



Gabrielle Foreman (center) works on the Colored Conventions Project with students Eileen Moscoso (left), Clay Colmon and Alyssa Ashley.

## NEXT GENERATION DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Article by UDaily staff | Photo by Lane McLaughlin | August 29, 2016

### NEH grant to support interdisciplinary African American public humanities training at UD

The University of Delaware has received a \$350,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (<http://www.neh.gov/>) (NEH) as part of a major "Next Generation Ph.D." effort by the federal agency to broaden the career preparation for doctoral students.

The University has been a training ground for museum professionals for over 50 years, through its professionally oriented master's degree and certificate programs in the humanities as well as its humanities doctoral programs.

More recently, UD has also built an outstanding interdisciplinary faculty in African American studies, many of whom embrace a larger mission of engaged scholarship.

This mission is exemplified by Yasser Payne's participatory-action research projects in Wilmington and Harlem, Tiffany Gill and Colette Gaiter's "Beauty Shop Project," the inter-arts research and teaching collaborations led by Lynnette Overby and others, and Gabrielle Foreman's Colored Conventions Project (<http://coloredconventions.org/>) (CCP). The CCP is a digital research collection that has quickly garnered national attention, as well as a global following of 70,000-plus through the Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture's digital outreach programming.

The NEH Next Generation Ph.D. implementation grant will enable UD to bring together and build upon its signature strengths in these two arenas — graduate-level humanities education and research training, and African American studies.

The interdisciplinary doctoral-level training that UD is piloting entails an intentional focus on training students for a broad range of careers in and beyond higher education and will showcase the opportunities and responsibilities of public scholarship and advocacy for African American history, cultural preservation and community outreach.

Students recruited to UD through this interdisciplinary initiative will have opportunities to develop their skills as classroom teachers if they are interested in academic careers, but stipend support will be structured to cover their apprenticeship experiences in projects that advance the public profile of humanities research.

They will pursue internships in libraries, archives, museums, galleries and special collections on campus as well as at partner institutions such as the Delaware Historical Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia. They will participate in digital humanities projects at UD and have opportunities to build their digital competencies through summer institutes and boot camps such as the Delaware Public Humanities Institute (DelPHI), Digital Pedagogy Lab and the University of Victoria's Digital Humanities Summer Institute.

Students also will participate in grant writing, fund raising and project management activities, including the curation of public exhibitions (digital as well as in real space/time) and the planning of public humanities outreach events.

"We anticipate that the five-year, 12-month training model that we will pilot in this initiative holds great promise as a national model for best practices in 21st century humanities Ph.D. training," said Ann Ardis, senior vice provost for graduate and professional education, director of the College of Arts and Sciences' Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center (<http://www.ihr.c.udel.edu/>) and a co-principal investigator on the grant.

"Through this interdisciplinary initiative, we seek to address a critical need that is both local and national in scope — the need to diversify the professoriate *and* the cultural heritage industry," said Erica Armstrong Dunbar, Blue and Gold Professor of Black American Studies and History and the inaugural director of the project.

"Researchers adept at exploring hidden archives and creating digital spaces can resurrect buried histories that deeply resonate in our current moment," said Gabrielle Foreman, Ned B. Allen Professor of English, professor of history and of black American studies and a co-principal investigator. "At a time when disparities in educational access and economics continue to plague our country, we need prominently placed scholars of color, experts in 21st-century research and teaching technologies, working with others in universities, museums and cultural institutions so we can better understand and address this cultural legacy."

UD is one of only three institutions nationally to receive Next Generation Ph.D. implementation grants of \$350,000 each to support and expand efforts that are already underway. Twenty-five institutions have received \$25,000 planning grants.

Announced earlier this month, the grants total \$1.65 million and launch the agency's initiative to transform the culture of graduate education in the humanities. A full list of institutions receiving Next Generation Ph.D. grants is available in the NEH press release (<http://www.neh.gov/news/press-release/2016-08-10>) about the awards.

"The academic-focused future we're accustomed to training graduate students for is disappearing," said NEH Chairman William D. Adams. "If graduate programs wish to make a case for the continuation of graduate education in the humanities, they're going to have to think about the professional futures of their students in entirely different ways."

The NEH has also forged a new partnership with the Council of Graduate Schools to create an inter-institutional learning community, the Next Generation Ph.D. Consortium, to support this work.

## Support for UD's 'Next Generation Ph.D.' initiative

Numerous letters were sent to the NEH from universities, scholars and cultural heritage organizations supporting UD's plans to develop its Next Generation Ph.D. project. Here is a small sampling:

Provost Domenico Grasso: "Enhancing UD's signature strengths in American material culture studies has been a high priority for me as provost, as is enhancing support for graduate and professional education, strengthening support for multidisciplinary collaborative research and improving utilization of the University Libraries and Museums' archival resources in the curriculum. I am enthusiastic about partnering — yet again — with NEH on innovative interdisciplinary material culture studies and public humanities programming."

College of Arts and Sciences Dean George Watson: "This initiative in African American material culture and public humanities training at the doctoral level is ambitious, timely, and transformative. It re-imagines doctoral education in the humanities as a form of public engagement designed to create scholars with the skills and relevance to work both inside and outside the academy. It re-imagines the doctoral experience in terms of project-based classes and internship experiences on and off campus that generate new and innovative forms of public scholarship and train students in new ways. And it re-imagines the doctorate as a twin driver of academic excellence and diversity."

Barbara McCaskill, professor of English at the University of Georgia and co-director of the Civil Rights Digital Library: "At a time when diversity increasingly is acknowledged by communities and countries as a catalyst for productivity, creativity, and emotional and social well-being, UD's ambitious program affirms the central role that the humanities can, will, and must play in assuring the heterogeneity of the next generation of scholars. I am honored to advocate for such an outstanding educational program."

Robert Levine, Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland: "What UD proposes to undertake is a real 'game-changer,' not only for graduate education in African American studies but in a larger sense for graduate education in the humanities."

Scott Loehr, chief executive officer, Delaware Historical Society: "The University of Delaware is to be commended for its proactive approach to transforming humanities education in an era when the value and relevance of the humanities constantly are being called into question."

Richard Newman, former Edwin Wolf 2nd Director of the Library Company of Philadelphia: "Libraries, museums, and cultural institutions need diverse archivists, librarians, and museum coordinators who are trained in their specific fields of historical research as well as in the digital humanities and public outreach."

Michele Shauf, director, Corporate Learning and Development, eVestment, an Atlanta-based technology firm in the institutional investing space (and UD English doctoral alumna): "I see extraordinary need for a new direction in doctoral training in the humanities: The world at large needs people steeped in the rich humanist tradition as critical thought-partners for technologists; the economy needs people with interdisciplinary mindsets who can apply 'design thinking' to solve problems and capitalize on opportunities to innovate; and doctoral candidates need a more pragmatic professional path that is appropriate for careers inside and outside the academy."

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