**Proposal to Establish an Arkansas Humanities Center**

**at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville**

**Housed in the** J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences

**Proposer:** Kathryn A. Sloan, Director of Humanities & Professor of History

**Center type**: Research, service, and instruction

**Unique value of the Center to the University.** The main mission of the Arkansas Humanities Center (AHC) is to support and enhance research opportunities in the humanities. Humanities research is by its nature interdisciplinary and the AHC promotes and incentivizes the collaboration of scholars across disciplines. The AHC also brings members of the academic and surrounding community together to discuss humanities research, encompassing the most pressing and salient issues of our time. The AHC will increase the reputation of the University of Arkansas (UA) in the nation. Currently, the University of Missouri and the UA are the only institutions in SEC that do not have a humanities center or institute.

More specifically, the AHC contributes to the profile of the university in the following ways:

* Support the *Arkansas Stories of Place and Belonging* project funded by a Chancellor’s Innovation grant (this project began summer 2018; funded for $88,735, PI is Kathryn Sloan, Director of Humanities)
* Collaborate with Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Arkansas Humanities Council, the Pryor Center, Archaeological Survey, and Mullins Library Special Collections, and other universities in the state to deliver quality humanities programming to the campus and state. Humanities is already collaborating with Crystal Bridges on *Arkansas Stories* project
* Establish humanities summer training seminars for K-12 teachers in the state
* Support graduate education and success by providing professionalization and grant-writing workshops for students
* Provide alternate-academic career education and workshops for Humanities PhDs seeking non-academic jobs (in alignment with Graduate School’s Mellon/NSF grant on PhD Career Pathways-Director of Humanities, Kathryn Sloan, is co-PI on that grant)
* Engage with diverse audiences and stakeholders around humanities projects and programming
* Seek federal, state, and foundation funding to support operations and programs (e.g., National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Arkansas Humanities Council, Whiting Foundation, and others)

The AHC aligns closely with the following UA guiding priorities:

1) **Advancing Student Success**: Humanities gateway courses develop **critical thinking** and **communication** (oral and written) skills in students for later success in their majors. Likewise, Humanities courses deepen students’ **resilience** and ability to succeed through learning how others have dealt with adversities and triumphs. Humanities courses engage students in the salient issues of our times, providing them a lexicon to discuss and debate what is means to be a global citizen. Fundamentally, humanities courses and inquiry provide students the tools and mindsets to form a sense of **belonging,** to identify and find their community.

2) **Building a Collaborative and Innovative Campus**: *Arkansas Stories of Place and Belonging*, a public humanities project funded by the Chancellor’s Innovation Fund, is the first step of the AHC to build meaningful **collaborations across disciplinary boundaries** and among internal and external stakeholders. The AHC will leverage this **seed funding** to seek federal funding from the NEH for future programming and infrastructure building. The humanities program has a long history of funding interdisciplinary events including a symposium on the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther and Protestantism, an anniversary conference on the Elaine Riot, and other events that have engaged constituents across the university and region. The AHC will incentivize collaboration and innovation by seed funding collaborative research and teaching projects.

3) **Enhancing Our Research and Discovery Mission**: Humanities scholars at the University of Arkansas have **international reputations**. Many have won grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, NEH, National Institute for Health, Fulbright Scholars program, Mellon Foundation, and National Humanities Center. The AHC will provide an interactive informational portal on its website for **humanities grant competitions** and host **workshops** by funding agency program officers and successful grant writers. Junior scholars will be especially supported by the AHC and it will facilitate **mentoring** relationships for them in conjunction with their department chairs.

4) **Investing in Faculty Excellence**: One key to student success is developing a sense of **belonging** to the college community. Belonging is a key component of retaining faculty too, especially faculty of color. The AHC serves as a space for all ranks of faculty to come together around **common interests in humanistic research and teaching**. Faculty and graduate student brown bag meetings, symposia, and public humanities events provide ample opportunities for all faculty regardless of rank to make connections, network, and develop a sense of **community and belonging.**

5) **Promoting Innovation in Teaching and Learning:** The AHC supports **innovative and active learning**. Humanities faculty members engage undergraduate and graduate students in research and **experiential learning**. The AHC presents teaching workshops for award-winning UA faculty to learn new pedagogical approaches to learning and will develop summer teaching seminars like the NEH Summer Teacher Institute hosted by UA English and Education faculty members in June 2018.

6) **Reaffirming Our Land Grant and Flagship Responsibilities**: The AHC will take humanities research out of the classroom and into the **public sphere**. The Chancellor Innovation grant funded project *Arkansas Stories* is a start. This project fosters teams of internal and external stakeholders to develop **public history programs** in communities across the state. Humanities scholars engage with local specialists, students, and community members to model how humanistic research is done and to spark **dialogue** on our state’s rich and diverse cultural history.

7) **Strengthening Graduate Education**: The Director of the AHC, Kathryn Sloan, is co-PI on a Mellon/NSF grant to track PhD **career pathways** among humanities and STEM graduates. The goal of the grant is to improve graduate education by providing a range of career preparation for PhD graduates. The AHC works with the four humanities PhD programs in the College to provide **career education and preparation** for non-academic sectors. The AHC also provides a venue for graduate students to present their research and gain valuable feedback through its brownbag colloquia series. Graduate students may also attend all research and grant writing workshops.

**Leadership and Organizational Structure.** The director position in Humanities already exists in the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. The Dean of the College pays the current director, Kathryn Sloan, two-summer months salary to oversee activities. She is an active scholar in the National Humanities Alliance and currently sits on the program committee of the National Humanities Conference. For the past two years Sloan has participated in Humanities Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill and has established relationships with Arkansas’s congressional delegation. This November she will host a lunch for Arkansas humanities colleagues at the national conference. Attendees include directors of the Arkansas Humanities Council, faculty members from community college and universities in the state, and the president of Hendrix College, Dr. William Tsutsui. The AHC director reports to the Associate Dean for the Humanities in the College. Once a Center is established, an associate director will be appointed and paid from the endowment funds. The associate director will report to the director and be responsible for organizing events, establishing communications with community partners and stakeholders, and grant writing.

The director will manage the unit, including day-to-day operations and finances. The director will undergo an annual performance evaluation that includes an assessment of administrative performance by the Dean of Fulbright College.

**Constituent Units and Personnel.** Currently, departments traditionally associated with the discipline of humanities—English, History, Communication, Philosophy, Journalism, and World languages—are directly involved in the humanities program and its programming. Likewise, interdisciplinary programs such as Classical Studies, Gender Studies, Indigenous Studies, Jewish Studies, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and Religious Studies are engaged with the humanities program. These relationships will continue and most of the directors sit on the advisory committee. There will be no joint appointments of faculty because the Center will serve to promote humanities scholarship and inquiry, public programming, and grant writing workshops and not serve as the home unit to any faculty member.

Moreover, the three-semester sequence of courses for honors students, Honors Humanities Project (H2P), is a collaboration between the Honors Program in the College and the AHC. The sequence of courses enrolls approximately 250 students each year. The director of the AHC works with the Honors Program Director to recruit faculty to teach H2P courses.

**Student involvement.** Students attend humanities symposia and lectures and enroll in the H2P sequence of honors courses in the general education curriculum. The AHC works actively to strengthen graduate education in the humanities. Indeed UA is the only R-1 institution in the state of Arkansas and the AHC takes a strong stand in this day and age to promote post-undergraduate study in humanistic disciplines. There are four PhD programs in the humanities in English, History, Philosophy, and Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies. The AHC works closely with those programs to offer career, professionalization, and funding workshops for their MA and PhD students. The AHC assists humanities programs and departments in crafting their message of why humanities matters. In fact, a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* confirms that students need to expand their thinking and training by taking humanities courses in order to best tackle our biggest social and technological challenges. Big questions matter and a humanities education expands our thinking and best equips us to see the big picture and devise solutions.

**Annual budget and expenditures.** The annual budget is approximately $40,000. Expenditures vary but average about $36,000 over the past three years. Over the past two years, Humanities has devoted funds to summer research stipends for 100% appointed faculty (tenure and non-tenure stream), research symposia and lectures, honoraria for guest scholars, and research and grant writing workshops. In fact, we hosted a very successful NEH grant workshop with a NEH program officer. The workshop was open to the region and state and attended by more than 100 faculty and staff from Oklahoma, Missouri, and several institutions of higher education in Arkansas.

**Estimated fiscal resources and potential sources of funding.** In 1985, Fulbright College received a $900,000 Challenge Grant (CU-20159) from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to establish a permanent funding source for two comprehensive programs at the University:  the Center for Arkansas and Regional Studies (CARS) and the Humanities Program.  This generous grant also contributed to the ambitious campaign to raise over $6 million to renovate Old Main, a building constructed in 1879 that has become over the past decade and a half the architectural showcase of the campus as well as the symbol of higher education for the state of Arkansas.  It is within Old Main that the Honors Humanities Project is housed, and the building over the years has lent its venerable cachet to the course itself.  Indeed, Old Main has become synonymous with the humanities on this campus. Humanities currently operates on the spending resources of that 1985 NEH Challenge Grant. Spending amounts average $40,000 per year. Center status positions Humanities to be competitive for additional NEH funding as well as grants from various foundations, humanities councils, and private donors.

The establishment of a Center will allow the directors to apply for funding and when successful, benefit directly from a portion of the indirect funds that return to the grant writer. Center status also conveys the university’s support for the humanities, which places the AHC in good stead for grant funding. Federal agencies like the NEH like to see that their grantees have strong support from their university administration. Center status will also put the UA in line with our peer and aspirant institutions such as the University of Kansas (Hall Center for the Humanities) and the University of Tennessee. Those humanities centers have large endowments that have allowed them to host visiting scholars, offer research colloquia, offer fellowships and book publication grants, and present high profile public lectures and events to the their states. Indeed the AHC would seek a donor or group of donors to name the Center.

**Space and equipment needs of the Center.** At this juncture, the Center does not need any additional space or equipment. The center will be run out of the director’s office in 419 Old Main until it can secure external funding or internal support for the renovation or refitting of space on or near campus. The current director will also work closely with the Fulbright Development office to seek donor funding. Meanwhile, AHC activities will occur in meeting rooms and lecture halls on campus as well as sites around the state.

**Administrative control and lines of authority in the Center.** The director runs the AHC as its chief officer. An associate director will be appointed to assist the director on rotating humanities initiatives. An advisory committee made up of humanities faculty and external stakeholders will provide counsel to the directors. A fiscal support specialist in the college will provide financial support, e.g. enter BASIS transactions. A graduate assistant (funded by a Chancellor’s collaboration and innovation grant) is also assigned to the director for a two-year period.

**Advisory board.** Humanities faculty members sit on the advisory board. Currently, the humanities steering committee is made up of faculty members from English, World Languages, Philosophy, History, and Communication. When the Center is established the advisory board will consist of seven members who will serve 2-year terms. In addition, the director will seek humanities specialists from outside the university to serve on the board, e.g. foundation members, historical society personnel, Crystal Bridges executives.

**Metrics for evaluation of the Center.** Good evaluations promote better projects and programming. Evaluation of humanities programs is key to the success of the AHC and the ability of humanities specialists to talk about why the humanities matter. The AHC director, associate director and humanities project pioneers will measure success on various impact factors. Measurable impact factors for the AHC include 1) increased exposure of diverse audiences to humanistic approaches to research and discovery; 2) increased collaborations between university faculty/students and community organizations and partners; 3) increased humanities content and teaching materials for K-12 educators; 4) graduate student success in grants/fellowships and career placement (academic and alternative-academic); 5) increased number of national humanities awards achieved by faculty. Assessment tools to glean impact factors will include attendance rates, funding rates, surveys of audiences and workshop participants, website and social media hits, research production (articles, podcasts, etc.).

**Conclusion.** Since that 1985 NEH Challenge Grant, the University has grown exponentially, hired more humanities faculty with sensational research and publication records, recruited more graduate students to its PhD programs, and achieved the highest Carnegie classification as a Very High Research (R1) university. Forming an **Arkansas Humanities** **Center** to foster humanistic research and teaching in these times of social and political turmoil is essential to the University’s role and mission as a land grant and flagship institution in the state. The research is clear humanities education and research help people live fulfilled lives.