

University of California, Irvine | School of Humanities

NEH Next Generation Humanities PhD Planning Grant

White Paper submitted June 30, 2017

Building on a history of innovative graduate training in the humanities, the University of California, Irvine's School of Humanities launched a year-long Next Generation Humanities PhD planning project in 2016-2017 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The planning year, described in detail below, addressed four key questions:

- How can we effectively engage faculty and graduate students in designing and implementing humanities doctoral training that prepares students for multiple career paths?
- How can graduate curriculum broadly defined combine rigorous scholarly training with an ability to articulate and demonstrate how the skills developed in that training can be applied in a range of professional settings?
- How can the university work with community partners to provide opportunities both to expand the settings in which graduate student learning occurs and to demonstrate how the humanities can contribute to all sectors of the economy?
- How can we serve our PhD alumni by recognizing their accomplishments and how can we engage them in modeling career paths for graduate students?

We conducted wide-ranging and sometimes intense conversations that explored philosophical, pedagogical, and institutional approaches to answering these questions in the UCI context. The planning process resulted in a set of concrete next steps, a series of potential actions that will require additional resources and planning, and some aspirational goals for future work. We also ended the year with momentum to move forward in our collective efforts to enhance humanities graduate education at UC Irvine.

Several themes kept emerging during the course of our work. We affirmed that graduate education reform should not involve thinning down the deep knowledge and methodological innovation of humanistic inquiry, nor should graduate students be asked to choose between studying for professorships and planning for other forms of employment. It is not only museums, businesses, and the government sector that want intellectually flexible, pedagogically innovative, technically proficient, and collaboratively-minded employees; academic institutions also increasingly want to hire scholar-teacher-citizens who can help renew the professoriate in response to the emerging goals and challenges of 21st century education. We envision graduate students learning how to think about the basic claims, animating principles, and desired outcomes of their scholarly work through opportunities to explain, apply, translate, and retool advanced research in a range of settings. These opportunities should make our PhDs into stronger and more credible candidates for many kinds of positions, including the tenure track. Committee members continually returned to the idea that articulating a shared set of values and skills involving the integrity of research, the merit of teaching, and the significance of varied forms and outlets of professional communication is shared by PhD students from all our disciplines and can guide them through many possible career paths.

Another recurrent theme was the availability of resources on campus that many committee members knew little or nothing about before coming together as a group. One major task next

year will be to communicate information about these services to faculty, graduate students, and administrators and make them into positive goods for students and their advisers.

Although there was increasing consensus on the value of a broader and more textured education for all graduate students in the humanities, members also voiced genuine concerns about what can actually be accomplished under present circumstances. One issue is time: in an environment stressing time-to-degree in a public university setting with high teaching loads for graduate students, contributors to the process were wary of add-ons and distractions. The more that reforms can be built directly into existing structures, the more likely it is that graduate students and faculty will be in a position to effect change.

Above and beyond these resource issues, the single largest barrier to graduate reform in the area of career diversity may also be the one most amenable to fixing: resistance from faculty and graduate students themselves. Some stakeholders have fixed ideas about what counts as success for a humanities PhD. Others are made anxious or uncomfortable by discussing placement rates in their departments and fields. Still others acknowledge the challenges and opportunities posed by multiple career paths, but think of these issues as pertaining to other people. The faculty and students who elected to attend our town halls and focus groups were already interested in these questions. In the next phase of the project, we plan to take this discussion to peers and colleagues where they are, in order to reach a broader group: to graduate students in their methods seminars; to faculty in their department meetings; and to directors of graduate study in their capacity as advisors and policy makers.

In sum, we had a highly invigorating and positive planning year, leading to increased consensus around key principles and a sense of manageable short-term goals and more aspirational long-term goals, all crafted within a sober understanding of the material, cultural, and affective challenges facing this urgent enterprise.

What Happened?

Planning Committee

We convened a 50 member planning committee made up of faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, alumni and local humanities PhDs in non-faculty careers, community members, and administrators. The full planning committee met three times – at the beginning of fall quarter, at the end of winter quarter and at the end of spring quarter. We formed four working groups in order to address practical considerations related to the four themes defined above. Each working group met five times during the academic year to discuss research on best practices, engage with guest speakers on specific topics, and explore potential changes in graduate education within the UCI context. The working groups also initiated a number of activities described below.

Faculty and Graduate Student Town Halls

We held two open meetings for faculty and graduate students to learn more about the Next Generation PhD project, ask questions, and share their ideas and concerns about humanities graduate education. Although the turnout for each town hall was small, we had productive conversations that brought new colleagues into the process.

Among graduate students, there was consensus about two central areas of concern: transparency around career preparation and the need for skills development provided by the department. Students felt that the nature of the professoriate and the academic job market is murky and only lightly touched upon in seminars and mentorship interactions. Part of the solution resides in better communication between academic departments and existing campus resources. Many resources, from career counseling to pedagogical training, exist on campus, but are neglected by departments due to a simple lack of awareness and coordination. Graduate students also expressed frustration with the skills that they develop while in school. Some students who have ventured out into the job market return with anecdotes about a misalignment between academic skills and the more practical tools desired by employers. Graduate students who have found promising employment outside of academia perceive their secondary skills, those that they cultivate outside of their regular coursework, such as web and graphic design or sound editing, as being imperative to their success on the job market.

Faculty members' concerns can be distilled into three central areas: obligations and expectations, admissions, and concerns about diversity and representation. Faculty were uniform in their hesitation to take on additional responsibilities, especially those related to professionalization outside of their areas of expertise, such as digital enskillment or non-academic jobs. This concern is also connected to the hazily defined roles of mentor and advisor. Furthermore, faculty pointed out that privileging tenure track career paths can, in part, be traced to the admissions process itself, describing the role of admissions committee members as "gatekeepers" to the university, with applicants who demonstrate enthusiasm for a career in tenure track teaching more readily admitted. There was also concern that fostering multiple career paths would draw graduate students from underrepresented groups away from the professoriate.

Focus Groups

Assistant professors: Assistant professors are the future leaders of departments and universities. In a meeting with this cohort, we were surprised to find that early career faculty were no less resistant to thinking of the PhD as preparation for multiple career paths, despite their own recent experience on the academic job market and the experiences of their peers who obtained positions outside of academia.

Second-year graduate students: The most active graduate students in considering the future of PhD training are those in their final years of the program. In order to include the perspective of graduate students at the beginning of their graduate school program, we held a focus group with second year students. We found that second year graduate students are engrossed with learning how to navigate graduate school and fulfilling the requirements to advance to candidacy, with little attention paid to career prospects that might exist in five years when they complete their degree.

Graduate Student Survey

In Spring 2017, we administered a graduate student survey about attitudes regarding graduate training, mentorship and professionalization, part of a UC-wide initiative organized by the UCHRI Humanists@Work project. Of the 87 students who took the survey, 77% reported being interested primarily in tenure-track teaching positions, while 64% reported planning to seek

employment outside of the professoriate as a secondary option. A slight majority expressed feeling prepared by their grad programs to achieve their career goals, and a significant portion indicated a lack of optimism about their career prospects upon graduation. Most respondents expressed a desire for additional professionalization, particularly workshops and tutorials that were department-specific. Most also indicated a desire for additional paid internships, particularly during the summer when students scramble for short-term employment while also catching up on writing and research. Overall, students expressed a need for programs, career preparation and alumni events that catered to their disciplines, rather than those that address the humanities more broadly. The information gathered from this survey has been shared with the committee and will be provided to departments and programs. We expect that this information can be used to make adjustments to departmental programming and curricula in line with the larger objectives of the Next Generation Ph.D. project.

Interviews

We actively sought out greater knowledge about employer expectations and potential partners through a series of interviews.

- Community Engagement Committee interviewed Maria Bezaitis (PhD French Literature) at Intel about her career path and work with EPIC (Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Community).
- Community Engagement Chair met with the Dean of the UCI Paul Merage School of Business, graduate counselor and employment engagement specialist at the UCI Career Center, and the Executive Director of the MBA Career Center, to understand campus services and explore contacts in local businesses.
- Community Engagement Chair and NextGen PI met with human resources professionals at two local businesses, the Irvine Company and Ambry Genetics, to discuss internship possibilities.
- Curriculum Chair and NextGen PI met with Dean Richard Arum, dean of the UCI School of Education, to explore opportunities to collaborate around pedagogical training.

Finally, we incorporated discussions about PhD training into other programs hosted by the Humanities Commons during the year. This included the *Inside the Tenure Track* panels with new assistant professors, with faculty who were first generation college students, and with community college faculty.

What Worked and What Didn't?

Major accomplishments

Level of engagement: The large and diverse committee was very committed to the project, including some members who were initially skeptical but became key advocates and potential change-makers. We experienced a widening circle of participation as the year progressed.

Talking to businesses: The appointments were difficult to set up and took us outside our academic comfort zone, but they generated potentially powerful new contacts and opportunities for our graduate students. We plan to conduct more of these.

Graduate student survey: We worked closely with the UC Humanities Research Institute to design a survey that would provide valuable data for both our planning process and for UCHRI's Humanist@Work project. We achieved a 37% response rate, which is a strong response in marketing data collection.

Campus partners: Through this project, we built strong relationships with the Career Counseling Center and Graduate Division, as well as made new connections with the UCI School of Business and School of Education.

GSR program coordinator: Having a dedicated graduate student managing day-to-day operations was crucial in keeping us on track and also provided our graduate student research assistant with professional development opportunities.

Alumni tracking: The School of Humanities Office of Graduate Study is in the process of setting up a centralized alumni tracking system that can be used by all departments in the School. They have also identified two graduate alumni from each SOH department in non-tenure track careers who could potentially be resources for mentoring activities.

If we were starting again...

Departmental faculty meeting: Rather than host Town Halls, which attracted faculty and graduate students who self-selected to engage in this conversation, we would request the opportunity to speak at a faculty meeting in each department. On the other hand, this initial year allowed us to talk through concerns and skepticism within our planning committee and those most interested in this topic so that we are now better prepared to have these conversations in a faculty meeting than we would have been at the beginning of the project.

Survey participation: We would institute the survey earlier in the process because it provided information that would have been valuable for the working groups to include in their discussions. We would have provided additional incentives for participation.

What Does It All Mean?

Culture Change: We learned quite a bit about the long term challenge of changing expectations of career outcomes for doctoral study. Getting at and focusing on the beliefs of faculty and graduate students about the professional goals of doctoral education proved a slippery topic, as conversation consistently gravitated to more actionable subjects such as curriculum and campus resources. We realized that assumptions that all students will pursue a tenure-track academic position are not only explicitly communicated by directors of graduate study and individual advisors, but are also implicitly reinforced in the structure of graduate coursework, teaching assistantships, and the conventions of how graduate programs define success and maintain program records (such as published "placement rates"). While faculty and graduate students have expressed concerns that a turn to preparation for multiple career paths will "instrumentalize" the PhD, we now recognize that upholding the expectation of a single, professional track for humanities students at the graduate level can be seen as its own form of instrumentalization.

Through this process, we came to view faculty not as resistant but as uncomfortable with their own lack of knowledge and preparedness for thinking broadly about multiple career paths. Many faculty have spent their careers in academia and simply do not know how to advise graduate students who

want to explore other types of employment. We learned that faculty are also unaware of School and campus resources that they can draw on or refer their students to. Seeing faculty engagement as a teaching and learning opportunity, rather than as resistance to be overcome, has already fostered greater involvement in this process. We also viewed healthy skepticism as a crucial component of this process, pushing us to more fully define and provide evidence for proposals to change or not change components of humanities graduate training at UCI.

We came to understand that current graduate students, especially students early in their academic careers, are more resistant to careers outside of academia than anticipated. Our students enter a PhD program with the desire to be a professor and many do not want to consider other potential career paths, especially in the first few years of their graduate study. Additionally, faculty themselves pointed out that the expectation of the PhD leading to the professoriate is inherent in the admissions process. As students reach the dissertation stage and become more aware of the challenges of the academic job market, many – although not all – begin to think about options other than tenure-track faculty positions. However, given the explicit and implicit structures of graduate training, they are often reluctant to voice a desire for careers outside the academy for fear of being perceived as a “failure.” We have learned that students still look primarily to their departments to set expectations and provide resources for post-PhD careers. Often departments and advisers see student participation in professional and career development activities outside of the department as something students do “on their own time,” rather than as part of their disciplinary graduate training. As a result, validation by departments of such activities outside the department is crucial to graduate student participation so that they engage in opportunities that prepare them for their post-PhD career path.

Connecting with employers: As part of the planning process, we had several fruitful meetings with local business leaders. These conversations provided insight into the needs and interests of businesses. We encountered genuine interest in developing relations between our School and these external partners. We believe the conversations had an impact on these partners by revealing to them the value of PhD training for the kind of employees they seek and by affirming our commitment to partnering in innovative ways.

Alumni Engagement: In this area, we learned that accurately reporting and disseminating alumni placement information is not solely a matter of reporting the “what” of an alumni’s career (e.g. job title, years in the position, etc.). Instead it requires addressing the “why” (e.g. “why did you choose to pursue a career outside of academia?”) and “how” (e.g. “what aspects of your PhD training do you apply in your professional career?”). Without this context, alumni placement information cannot guide programs looking to refine their curriculums to improve student preparation for careers outside of academia. We confirmed that humanities departments at UCI do not have effective methods of keeping in touch with former students, which results in a lack of data as well as lost opportunities for mentoring and other forms of engagement. We also realized that different information is held in different places on campus – departments, Graduate Division, alumni affairs, advancement – which necessitates better collaboration.

Given the real and perceived resistance to multiple post-PhD career paths, we recognize that it is imperative that we modify our institutional/School culture to align with career placement within and outside of the academy during doctoral training. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) providing students with opportunities to connect their academic training to nonacademic settings; 2) providing a way for students to support themselves through appointments outside of teaching;

3) providing deeper pedagogical training for placements in teaching-intensive institutions; and 4) admitting students with a range of skills and experiences that might enhance and diversify graduate school culture and career outlooks. When our PhDs believe that they are valued for their scholarly contributions in graduate school and their career paths afterwards, we believe that they will stay more engaged with us, making it easier to accurately and thoroughly report alumni placement data.

What's Next?

Our recommendations proceed from a central premise: that any changes to the humanities PhD curriculum must be more than a reaction to the current crisis in the academic job market; they must make sense within and be justified in terms of the humanities disciplines themselves. Whatever career decisions graduate students make, PhD students have come to graduate school to immerse themselves in high-level academic research. It is important that we respect the integrity of that decision, even as we prepare students for many possible career outcomes. Similarly, if we hope to persuade faculty, not only of the necessity of curricular changes, but of their merit, changes must present themselves not as mere add-ons or alternatives to the crucial task of instruction and mentorship, but as supporting and deepening the intellectual mission of fields and departments.

Reporting to the School

- Project leads will present the project's recommendations at the Council of Chairs retreat in September and discuss next steps.
- The Office of Graduate Study will organize a fall meeting of departmental faculty directors of graduate study to present the project's recommendations and to introduce Career Center and Grad Division resources for professional development.
- During the academic year, 2-3 representatives from the planning committee will attend a faculty meeting in each School of Humanities PhD program to present the project's recommendations for discussion.

Immediate next steps with current resources

- We will encourage the establishment of Schoolwide faculty learning communities to discuss shared concerns and best practices across departments and fields. This could begin immediately by establishing regular meetings of the Directors of Graduate Study in humanities departments and programs. The DGS has the most direct and obvious institutional responsibility for PhD concerns; however, would ultimately like to see these communities expand to incorporate all interested faculty.
- Adapting Academic Program Design
Faculty teach more than their subject matter; they also teach the many skills and competencies that go into academic research and teaching. Whether we think of these as "basic" skills that underwrite academic work or "transferrable" skills that can be

exercised across disciplines and beyond academic contexts, we will encourage faculty to be explicit and intentional about making those skills legible to graduate students.

- a. Seminars can include assignments that incorporate and explicitly reflect upon these skills: writing in multiple genres and for multiple audiences (including “public facing” genres); collaborative work; and (where appropriate) work involving different media.
 - b. We will communicate NACE’s (National Association of Colleges and Employers) eight key areas of Career Readiness to faculty and recommend that they explicitly reference these skills in classrooms, on syllabi and in advising.
 - c. MA and/or qualifying exams can include a public component, in which students consider how to present complex material to a general audience.
 - d. While we do not recommend a wholesale transformation of the dissertation, we recommend that departments communicate to faculty and students alike the possibilities that already exist for innovation in these final projects and to be open to exploration.
- Deepening Mentoring, Professionalization, and Pedagogy:
- Graduate students have expressed strong interest in more opportunities for professionalization and pedagogical training. Some departments have instituted seminars and workshops to help students develop these important skills.
- a. We recommend that departments continue and expand existing workshop series (such as the English department “Workshop on Professional and Pedagogical Development”) to provide ongoing opportunities for graduate students to build upon and recognize their disciplinary and transferable capacities.
 - b. We also recommend that the Humanities Commons continue its School-wide graduate professional development programs, such as the careers panels, public speaking training, and grant-writing.
 - c. We recommend that Directors of Graduate Study promote opportunities already available through the Humanities Commons, the Career Counseling Center, the Graduate Resource Center, and the Center for Teaching and Learning.
- We recommend strengthening community partnerships through opportunities for knowledge exchange that involve graduate students, faculty, community professionals, and the public (these might include lectures, film series, book clubs, and other cooperative ventures on campus and off).
- We recommend the creation of a database of all Humanities graduate alumni that feeds into a central tracking tool maintained at the School level. This tool would also feature a public interface for alumni to update their personal information. This database would enable multiple offices tasked with alumni tracking to pool resources to provide a single resource for alumni information.

Next steps for which we need additional resources and planning time

- Reflection upon the functions and goals of the humanities requires an awareness of their past formations; and a better future for our disciplines and fields may be possible only in the light of their pasts. We recommend that the School create a faculty summer fellowship (with graduate student support) aimed at developing departmental seminars that encourage reflection upon the history, structure, and function of disciplines (e.g. “The Many Professions of History,” “The History of Literary Study”).
- We recommend that departments implement a first-year seminar devoted to orienting beginning graduate students in their fields and in the skills they need to develop within their disciplines and beyond. This need not be a purely “practical” course; it might be a standard seminar but with special attention and explicit attention paid to the first year graduate experience.
- Where departments do not have the numbers to mount professionalization seminars, we recommend considering ways for humanities disciplines to collaborate and combine forces to provide students with the opportunity to develop professional skills, perhaps through the Humanities Commons.
- We recommend continued support of humanities internship opportunities in non-profit, business and government sectors and the promotion of these opportunities within departments. Faculty should continue to develop relationships with diverse community partners in order to become aware of existing internship programs and establish new ones
- We recommend the creation of either an Annual Alumni Newsletter or Quarterly Alumni Blog. Edited by a summer graduate research assistant, publications would feature both traditional and nontraditional career paths, validating the achievements of Humanities graduate alumni.
- We also recommend the development of a Humanities event in partnership with Graduate Division’s “Celebration of Graduate Success.” Faculty and graduate students would be involved in selecting a topic and identifying 5-6 alumni to speak. These alumni would also serve on an alumni panel that addresses and acknowledges the unique experiences of humanities graduate students.

Potential next steps that require more discussion

One of the most common (and intuitive) alternative career paths for humanities PhDs is secondary education. The Curriculum Committee met with the Dean of the Graduate School of Education to discuss these and other issues. While the practical hurdles for incorporating a teaching credential into graduate education seemed formidable, we broached other areas of collaboration, such as pilot courses oriented specifically toward the needs of university educators. We strongly recommend that we continue to explore such a partnership with the School of Education.

To support internships for graduate and undergraduate students, we envision a School of Humanities internship office staffed by a dedicated professional. Staff support is necessary to substantially grow our graduate internship program and add additional programming and advising in multiple career paths.

Appendix

List of Participants

School Leadership

Georges van den Abbeele, Dean, School of Humanities; Professor of Comparative Literature;
Julia Lupton, Associate Dean for Research, School of Humanities; Faculty Director, Humanities Commons; Professor of English;
James Herbert, Associate Dean for Curriculum and Student Services, School of Humanities; Professor of Art History

Faculty

Rebecca Davis, Associate Professor of English;
Kai Evers, Associate Professor of German, Director of Graduate Study, Program in German;
Marcello Fiocco, Associate Professor of Philosophy;
Zina Giannopoulou, Associate Professor of Classics;
Oren Izenberg, Associate Professor of English;
Aaron James, Professor and Chair of Philosophy;
Viviane Mahieux, Assistant Professor of Spanish, Spanish and Portuguese;
Jessica Millward, Associate Professor of History;
Laura Mitchell, Associate Professor of History;
James Nisbet, Associate Professor of Art History; Director of Graduate Study, Program in Visual Studies;
Allison Perlman, Associate Professor of Film & Media Studies; Associate Professor of History;
Nasrin Rahimieh, Howard Baskerville Professor of Humanities, Chair of Comparative Literature;
Michael Szalay, Professor and Chair of English;
Linda Vo, Professor of Asian American Studies

Administration

Bindya Baliga, Graduate Coordinator, Ph.D. Programs in Comparative Literature and German;
Kelly Anne Brown, Assistant Director, UC Humanities Research Institute;
Amy Fujitani, Director, Office of Graduate Study, School of Humanities;
Nicole Gilbertson, Director, The UCI History Project;
Douglas Haynes, Professor of History; Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion;
Sandra Loughlin, Director of Graduate Academic Development, Graduate Division;
Neda Moayedi, Graduate Career Counselor;
Clara Quijano, Graduate Coordinator, PhD Program in Visual Studies;
Raslyn Rendon, Director of Graduate Alumni Relations and Student Affairs, Graduate Division;
Matthew Roberts, Research Librarian for English, Comparative Literature, and Critical Theory;
Amanda Jeanne Swain, Executive Director, Humanities Commons;
Thuy Vo Dang, Archivist for the Southeast Asian Archive & Regional History; Research Librarian for Asian American Studies

Graduate Students

Kourosh Alizadeh, Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy;
Shane Breitenstein, Ph.D. Candidate, Visual Studies;
Jessica Conte, Ph.D. Candidate, East Asian Languages and Literatures;
Allison Dziuba, Ph.D. Candidate, English;
Ryan Gurney, Ph.D. Candidate, Visual Studies;
Jacob Heim, Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy;
Henry Lem, Ph.D. Candidate, East Asian Languages & Literatures;
Lucena Valle, Ph.D. Candidate, Visual Studies;
Darby Vickers, Ph.D. Candidate, Classics

Alumni

Matthew Dworkin, PhD in Philosophy; Mellon Humanities Faculty Fellow, UCI Humanities Core Course;
Marlon Gruen, PhD in History; Mellon Humanities Faculty Fellow, UCI Humanities Core Course
Brook Haley, PhD in Comparative Literature; Teacher, French and English, The Bishop's School;
Lance Langdon, PhD in English, Lecturer, UCI Department of English;
Erin McNellis, PhD in English, Teacher, Upper School English, Tarbut V'Torah Community Day School,;
Amy Scott, PhD in Visual Studies, Chief Curator and Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross Curator of Visual Arts, The Autry Museum;
Jana Remy, PhD in History, Associate Director of Digital Scholarship, Chapman University;

Community Partners

Leslie Kaufman, JD, Attorney; undergraduate alumnus and donor;
Felicia Kelly, Program and Evaluation Officer, California Humanities;
Justin Sikora, Historic Resource Specialist, Historical Operations Group, Orange County Parks;
Marinta Skupin, Curator of Education, Laguna Art Museum;
Marilyn Sutton, Consultant, Public Policy and Higher Education; UC Board of Regents