campus to 2020. The strategic plan for the Humanities calls for us to offer a national model for conjoined and interdisciplinary teaching that links the Humanities broadly – including the arts and anthropology. Faculty research and academic programs will feature border-crossing work engaged with the whole campus, the local community and the wider world. We expect the size of the faculty to grow by 150-200% in that time. The Center for the Humanities, by fostering conversation and collaboration, will play a pivotal role in this process.

While the physical library resources of the campus are still limited, our library has an extensive collection of e-books, and we have rapid access to all the books in the UC system through interlibrary loan; through the California Digital Library, we have access to a wide array of electronic books, journals and databases. Furthermore, the CDL sponsors eScholarship, an open source electronic publishing platform. Already, Humanities faculty at UC Merced have established one open-access journal (*TransModernity*) published through eScholarship; the papers from the graduate student conferences the Center helps sponsor

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<sup>2</sup> This program has been approved by the University of California, and we are awaiting WASC approval; it will replace our earlier Individualized Graduate Program in World Cultures.

each year are also be published through there. Thus we have a robust and accessible platform for open access publication and dissemination of our work. In addition, faculty members publish regularly in a range of journals, as well as with presses both in the US and abroad.

The UC Merced Library, which seeks to model the library of the future, provides robust support for both data curation and the preservation of digital scholarship. For instance, Professor Ruth Mostern's [Digital Gazetteer of the Song Dynasty](#) is hosted by the library. The Library is eager to serve as a partner in both digital humanities research and publication. The Center itself, and the Humanities faculty generally, have a strong partnership with the Library to ensure that we have adequate resources for research and publication.

The Center for the Humanities, as a research hub, will play a central role in the development of the Humanities, and in particular the development of a shared intellectual culture at UC Merced in three ways. First, the Merced Seminar, and the publications that emerge from it, will highlight the shared frameworks and concerns of humanities faculty. Second, the workgroups and conferences it funds will both highlight faculty research, and allow faculty to build collaborations across disciplines, not only in the humanities but in the social sciences. Finally, through the Valley Heritage Lecture, and other collaborations, we will provide links to community groups that will support both undergraduates and graduates in building experience in the public humanities. Our outreach to the community supports key campus goals.

In this process, we will work closely with the Interdisciplinary Humanities graduate program: while Interdisciplinary Humanities is building a pedagogical infrastructure, the Center is building a research infrastructure that supports cross- and inter-disciplinary projects. Graduate students will take a course in Public Humanities (museum studies, digital humanities, etc), and the Center's graduate fellows for the seminar will build on this by undertaking public humanities projects. While a course in the graduate program focuses on professionalization, their participation with faculty in workgroups, conference planning committees, and the Merced seminar will provide graduate students with the concrete experience of being a professional colleague.

In doing this, we have the support of the Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and

Arts, the Provost and Executive Vice-Chancellor, and the Chancellor of UC Merced. Provost Tom Peterson has described the Interdisciplinary Humanities graduate program as “creative and forward thinking,” and gave it strong support. Similarly, Dean Mark Aldenderfer praised the proposal for the Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group for the way Humanities faculty have “leveraged [their] talents through cooperation and collaboration.” Chancellor Dorothy Leland has repeatedly stressed the importance of the Humanities; she has described the Center as “a crucial hub for building community across campus,” and notes that “questions raised by the Humanities cut across all our schools.” The campus is in the midst of developing its plan for expansion, and the humanities will be central to it. Every time the campus develops a set of research themes, themes of culture and cultural connection emerge as core concerns; just as the campus seeks to create new intellectual crossroads through interdisciplinary inquiry, the understanding of cultural crossroads is central to UC Merced’s intellectual mission.

### ***Fundraising Plan***

As a brand new institution, the measurable impact of gifts is substantial and often immediately visible – our community has watched UC Merced rise up from nothing since 2005. We will focus on this substantial impact in the Valley as we ask future donors to help “grow” the Center with us. We believe tapping into the heritage of the Valley will be an important framing story for explaining why this grant is important – a seed grant that requires careful cultivation. Since June 2013, we have been working with the Office of Development, the Library, and the Office of Research to lay the groundwork for raising the matching portion of this grant.

The fundraising plan for the Center is being led by our office of Development and Alumni Relations, with whom we have met multiple times over the last year to discuss how the NEH Challenge Grant can create sustainable funding for the Center. This is part of the original vision proposed by Development to the anonymous donor who provided a gift of \$2 million in 2012 – that proof of concept over four years for these programs would allow us to work on securing sustainable funding in the form of endowment. Development and Alumni Relations is led by Vice Chancellor Kyle Hoffman; the support for the fundraising portion of this grant will be led by Jan Mendenhall, Associate Vice Chancellor for Development, and her staff. There are

currently six directors working under her; Patricia LaCroix, Executive Director of Corporate and Foundation Giving will work with us on current-use funds. There is currently a search for a Development Director who will work with the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts; that person will have primary responsibility for this campaign.

UC Merced is, as we have noted, a new institution, and it therefore still has a small endowment. However, the University is financially stable, as it is supported by the vast resources of the University of California and the University's President, Janet Napolitano. The Office of the President will be signing an MOU with the campus in the next month; that will guarantee not only tuition support for the growth of our student body, but financial support for the physical expansion of the campus. The shared resources of the UC system have been of enormous importance to the campus. Without a significant alumni base, we have used people's ties to the University to build our donor base and cultivate new long-term relationships. Given this challenge, the campus has been remarkably successful. The campus has attracted over \$90 million in gifts. Most of these gifts have come to us from foundations, corporations and individuals that understand and are committed to the value that this university brings not only to this underserved region, but also to the state of California... and beyond. We have nimbly and successfully cultivated the support of donors who are eager to invest in a "work in progress," who believe in our vision for this community, and its role in addressing the problems of our age across the globe; as Chancellor Leland notes, we are "increasingly attracting attention – and more importantly the support – of generous individuals and organizations who believe in the work we do." Based on our current \$2 million gift, we know that the humanities can capture the imagination of members of our community. The project proposed here is designed to engage our constituents on issues they grapple with and care about. The NEH Challenge Grant will be a vehicle to stimulate support from our existing donors as well as from new prospects.

In developing the fundraising plan for the challenge grant, we will both work with existing donors and prospects who have an interest in the humanities, and cultivate new donors – individuals and groups – who will be inspired by our plans. In projecting our fundraising plan, we start with the existing donor pool, of which there are four in the \$5-15 million giving range, 18 in the \$1-5 million range, 24 in the \$500,000 to \$1

million range, and 32 in the \$100,000 to \$500,000 range. A targeted effort will be made with those donors (other than our anonymous donor) who have already given close to \$4 million of support for the Humanities Program, including allocations for two endowed chairs. While one of our goals with this grant is to expand this pool, we expect a significant portion of the funds we raise to come from our existing donors. However, because this is a new area of focus for our development office, and we will be cultivating new donors, we have assumed that most of our gifts will come in the latter years of the campaign.

The campus has identified [five fundraising priorities](#) that are aligned with the University's 2020 goal of achieving the status among its peers as a competitive and distinctive UC research university with an enrollment of 10,000 students. The first two of these priorities align directly with this proposal: 1) Competitive Recruitment of Graduate Students 2) Enhancing Research Culture and Infrastructure. The institution has already begun raising funds for graduate student recruitment through its Chancellor's Fellowships initiative; \$623,000 has been committed toward a goal of \$1.1 million, a significant portion coming from UC Merced Foundation trustees who have made this a special project. The priority of enhancing the University's research culture includes development of lecture and speaker series, and growing a robust visiting scholars program; the fundraising priorities plan specifically calls out visiting scholars for the Center for the Humanities.

For the Humanities Center's endowment campaign, Development is utilizing the framework of a gift pyramid, with particular naming opportunities for the program's components in mind to set specific donor prospect targets: two single gifts of \$275,000 and \$250,000 for the faculty fellow and Heritage Lecture respectively; for the remainder of the match, we will seek two gifts of \$100,000, \$150,000-\$200,000 from gifts in the \$25,000 to \$50,000 range, \$5000 from the faculty, and the remainder in smaller gifts from alumni and the local community. Development is already discussing the possibility of funding with both the Mellon and Sloan foundations. We have already identified 10 prospects who could potentially bring in at least \$500,000 of our \$900,000 match by Year 5. We will work actively with Development and Alumni Relations to identify additional donors, and will use a range of methods to build those relationships, foremost being the participation of the Chancellor and the Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts in major

gifts cultivation. We will use the Challenge Grant to develop community friends and to leverage their spheres of influence, engaging them in special Center events. Our fundraising strategy is to connect with the passions of our community, providing inspiration for stakeholders to invest in projects that are meaningful to our Valley's cultural heritage.

The fundraising strategy we have chosen has been designed to provide opportunities for new participants to become involved with UC Merced and the Center for the Humanities. In addition, the process of fundraising will provide a network of donors for ongoing support for the Humanities. This grant will be important in building the capacity of our Development Office to raise money for the Humanities. By expanding internal capacity, and external relationships, this grant will strengthen the University.

### ***Conclusion***

Our programs offer one answer to anguished discussions of the crisis in the humanities. That crisis, as numerous commentators have reminded us, is not a crisis of good ideas or significant research, but a crisis brought about by the changing funding model of the university. While we might wish to have greater public commitment to university education, the work of the Center, in conjunction with the faculty in Interdisciplinary Humanities, provides a model of making our research integral to the Merced community. In doing so, it will give graduate students and faculty the opportunity to explore the range of possible uses of humanities research.

UC Merced was founded with a vision of redesigning the research university to be a crossroads not only of disciplines, but of the university and the community, so that the structures of the university serve the intellectual needs of the academic mission, rather than vice versa. The challenges presented by this project are greater than anyone imagines before they arrive on campus; yet the excitement of creating something new energizes faculty, staff, and administrators. It is tempting, when constructing a university in an underserved region of the state, with enormous economic and social needs, to focus entirely on the utilitarian. Scholarship in the humanities often seems to reflect on the challenges we face more than it provides immediate answers. However, the perspectives that emerge from the humanities, and their ability to illuminate intellectual, cultural, social and political intersections, have always played a vital role in building communities that can

effectively respond to the many challenges we face.