

The Center for Engaged Humanities
Colorado State University
February 2021

This white paper proposes the formation of a Center for Engaged Humanities. Supporting CSU’s leadership efforts to reimagine the 21st-century land-grant university, this Center seeks to develop a coherent and robust approach to building the capacity of the humanities at CSU to undertake engaged research, teaching, and service parallel to and in concert with engagement activities across the entire university system.

The program described below supports the work of faculty and students in the *humanities disciplines and departments* who study culture, history, politics, and human expression (Art and Art History; Communication Studies; English; Ethnic Studies; History; Interdisciplinary Studies; Journalism and Media Communications, Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Music, Theatre, and Dance; Philosophy; and Women’s Studies). Many CLA humanities faculty already pursue forms of “engaged scholarship,” described by Dean Benjamin Withers and Associate Dean Michael Carolan as “intentional efforts to connect knowledge generated through faculty activity directly to the public in ways that collaboratively address social issues and community needs and concerns.”¹ Here space allows mention of a few: Center for Public Deliberation (Communication Studies), Community Literacy Center (English), Public Lands History Center (History), and race relations work among East African, Latin@, and white communities in Fort Morgan, CO (Ethnic Studies). Recent conditions in US and global societies—civil unrest, political divisiveness, inequality, incivility, and racial and ethnic tensions—have prompted renewed interest among humanities faculty and students hoping to use their research to address these issues.

As a centralized coordinating unit within the CLA, the Center for Engaged Humanities would provide 1) the material, administrative, and intellectual infrastructure to support engaged humanities research, 2) interdisciplinary graduate education and programming to train, retain, and support the next generation of engaged scholars, and 3) a highly visible public portal to experts and community support where Coloradoans can connect and collaborate with faculty and students via projects that respond to real community needs. Key stakeholders include:

CLA faculty and graduate students: The Center will provide engagement-related opportunities and training. It will serve as a venue for scholars to develop constructive relationships with community partners and generate interdisciplinary research solutions to local issues.

CSU: As a center of centers, the Center for Engaged Humanities will provide an administrative home to the complex and evolving array of efforts in humanities at CSU, reducing duplicated efforts and making efficient use of resources. The Center also provides a space for and represents the College’s commitment to the inclusion of historically excluded voices and perspectives.

Community: Central to the Center for Engaged Humanities initiative is genuine and sustained dialogue with community members around issues of equity and access that are relevant to our region, its history, its people, and its diverse forms of cultural expression. CEH leaders and Scholars will make concerted efforts to partner with local organizations, especially those that advocate for marginalized, disempowered, or at-risk people. Such organizations may include the

¹ Michael Carolan and Benjamin Withers, “Re-envisioning and Valuing What We do: Twenty-first Century Liberal Arts Scholarly in a Land Grant University,” nd. The current document reflects the work of the first cohort of Humanities Fellows (2020-21): Tori Arthur, Ryan Claycomb, Maricela DeMirjyn, Kit Hughes, Katie Knobloch, Sarah Payne, and Ken Shockley.

ISAAC (documented and undocumented immigrant support) (isaacnoco.org), the BIPOC Alliance (bipocalliance.org), La Familia (thefamilycenterfc.org), Fuerza Latina (fuerzalatinafoco.org), and the Fort Collins Homeless Coalition (fccan.org).

Mission The CSU Center for Engaged Humanities supports the capacity of scholars, teachers, students, and community members to explore the full range of humanistic research, to facilitate social change, to recognize different voices and anti-racist perspectives, and to build systems of equity and inclusion across local, state, and regional communities. The Center promotes and sustains transformative social justice research, education, and engagement in support of CSU's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. The Center's physical space provides a venue for engagement with the humanities, sharing perspectives, gathering partners across the university and within our various communities, and expanding outreach and collaboration beyond the university. In bolstering interdisciplinary connections spanning history, philosophy, the arts, literature, ethnic studies, languages, and other domains, the Center seeks to establish Colorado State University as leader in the study of culture, civic engagement, and the study of bias, race, and equity through the lens of the humanities.

Initiatives The Center's emphasis on supporting research, graduate education, and community engagement builds the capacity of the humanities at CSU to tackle community challenges and address the CLA's stated vision of creating a more humane, livable, sustainable world. These initiatives take seriously existing challenges to engaged humanities efforts, including lack of training opportunities for graduate students and faculty, and community mistrust of higher education institutions. They also support work already being conducted in the CLA by coordinating efforts and resources of engaged CLA centers, bolstering their potential impacts.

Engaged Humanities Scholars Program: this annual series leverages faculty and graduate student expertise regarding important problems facing Colorado communities (e.g., water), with explicit attention to how the theme intersects with questions of equity, justice, and democratic decision-making. Engaged scholars receive training in engagement and working with local organizations. Together scholars create public programs, host community workshops, and develop interdisciplinary, multi-vocal approaches to address the year's theme and demonstrate the importance of the CSU humanities to stakeholders outside of the university. For engaged scholars, meetings also stimulate intellectually shared interests, provide interdisciplinary mentorship opportunities, and support faculty and student research output.

Public Programming: proposed Center events go well beyond the traditional academic lecture-Q&A to focus on building lasting connections across Colorado communities. Examples include workshops that link community members and stakeholders around shared topics to build trust and create avenues for engaged projects, interdisciplinary engagement training workshops for graduate students and their faculty mentors, and lectures paired with facilitated community discussions that focus on scholarship's relevance to Fort Collins, Colorado, and the West.

Graduate Education and the Engaged Humanities Certificate: The Center for the Engaged Humanities seeks to become a vibrant home for CLA graduate students that strengthens existing CLA graduate programs, establishes infrastructure for sharing strategies related to diverse student recruitment and retention, builds inclusive interdisciplinary graduate student community,

provides novel and needed curricular opportunities, connects students to service-learning and engaged scholarship projects, and supports on-time graduate degree completion. The centerpiece of these efforts is the Engaged Humanities Certificate, which provides graduate students with the practical and theoretical resources they need to carry out engaged humanities research. This 3-course suite enables students to think critically about how to mobilize the work they do in their “home” discipline to meet communities’ most pressing problems and offers a formalized structure to encourage engaged research and address student difficulty in meeting graduation timeline requirements. It also complements the CLA’s slate of practice-based graduate studies offerings (MPPA, MSM, MALCM), thus helping to build the profile of the CLA at CSU as a vanguard in community leadership programs by offering students in all CLA graduate programs an opportunity to undertake engaged work in concert with diverse program requirements.

Centers Hub: In addition to offering independent programming, the Center for Engaged Humanities will coordinate operations across a select number of university centers housed in the College of Liberal Arts. The Center will offer centralized services including branding, marketing, publicity; administrative and fiscal support; aid with development, grant writing, and fund raising; community outreach and help identifying local partners; shared training opportunities; and transcription and translation services. The center will also house an Engagement Library that includes training, case study, and research materials from the EHS program as well as research and engagement tools that are either currently hosted by individual centers or out-of-reach because of their costs (e.g., Qualtrics, Group Maps, recording technologies, and meeting supplies). Finally, the Center for Engaged Humanities will work other centers to develop and coordinate projects that can be conducted by the centers in partnership with one another. This might include large, interdisciplinary grant projects or inter-college efforts aimed at connecting students and faculty across departments. The Center will be tasked with identifying potential projects that may be suitable for work across centers and then enabling those partnerships by providing administrative assistance and coordination services.

Space: As Humanities scholars, we know the impact that physical working spaces have on promoting or discouraging collaboration, conversation, and community. As CSU and the CLA consider revitalization plans for the Andrew G. Clark building, we propose that a dedicated space for the Center for the Engaged Humanities be a priority. The Center’s physical space will serve not only as an administrative center for the above initiatives, it will provide a central location for ongoing discussion, building networks linking centers and communities, and sharing resources.

Progress Beginning in 2017, the College of Liberal Arts began a concerted effort to support, enhance, and reward “engaged scholarship” among its faculty and graduate students. In March 2020, the College of Liberal Arts and the Office of the Vice President for Research funded a proposal to launch the CSU Program in Humanities. This annual interdisciplinary fellowship program was designed to enhance the capacity of the humanities at CSU to build systems of equity and inclusion across local, regional, national, and global communities. The first cohort of Humanities Fellows imagined the scope and potential of a program at CSU that highlights how the humanities can both tackle the intricacies of prejudice, social and economic inequities, and community polarization, as well as showcase the manifold ways in which cultural heterogeneity is an asset to communities and robust discussions of self-governance and the good life.

Accomplished as of March 2021:

Collaborated with CLA leadership to design fellowship program

Convened inaugural group of Humanities Fellows

Drafted internal white paper (December 2020) and shaped detailed initiatives, abbreviated above

Applied for and received \$30,000 seed grant from OVPR

Upcoming Tasks for SP/Summer 2021:

Carry out and assess success of programming pilots (OVPR funding)

Submit National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge grant, with CLA Development

Propose next cohort of Engaged Humanities Scholars

Work with CLA Development and Advancement to identify sustainable funding streams for

programming and facilities, secure funding for next Engaged Scholars cohort

Engage substantively with the college's strategic planning process, leverage points of overlap, and expand possibilities

Tasks for Years 2-3 (AY 2021-22, 2022-23):

Expand Engaged Scholars Program

- Collaborate with **Provost's Council of Engagement** and **Office of Engagement and Extension** to develop engagement resources targeted to humanists' specific needs.
- Participate in CSU's Engaged Scholarship Conversations series (**VP for Engagement and Extension**), and support graduate student participation in the **Engagement Scholarship Consortium's** annual Emerging Engagement Scholars Workshops.
- Establish Engaged Humanities Library (workshop materials, case studies, bibliographies, sample CVs, and—in collaboration with **Catherine Coleman Kane** and **CSU Foundation Relations**—a list of funding sources for engaged work).
- Develop **TT/CCA faculty mentorship program** to and College-wide training workshops on topics including methodological issues, building community partnerships, and involving community members in research.

Develop detailed plan for graduate certificate (with **Departments and College**)

- Research utility of a certificate to students' educational and career goals
- Meet with **graduate coordinators** in humanities departments to explore how credit distribution would fit with existing programs of study and potential for graduate students to use practicum to develop thesis and portfolio products for their home departments
- Determine how teaching load for courses dovetails with faculty teaching responsibilities
- Meet with **CLA leadership** and **Graduate School** to define possibilities and limits of GTA-ships for supporting enrollment in certificate program
- Meet with **CSU Online** and outline profit model for online introductory course

Build on SP21 programming and community outreach initiatives

- On-board new Engaged Scholars cohort
- Identify intersections between community interest and University strategic priorities
- Secure funding (identified in collaboration with **CLA Development and leadership**)

Explore feasibility of Centers Hub

- Identify temporary meeting/work spaces prior to possible NEH grant/Clark revitalization
- Work with **College leadership and CLA CIOSU/PRSE directors** to explore future catalyzing investments.