



National
Humanities
Alliance

Approaches to Training in the Public Humanities

REPLICABLE MODELS FOR BUILDING PUBLIC
HUMANITIES TRAINING PROGRAMS

Approaches to Training in the Public Humanities

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The National Humanities Alliance (NHA) is a nationwide coalition of organizations advocating for the humanities on campuses, in communities, and on Capitol Hill. Founded in 1981, NHA is supported by over 200 member organizations, including: colleges, universities, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, state humanities councils, and scholarly, professional, and higher education associations. It is the only organization that brings together the U.S. humanities community as a whole.

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Approaches to Training in the Public Humanities

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Introduction

In recent years, we have seen significant growth in efforts to train undergraduate and graduate students in the public humanities. In classrooms and through experiences beyond the classroom, undergraduate and graduate students are learning to leverage humanities methodologies to address major social and cultural challenges, promote social justice and civic engagement, and build sustainable relationships that bridge university/community divides. Faculty, meanwhile, are seeking out opportunities to develop their own skills in carrying out public humanities projects and to give their students experiences in the public humanities.

Through the National Humanities Alliance's *Humanities for All* initiative, which documents and communicates the value of publicly engaged humanities initiatives across U.S. higher education, we have collected campus-based efforts to train students and faculty in public humanities methodologies. As part of this research, we conducted a national survey of higher ed institutions to better understand how they are creating training infrastructure. In this report, we provide an overview of approaches to training students and faculty in the public humanities based on our research, focusing on efforts to create publicly engaged degree granting departments, majors, minors, certificates, course pathways, internships, and faculty training programs.

WHAT ARE THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES?

Public humanities practices involve using research, teaching, programming, and preservation to engage with local, regional, national, and global communities. Much of this work involves partnerships with community organizations and individuals that draw on shared knowledge and resources to advance particular academic and public objectives. To learn more, read our essays offering a [Typology of Publicly Engaged Humanities](#), [The Goals of Publicly Engaged Work](#), and [best practices in centering Partnerships in Publicly Engaged Work](#).

While efforts to train students and faculty in the public humanities are fairly new—with most programs founded within the last 15 years—public humanities departments, majors, minors, and certificates are increasingly common. Based on responses to our survey, 72% of respondents (total n=156) noted that their institution offered a public humanities course, degree, or credential for students. This growing list of credentials and training programs provides a range of models for faculty and administrators to consider in building training programs for students.

As you consider the models for on-campus infrastructure in this report, we encourage you to also read our earlier essay, [Scholarly Societies and the Public Humanities](#). This essay, which includes a section on the many ways that scholarly societies support publicly engaged practitioners and scholarship, is a good starting point for considering the resources that academic associations can offer as you work to build your on-campus infrastructure.

Who This Report is For

This report is intended for higher ed-based faculty (including individual scholars, department chairs, center directors, and committees) and administrators looking for replicable models for building public humanities training programs. While some of these initiatives were supported by major grants from funders such as the Mellon Foundation, many are funded internally by departments, centers, provosts offices, offices of academic research, or alumni donors interested in seeing the humanities thrive both on and off campus. This report introduces key trends and methods for creating these offerings for students and faculty. It is meant to provide enough information for those interested in learning more to draw connections across their humanities communities. If you see a program model that might fit the needs of your campus, we encourage you to reach out to the institution to learn more.

Goals Animating Public Humanities Training Programs

While the goals of public humanities training programs vary based on institution, departmental expertise, community needs, and student and faculty capacity, public humanities training programs often share four, interrelated goals:

1 Offering students the opportunity to act on civic and social justice commitments through the humanities

Public humanities training programs respond to the desire of students and faculty to apply the ideas and skills they are learning in a higher ed context to address the civic and social justice issues of our time. They generally do so by offering students the opportunity to work in close collaboration with community partners to address community issues such as environmental sustainability, cultural heritage preservation and access, decolonization, immigration and migration, and prison education. Given the goals of supporting community organizations and having a broader public impact, public humanities courses and degree programs often involve the production of digital exhibitions, consultation-based projects, or oral history projects rather than more traditional assignments. On a broader level, these courses and programs provide venues to identify and address how conventional modes of scholarship contribute to power differentials between higher ed institutions and communities.

2 Training current and future faculty in publicly engaged methods to shape the future of humanities disciplines in the academy

The public humanities are becoming a desirable scholarly career orientation within higher ed institutions. While traditional tenure lines in the humanities are few and far between, departments are increasingly looking to hire faculty who are able to equip students for a changing research and career landscape by teaching them engaged humanities skill sets. As a result, graduate students and junior faculty are increasingly seeing public humanities scholarship as an imperative. At the beginning of their doctoral journeys, graduate students are encouraged to ask what a public humanities scholarly career might look like for them. Faculty are similarly called to ask what their publicly engaged commitments offer their students, department, and campus community.

3 Equipping humanities students with the tools and experiences that may help them succeed in a variety of fields

While graduate students are increasingly oriented toward public humanities scholarship in order to meet a demand for these skills within the academy, they are also seeking training in the public humanities as a way of equipping themselves for careers outside of the academy. Graduate students' dissatisfaction with the personal financial costs and pressures of many graduate programs combined with poor prospects for academic jobs, have led students and faculty to push higher ed institutions to reorient graduate

programs to the public humanities as a training ground for a diverse and quickly evolving job market. Meanwhile, undergraduates are often discouraged from studying the humanities because they have a hard time seeing the career pathways that are open to humanities graduates. Many institutions are turning to public humanities as a way to demonstrate how humanities skills translate to a range of applied settings—giving students a concrete sense of where their humanities studies may lead.

4

Addressing the challenges faculty confront in developing a publicly engaged practice and teaching about the public humanities

While some faculty have expertise in engaged teaching and ethical research methodologies as well as deep ties to community life, others require support in creating and teaching engaged courses and creating public humanities credential programs. In many cases, these faculty are keen to answer the call for increased public engagement in the classroom and are leading the charge to create courses that incorporate collaboration with community organizations as a core element of their curriculum. Still, building these mutually beneficial partnerships—and especially sustaining them—in a way that advances both the needs of community organizations and the educational and research goals of the university partner is a challenge. Several of the training initiatives described below are designed to offer the time, funding, training, and the ability to develop mutually beneficial community partnerships.

Report Overview

We have organized the public humanities training programs that we collected through our survey of higher ed institutions into three categories:

Public Humanities Graduate Training

Public Humanities Undergraduate Training

Public Humanities Faculty Training and Support

Each section includes short project snapshots and longer case studies of public humanities training programs that are examples of the particular subcategories of projects discussed in the section. Throughout this report, we distinguish between department-level efforts and university-wide initiatives, even while many of these programs intentionally span units, schools, and centers.

We also offer Impact Research Spotlights with data on the impact of public humanities training programs we have collected in partnership with project directors on a range of campuses. The impacts range from increased civic engagement to deeper connections with communities and peers to greater appreciation for public humanities methods and teaching. We have included Impact Research Spotlights here to 1) highlight the wide variety of impacts public humanities training programs can have; and 2) to offer concrete data that faculty and administrators beyond these specific campuses can draw on when advocating for the creation of or greater investment in public humanities training programs on their campuses.

Public Humanities Graduate Training

While there are currently no doctoral granting degrees to our knowledge that carry the title of “public humanities,” there are public humanities master’s degree programs, interdisciplinary doctoral degrees, and certificate credentials that combine traditional humanities curricula with community engaged methods. Through coursework, required internships, cohort collaboration, and capstone projects, public humanities graduate degrees provide opportunities for students to build skills and signal their commitment to community engaged work to future collaborators or employers. These programs often cut across humanities disciplines and departments, and they allow students to gain experience in a range of humanistic methodologies, such as oral history, participatory action research, ethnography, digital humanities, storylistening, and archival preservation.

Master's Degrees

Most master's-granting public humanities degree programs share a few key characteristics that distinguish them from undergraduate or doctoral degree programs.

- In comparison to undergraduate public humanities degrees, where students are more likely to join ongoing engaged faculty research projects or work collaboratively on a number of department-sponsored initiatives, public humanities master's programs give students core competencies in creating and independently driving publicly engaged work themselves.
- In comparison to doctoral programs, where students are often required to take qualifying exams to achieve candidacy, master's program requirements tend to reflect an applied or experiential approach to benchmark moments. Here, capstone projects or internships replace a traditional master's thesis.
- In comparison to doctoral programs, where students are predominantly trained for careers as professors, public humanities master's students are intentionally trained for careers both inside and outside higher ed, including careers across the cultural, federal, private, and nonprofit sectors.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

Rutgers University-Newark's American Studies Program offers a Public Humanities track in their M.A. degree program. Students pursuing that degree learn to communicate to a variety of audiences, work collaboratively with institutions and community stakeholders, critically evaluate digital technologies and be able to use specific technologies to engage the public, and master new information and skills independently. Students take 30 credits including Introduction to American Studies, Introduction to Nonprofit Management, an internship, and at least one project-based course such as Introduction to Digital Public Humanities. At the conclusion of their studies, students conceptualize, plan, carry out and reflect on their own public humanities capstone project. Graduates of the program deeply consider the public(s) they are engaging, critically analyze scholarship and other related projects, and create a new public project that builds on this work and draws from their graduate studies. In just one example, students recently co-created an exhibition on the local history of police accountability campaigns and conducted oral history interviews for the Queer Newark Oral History Project.

At New York University, the interdisciplinary master's program **XE: Experimental Humanities & Social Engagement** emphasizes creative practice and social action by encouraging students to create public-facing and publicly engaged humanities projects such as exhibitions, films, books, and digital media. Outside of required coursework and a master's project towards the degree, XE's student-run interdisciplinary journal, *Caustic Frolic*, is a venue for collaborative creation where students can gain experience editing and working in physical and digital publication.

GRADUATE

Through the **University of Louisville's Department of Comparative Humanities**, master's students can choose from three career tracks, including interdisciplinary humanities, linguistics and the humanities, and the public humanities. Students who choose the public humanities track can combine their study with a discipline or a focus on the culture of a particular historical period. The cultural periods included are: ancient, medieval and Renaissance, early modern, and modern/contemporary. Students interested in continuing on to doctoral study can also pursue a Ph.D. in Public Arts and Letters, which emphasizes the creation of public facing projects in the humanities. As part of the requirements towards both the M.A. and the Ph.D., students identify either a graduate internship or a professional project, in which they work independently, with supervision, to share scholarly or creative expertise with a campus, community, national, or international institution or organization on a short-term basis.

Graduate Certificates and other Non-Degree Credentials

Like master's programs, public humanities certificate programs can bring new methodologies into conversation with graduate students' degrees and encourage students to examine how their work towards their degree can be in conversation with civic life. Usually designed as a specialized pathway through the humanities curriculum combined with electives and non-coursework requirements, certificates can offer students a cohort of like-minded peers committed to similar methodologies and sometimes a stipend to support some combination of community engagement, professional development, and summer internship funding.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

At the **University of Delaware**, the **African American Public Humanities Initiative** is a five-year, cohort-based program that provides year-round training, tuition, and summer stipend support for Ph.D. students in history, English, and art history interested in grounding their publicly engaged scholarship in African American contexts. The program's interdisciplinary training focuses on collections based research, material cultural studies, and digital humanities, with students gaining experience through coursework, internships, and independent projects.

With funding from the Mellon Foundation, **Tulane University's Graduate Program in Community-Engaged Scholarship** offers master's and Ph.D. students in the humanities and the arts two years of curricular and funding support to do publicly engaged work. A distinctive feature of the Tulane certificate program is the way it values and centers community organizers, who serve as cohort members and advisors on graduate projects. In addition to regular meetings with community and faculty advisors, students are required to take three one-credit courses that train them in publicly engaged humanities theories, methods, and best practices.

Virginia Tech offers a nine-credit **Graduate Certificate in Material Culture and Public Humanities**, which is jointly administered by faculty in the department in religion and culture, and the Program in Art History. The program is geared toward both master's and Ph.D. students interested in a thematic focus on material culture and public humanities as well as scholars from outside the Virginia Tech community pursuing continuing education as non-degree Commonwealth Campus students whose work may intersect with the offered coursework. Other offerings through this program include a 30-credit master's (with an additional 6 credit thesis option) and an accelerated master's for undergraduate majors in the Program in Art History and the Department of Religion.

The **Engaged Pedagogy Initiative (EPI)** at the **University of Michigan, Ann Arbor's** Rackham Graduate School is an intensive, semester-long, community-engaged learning workshop for graduate students that allows them to explore the theoretical foundations, ethical implications, and practice of community-engaged learning. Designed and facilitated in partnership with the Edward Ginsberg Center for Civic Engagement, students work within an interdisciplinary cohort to develop a community-engaged syllabus, receiving feedback from faculty and teaching staff. Upon completion of the workshop, students are eligible to compete to teach their community-engaged course in U-M's Residential College during the winter term and receive a small stipend. They can also use the workshop toward U-M's Graduate Teaching Certificate.

Graduate Internships

Internship programs are a common way that graduate students build their resumes while gaining practical skills related to their research interests or commitments to communities. For graduate students with scholarly commitments to community engagement, an internship might provide an opportunity to explore applied methods or genres that will contribute to their thesis or dissertation research. For those who are oriented toward careers outside of the academy, an internship may provide practical experience that incorporates their academic knowledge and skills while also providing a line on their resume and potentially a professional reference. Oriented towards public humanities goals and methods, internship programs can be a particularly useful way that colleges and universities can:

- Train students in publicly engaged methods that are difficult to replicate in the classroom, such as oral history interviewing, archival preservation, project management, event planning, budgeting, or digital mapping;
- Build the capacity of local organizations through people-power;
- Sustain mutually beneficial institutional and interpersonal relationships between campus communities and local organizations;
- Foster pipelines for students interested in particular career pathways;
- Incentivize students to pursue publicly engaged work outside of their coursework or research through course credit and/or pay; and
- Demonstrate the usefulness of humanities approaches (such as storytelling and critical thinking) for industries or fields in which those trained in the humanities are traditionally underrepresented.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

Georgetown University's Master's Program in Engaged and Public Humanities requires students to complete a mentored internship as well as a public-facing capstone project related to the internship. Students earn six credits by completing a mentored course of study tying the training in their coursework to the internship experience. The mentored course includes the development of a syllabus of no fewer than five readings from their coursework and/or other current scholarship, the writing of a weekly journal about their work for the internship, as well as a formal written essay reflecting on the combined experience of their coursework and their internship. In their capstone projects each student takes some key aspect of their internship experience and produces a digital, multi-modal, prospective and/or creative work product that tangibly showcases their unique training and professional skill set.

Through the **University of Iowa's Humanities for the Public Good** initiative, **Graduate Summer Intern Fellows** spend two summer months working with and for a campus or community partner on a thoughtfully designed project. Following orientation, the students attend several cohort gatherings over the summer to share their experiences. They also respond to prompts and to each other in an online discussion that continues throughout the two months. The internship experience is funded with the support of the Mellon Foundation and the University of Iowa Graduate College.

Launched in 2016, the **Humanities Out There Public and Higher Education Fellows Program** at the **University of California, Irvine (UCI)** provides Ph.D. students in the School of Humanities with paid summer opportunities to contribute to program development, research, and communications at local arts and culture institutions. Upon completion of their internships, Public Fellows share their experiences in various formats. Humanities Out There was founded in 1997 as an education partnership between UCI's School of Humanities and the Santa Ana Unified School District. In 2015, Humanities Out There was relaunched by UCI's Humanities Center, and the Public Fellows program was funded by individual donations and a \$50,000 grant from the Luce Foundation. It is currently funded by the Mellon Foundation and various small donors. Partnership institutions grew to include a variety of internship opportunities, including California Humanities, CEO Leadership Alliance OC, the City of Santa Ana, PBS SoCal, the Black Panther Party Oakland Community School, Orange County Environmental Justice (OCEJ), and the Vietnamese American Arts & Letters Association.

IMPACT RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:

The Humanities Clinic at Wayne State University

The **Wayne State University Humanities Clinic** is a graduate internship program that hires graduate students from all humanities and social science departments to work as paid, semester-long interns with Detroit nonprofit organizations and small businesses. Interns are matched to projects at the City of Detroit, the Heidelberg Project, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Historical Museum, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, among others. In an effort to support healthcare workers, researchers, and local organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Humanities Clinic also began partnerships with 10 hospitals and health-focused businesses and nonprofits, including Henry Ford Health System, Karmanos Cancer Institute, and Food Rescue US. Humanities Clinic interns contribute a range of skills to these organizations including historical documentation, grant writing, data collection and analysis, project development, social media/web development, community outreach, copy editing, and archival research. In addition to internships, the Humanities Clinic also hosts a series of job talks and workshops to help prepare humanities and social science graduate students for diverse careers.

INTERN PERSPECTIVES

“”” *I was offered the opportunity to do work outside of academia, yet incorporate my knowledge in qualitative research methodologies to help create change in the healthcare system. This applied focus helped me consider my potential outside of academia and how I might be able to utilize my skills to work directly with(in) large systems.*

“”” *I understand how an education in the humanities can be put to use in the community. Prior to this internship I viewed my skills as purely academic.*

“”” *This internship deeply inspired me and made me realize how essential the work of community partners and activists is to improve and positively impact the lives of the people in their communities. This was both an eye opener and a reminder of the necessity and responsibility that one bears to exercise his/her citizenry.*

COMMUNITY PARTNER PERSPECTIVES

“”” *Our workplace benefited greatly from having [an intern] whose background was in anthropology. Her expertise in research and in understanding people and place was imperative to the work that she performed for us.*

- DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

86%

of community partners agreed that they are more likely to consider job candidates from the humanities or social sciences as a result of their internship experience.

90%

of community partners agreed that the internship program is a valuable asset to the Detroit community.

Public Humanities Undergraduate Training

Much like master's and doctoral public humanities credentials, undergraduate public humanities majors, minors, certificates, and course pathways are increasing in number across higher ed. These training programs are similarly housed and supported by units and centers across campus, rarely (though occasionally) existing as independent departments.

Majors and Minors

As students express an interest in aligning their humanities education with the needs of their local and regional communities, interdisciplinary public humanities majors and minors create opportunities both inside and outside the classroom for students to connect with organizations and individuals in their communities using their humanistic training. Many majors and minors feature substantial projects that allow students to gain experience with a variety of methodologies and explore connections between their research commitments and local or regional community life. Examples of these projects include cultural preservation through oral history collection, expanding access to humanities classroom topics via facilitated community conversations, making archival collections accessible through story mapping and open access digitization, podcasting, and public installations. Often higher education institutions refer to these activities as the applied humanities.

WHAT ARE THE APPLIED HUMANITIES?

Applied humanities utilizes methodologies and knowledge from the humanities and applies them to the concerns of and issues within a particular industry, sub-discipline, region, or social issue. Common examples include medical humanities and environmental humanities.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

At the **University of Arizona**, the **Department of Public and Applied Humanities** requires undergraduate majors in the BA in Applied Humanities to declare an emphasis in one of eight concentrations that bring the humanities into direct conversation and collaboration with various applied topics professional disciplines, including either business administration, fashion studies, game studies, medicine, plant studies, public health, rural leadership and renewal, and/or spatial organization and design thinking. In the classroom, students collaborate on outreach and research projects that emphasize a range of humanities skillsets intelligences and competencies, such as the UA Memorial MAP Project, which was produced by students in a fall 2019 Introduction to Applied Humanities class. Over the course of the semester, students documented and built a virtual map of the cultural and historical memorials on and near the University of Arizona campus.

At **Alaska Pacific University**, students who are interested in K-8 teaching in Alaska or careers in nonprofits and public agencies can earn a **degree in Community and Place-Based Education**. The degree combines on-campus, distance education, and field-based classes that emphasize hands-on, experiential learning, with education courses bringing students into K-8 classrooms for practicum hours. The core curriculum emphasizes Indigenous Alaskan culture and education, and includes Indigenous language courses, as well as outdoor studies requirements that take students into nature to learn wilderness skills, leadership, risk management, Indigenous knowledge, and natural history.

UNDERGRADUATE

At the **University of Missouri, Kansas City (UMKC)**, undergraduates can take courses towards a **bachelor of Applied Science with an emphasis on Digital and Public Humanities**. The Bachelor of Applied Science degree program is designed to allow transfer students who enter UMKC with an Associate of Science degree to complete a bachelor's degree in two years. In addition to foundational coursework, students select from one of five emphasis areas. The Digital and Public Humanities emphasis area trains students in the creative application of digital tools to texts, archives, and visual materials. This training positions students to use digital technologies and data research methods to enrich the public's understanding of the humanities and improve the quality of life for citizens of the Kansas City region and beyond. Alternatively, students can receive a **Digital and Public Humanities Minor** which provides opportunities for students to work closely with faculty mentors in emerging research fields and on community-engaged projects. Examples of minor electives from across the humanities curriculum include Introduction to Digital and Mobile Journalism, Public History and New Media, and Art Museums: History and Practice.

At the **University of Lynchburg**, students can work towards a **minor in Public and Applied Humanities**. Through this minor, undergraduates complete a broad, introductory course about the humanities, work on three different areas of competency (digital, career, and intercultural) by taking courses across the humanities curriculum; develop a portfolio of blogs, podcasts, and other multimedia elements; and finish by working on a final, community-based project. Sample courses include Introduction to Applied and Public Humanities, Understanding the Historic House Museum as Public History, and English for Life.

Course Pathways

Another way of creating publicly engaged opportunities is through course pathways that integrate courses across the undergraduate humanities curriculum to train students in public humanities methods. These pathways do not necessarily offer credentials, but some of these pathways or course designations have served as pilots for public humanities minors or majors, with their success leading administrators or foundations to provide funding for further development.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

At **Ursuline College** in Cleveland, Ohio, the **Rustbelt Pathway** is a series of courses that threads its way through the core curriculum and focuses on the Rust Belt region of the Midwest as a cultural laboratory. Through discrete course-based collaborations, students develop concrete skills in digital humanities and community-based storytelling and work in partnerships with local community organizations. One such class, *From Rust Belt to Revival: Exploring the legacy of segregation, inequality, and social justice through the lens of the Anisfield-Wolf canon*, was created with support from Cleveland's Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, the only juried prize in the nation for books that confront racism and celebrate diversity. The course culminates with the creation of a public-facing exhibition. To preserve this work beyond the course's end, all of the deliverables from Rustbelt Pathway courses are stored in a digital "Rust Belt Repository" on Ursuline's website.

Funded by the Office of the Provost at the **University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**, the **Michigan Engaging Community through the Classroom** initiative allows students from different disciplines to learn from each other as they collaborate on complex projects in the classroom. For example, the Detroit River Story Lab, founded by David Porter in the fall of 2020, began researching the history and enduring impact of the Detroit River on social and natural life through partnerships across Michigan's colleges and units. Course-based partnerships with the Detroit Historical Society, the Detroit River Project, Planet Detroit, and the state Department of Natural Resources are ongoing, with student projects working to understand how to best tell compelling and comprehensive narratives of the Detroit River and its place in the region's history.

At **Barnard College, Barnard Engages New York (BeNY)** is a Mellon Foundation funded course designation given to Barnard classes across the curriculum that foster long-term collaborations between Barnard faculty members and community-based organizations based in New York City. Courses must take on questions and topics related to one of three thematic areas: immigration and immigrant rights; poverty and associated issues of health, food insecurity, and criminal justice; and the human rights of laborers. For example, in *Seeking Asylum*, students explore the roots of and responses to the contemporary refugee crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. The course is organized around an oral history project conducted in collaboration with the Women's Refugee Commission and Justice in Motion. A partnership between a junior seminar in Urban Studies and the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative yielded an inquiry into the effects of vacant city-owned land in the Bronx and a participatory budgeting project, the Bronx People's Budget Survey. Other BeNY courses produced oral histories of Filipino migrant workers during the pandemic and immigrant African communities in New York City; projects on urban tree cover and heat indexes as markers of environmental justice; educational partnerships with NYC public schools; and a program for English language learners on social norms acquisition for adults new to the country.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE: BARNARD COLLEGE

“I would definitely recommend this course to other students who are able to commit to the workload. Being in a class with students who care so deeply about what we are working on as a baseline for the learning and work we did together was an incredible and unique experience. Everyone brought such different skills and perspectives to the classroom, so I was always learning so much. Finally, this course was one of my only campus opportunities to feel as though my classroom work connected to greater, more impactful work.”

- FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT AND HUMANITIES MAJOR IN HIST BC3670, SEEKING ASYLUM

IMPACT RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:

The Engaged Humanities Initiative at UIC

At the **University of Illinois at Chicago**, the **Engaged Humanities Initiative (EHI)** is a four-year pathway program that supports students through coursework and publicly engaged research opportunities. This Mellon Foundation-funded initiative offers seminar-style humanities courses specifically designed for the EHI, connections with faculty mentors, and leadership opportunities for EHI students. A large draw of the program is its funding support, with students eligible for up to \$10,000 in funding over the course of their time in the program that can be used to support publicly engaged projects, pursue an internship, or attend events and lectures across Chicago.

We partnered with the EHI to document the impact of the initiative on students. In particular, we were interested in learning about how taking EHI courses impacts students' sense of connection with their communities, attitudes toward the humanities, and participation in civically engaged activities. We surveyed students in EHI courses offered during Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, which included course titles such as Social Justice and the Politics of Information; Refuge, Race, and Resistance; and Pandemics + Climate Change + Hate: What in the World is Happening?

“” *Because of the EHI class [I] was able to pursue my research interest with funding. This has allowed me to shift my focus less on urban planning and more to urban history. The infusion of humanities into my study has broadened my scope of what I can do in the future. Now instead of planning to get my masters just in urban planning, I hope to get it in urban planning and history.*

- HUMANITIES MAJOR IN HUM 202: ENGAGED HUMANITIES RESEARCH WORKSHOP

93%

of undergraduates who responded to our survey agreed or strongly agreed that their **EHI class made them more interested in conducting research on issues that affect their community.**

93%

of undergraduates who responded to our survey agreed or strongly agreed that their **EHI class helped them think about their role in their community in new ways.**

We presented the students with a set of civically engaged activities and asked them to tell us if they were more or less likely to participate in these activities as a result of their experience in an EHI class. On average, **67% shared that they were more likely or much more likely to participate in civically engaged activities such as voting in local and national elections, volunteering and donating to local organizations, and discussing issues of local and national importance.**

“” *I became more interested in how others form their political opinions rather than simply being ready to defend my own.*

- HUMANITIES MAJOR IN HUM 120: PANDEMICS + CLIMATE CHANGE + HATE: WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HAPPENING?

IMPACT RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT:

Engaged English courses at California State University, Los Angeles

As part of **California State University, Los Angeles'** recently redesigned English major, its **Engaged English course requirement** makes sure that every English major graduates with an experience applying their disciplinary knowledge to a public humanities, community engagement, or preprofessional endeavor. Courses designated as engaged in the new curriculum include English Major Mentorship and Professionalization, Narrative Practices of Healing, Introduction to Archival Research, Introduction to Grant Writing as Community Engagement, and Poetry in Place, among others. In partnership with the department, *Humanities for All* surveyed students in Engaged English courses to better understand the impact of taking an engaged course.

“” This course allowed me to explore a possible career choice and gain experience in it. Taking this class has granted me career choices for when I graduate and I won't have to worry about experience because I will already have it on my resume.

“” This [course] strengthened what I already believed; As an individual, the voice is small, but it can be a lot louder when paired with a team that reaches out to an entire community.

Q.

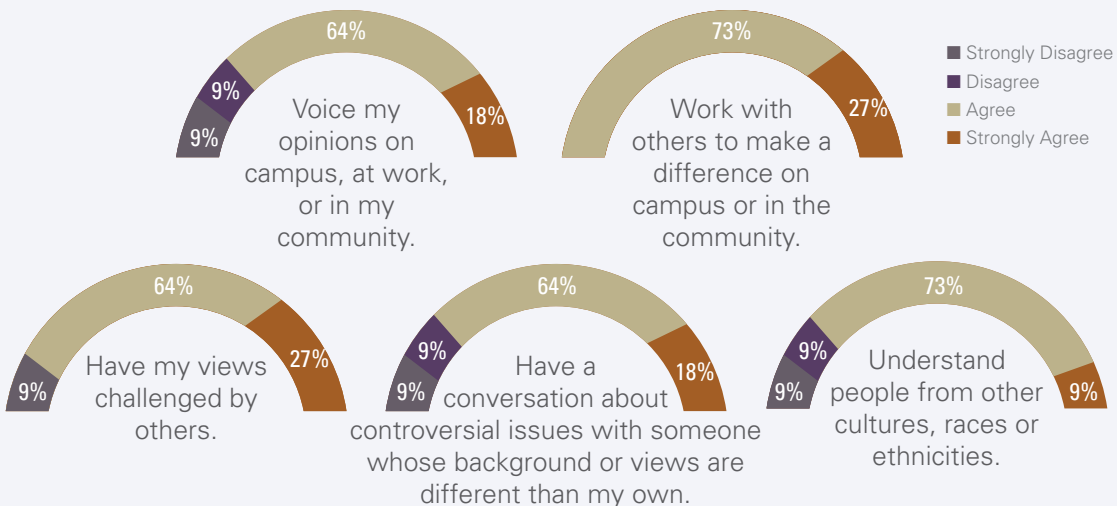
How would you describe the relationship between the humanities and social justice work?

A.

“Humanities is the study of people and social justice work is done on behalf of people. One learns sensitivity, empathy, and the skill to see things from many perspectives when studying people.”

SURVEY QUESTION:

My experience taking this class has contributed to my ability to:



Humanities Labs

In both the undergraduate and graduate context, humanities labs are a research and pedagogical model in which the skills and expertise of students in the humanities classroom are made available to community partners. Similar to the business school consult or law school clinic model in which students act as project-based consultants for companies, courses that employ a humanities lab model generally organize students into consulting teams for local and national humanities organizations such as archives, museums, or historical societies. Humanities labs can also exist beyond the classroom. Within this context, humanities labs often function as research collaboratives, with students, faculty, and community stakeholders working together to address a set of questions of local and national importance. In comparison to course-based labs, where students come and go and semesters often define the boundaries of a project partnership, these research collaboratives can sustain and scale collaborations with community partners over long periods of time, with project participants staying on for years at a time. Among other outcomes, the work of these labs can make progress toward the goals of community-based partners, advance research towards publications, or create public events jointly hosted by organizations with similar interests.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

At the **University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, HistoryLabs** bring together faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates as collaborators in long-term course-based research practicums. Course-based projects are often developed in collaboration with community partners and may be contained within a single term or be reimplemented in new ways in future terms. Designed as a central component of the history department's broader "U-M History in the Public Service" mission, these courses aim to address new and broader publics through innovative research forms while also diversifying graduate and undergraduate students' portfolios as they transition to future job searches. To encourage cross-departmental collaboration and training for graduate students, seed grant funding of \$3,000–5,000 from the U-M HistoryLabs departmental Development Fund encourages teams of graduate students and faculty to propose new course partnerships.

Funded by the Dean of Faculty's office and supported by the Center for Hartford Engagement & Research, **Trinity College's Public Humanities Collaborative (PHC)** brings together cohorts of students, faculty, and community partners in Hartford for a summer research opportunity in the public humanities. For 10 weeks, 16 students work 15 hours per week on humanities-oriented faculty scholarship and another 15 hours per week on community partner public humanities projects (oral history collections, interactive websites, exhibitions, public performances, and more). Examples of collaborative projects include exhibits in partnership with the Amistad Center for Arts and Culture, the Connecticut State Library, and the West Indian Social Club/West Indian Foundation as well as a digital content project with the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum. In selecting student fellows, the PHC gives preference to first generation, under-represented, and other students with demonstrated financial need, for whose socio-economic status has prevented them from engaging with summer research opportunities.

CASE STUDY

Public Humanities Lab at Middlebury College

In 2021, the Axinn Center for the Humanities at Middlebury College received a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation to launch their Public Humanities Lab (PHL) initiative. Led by Axinn Center co-directors Febe Armanios and Marion Wells, the initiative offers courses that integrate humanities skills, content, and expertise into public facing projects, often done in partnership with a Vermont-based community organization. To encourage and sustain participation from faculty, the Axinn Center offers faculty preparing a new lab a one-time stipend of \$2,150 and up to \$1,000 in support costs for workshops, materials, etc. Throughout the year, the Center also hosts pedagogical training workshops in engaged methods on topics such as the use of digital humanities tools, writing for the public, and podcasting.

The National Humanities Alliance partnered with the Axinn Center to document the impact of these courses through surveys of students taking the courses and the faculty who taught them. We have now conducted surveys across 15 courses taught in the 2022–2023 academic year. To meet the PHL goal of integrating the humanities into public-facing projects that address issues of cultural, social, and intellectual importance, faculty designed courses that incorporated a variety of topics and methods, including oral history, digital humanities, medical humanities, archival work, and more. Popular courses include Art and Protest; Blackness and the Arab Imaginary; Ethics in Health Care, Gender, Technology, & Future; and Science and Society. Some of these courses included assignments where students developed a project to introduce course content to a broader public, such as through developing a board game or building a website. Others partnered directly with local community organizations, like the Rokeby Museum, a small museum that introduces visitors to the history of the Underground Railroad in Vermont. The course ARBC 241: Blackness and the Arab Imaginary partnered with the Somali Bantu Association of Vermont and worked closely with the organization to help them apply for grants, create public programs, and develop resources for ESL training. While the organization gained practical, much-needed assistance, the students gained grant-writing skills, learned how to design resources and events for the public, and experienced firsthand how an institution can connect with its surrounding community. Through assignments and partnerships such as these, PHL courses encourage students to consider the broad applicability of humanities knowledge and skills and how they can make a difference in their communities while they're in college and far beyond.

Student Perspectives

Students overwhelmingly shared that taking their PHL class shaped their approach to other courses—particularly non-humanities courses—as well as their lives beyond the classroom.

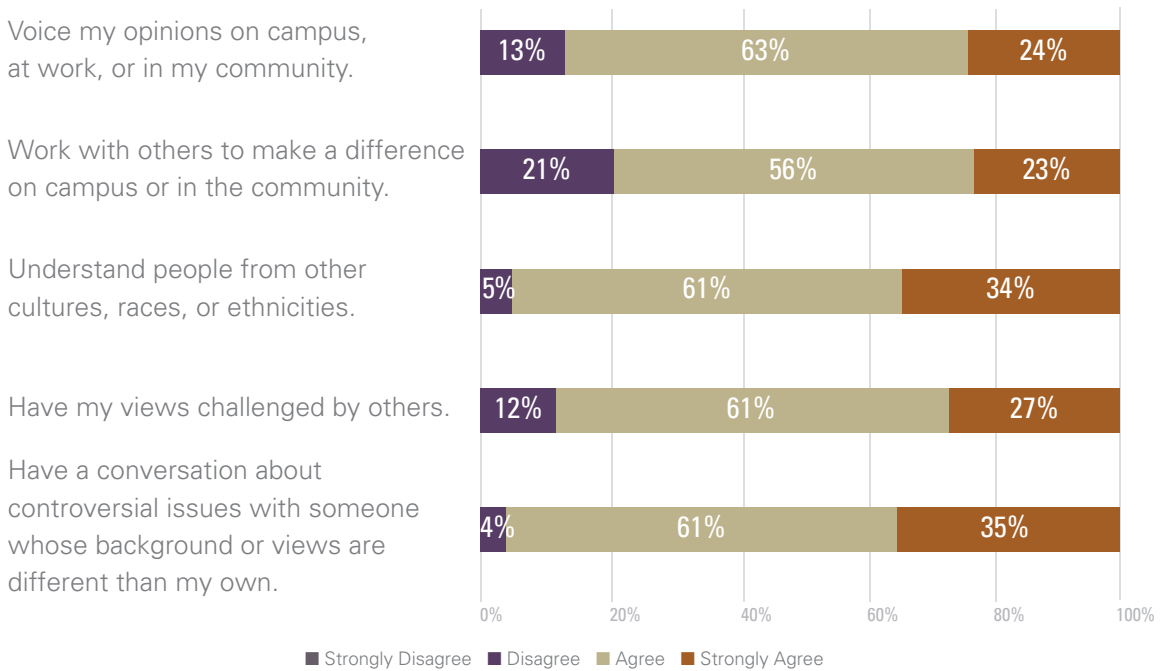
“” I find myself using the language and principles discussed in this course to formulate arguments pertaining to the ‘hard science’ I engage with more frequently in my STEM coursework.

– NON-HUMANITIES STUDENT IN RELI 293: ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE

“” I think I really brought the work done in my class into discussions with friends and family. I also think this class was really beneficial in my computer science class as I was able to clearly understand the ethical implications of algorithms.

– NON-HUMANITIES STUDENT IN GSFS 308: GENDER, TECHNOLOGY & FUTURE

My experience taking this class has contributed to my ability to:

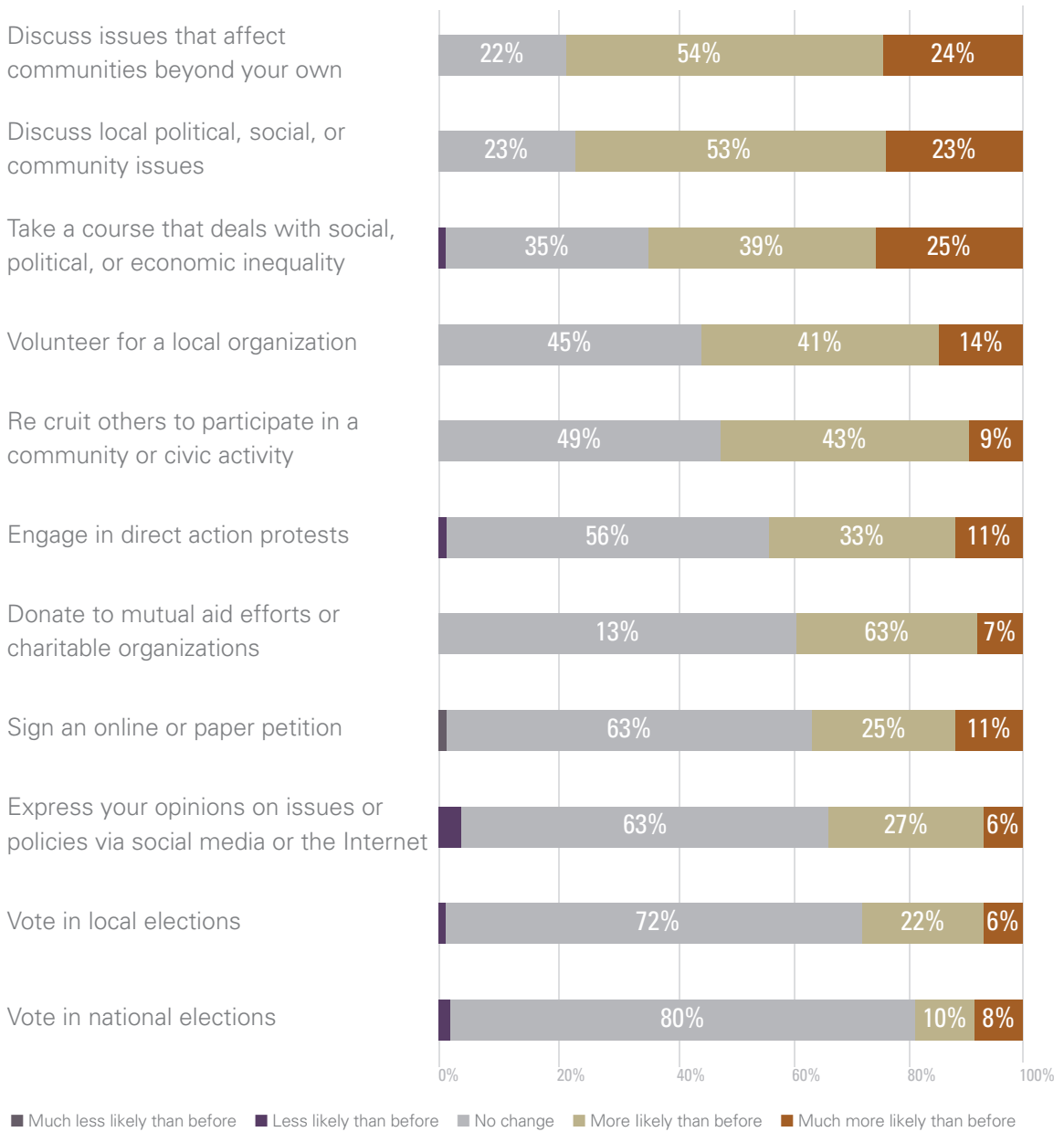


A non-humanities student shared: *“I gained a lot of confidence in articulating my convictions, and similarly, I gained confidence in admitting when I am wrong.”* This ability and the skills outlined in the chart above are imperative as students navigate their academic journey and their lives as citizens of a diverse society.

We also gave students a set of civically engaged activities and asked them to tell us if they were more or less likely to engage in them based on their experience in a PHL course. They were also given the option to select “no change.” As the chart below indicates, an extremely small number of respondents selected that they were less likely or much less likely to engage in any of the listed activities after taking a PHL course. On the other hand, much larger percentages of students responded that they were more likely or much more likely to discuss issues that affect communities beyond their own; discuss local political, social, or community issues; and take a course that deals with social, political, or economic inequality. These responses match the patterns that appear across the student survey data, which indicate that the students gained the vocabulary and information needed to discuss important issues as well as the confidence to have those conversations.

The activities that PHL courses appear to have the smallest effect upon are those that have the largest percentage of responses in the no change category, such as voting and expressing opinions online. As the students detailed in their written follow-ups to these questions, these are activities that they already engage in on a regular basis—for example, they already vote in every election, so their PHL course did not affect their behavior. One student’s response perfectly summed up these patterns: *“I always ensure that I vote in both local and national elections so that has not changed. I have a greater understanding of historical examples and theory of power and hegemony so I am more likely to engage in discussions with people!”*

Surveyed Middlebury students' likelihood to engage in civically engaged activities as a result of taking a PHL course:



Faculty Perspectives

In addition to surveying the students taking PHL courses, we surveyed the faculty who taught them. Across the board, these faculty expressed that teaching a PHL course helped them think about their research and pedagogy in new ways, as well as better understand the value of experiential learning to their students.

“” *Being a part of the Humanities Lab introduced a completely new way of thinking about course assignments and projects.*

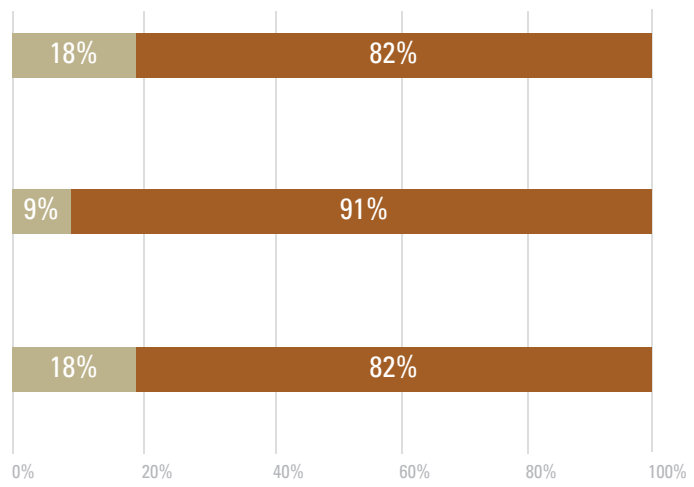
“” *I learned (or was overwhelmingly confirmed in knowing that) that students absolutely love hands-on work. They love doing research when it has wider applications and teaches them skills they can use in every day life (in my course's case, improved listening and conversational skills). They also love when their research serves a larger purpose, particularly if that purpose involves deepening relationships with their peers and people in their extended community. ... I already do a certain amount of this but the experience has made me even more committed to doing it.*

Through the PHL initiative, do you feel that you learned new ways to help your students...

...consider the relationship between the humanities and civic engagement?

...consider the relationship between the humanities and social justice?

...appreciate how the humanities help them contribute to their communities?



■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Undergraduate Internships

Humanities departments and units are increasingly partnering with community humanities organizations (such as public libraries, archives, historical societies, museums, and arts nonprofits) to create internship opportunities that introduce students to public humanities work beyond their institutional campuses. For undergraduates, internship opportunities can offer course credit towards their major or serve as a useful venue to apply topics discussed in the classroom. For internship sites, hosting interns may allow them to move projects along that otherwise would not have existed, bolster their ability to partner with the university on future projects, or serve new populations.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

Through **Florida International University's Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab (WPHL)**, undergraduates from across the university are encouraged to apply to a number of the WPHL's Mellon Foundation-funded projects, including their Miami Studies internships and Community Data Curation internships, which train students in archival digitization, museum administration, and oral history collection. Through these projects, undergraduates have been placed at organizations such as the World AIDS Museum and Educational Center, the African American Research Library & Cultural Center, Historic Hampton House, Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center, the Museum of Graffiti, and the Stonewall National Museum & Archives.

A collaboration between the Provost's office and the Dresher Center for the Humanities, the **University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Interdisciplinary CoLab** provides students with a team-based three-credit (four weeks, 30 hours per week) paid internship in engaged humanities research. Interdisciplinary teams of undergraduate students work with a faculty member project leader and a community partner organization to gain training in a range of research methods, modes of analysis, and technical tools to produce public-facing final projects. Examples of collaborative partners have included Baltimore Green Space, UMBC Special Collections, the Baltimore Immigration Museum, Goddard NASA Visitor Center, Baltimore's Great Kids Farm, and Mid-Atlantic Regional Moving Image Archive. Core objectives of the program include giving students professional, interdisciplinary research experience while they learn to tell effective stories and amplify voices to the general public. This internship experience can be used as credit towards a minor in public humanities, which is offered within the Department of American studies' Orser Center for the Study of Place, Community, and Culture but is open to all majors across disciplines.

Public Humanities Faculty Training and Support

This section focuses on efforts to train faculty in public humanities pedagogy and methodologies, as well as efforts to support faculty in developing courses that incorporate the public humanities. These training and support structures may include a workshop series on how to work with community partners or how to incorporate specific skills into a course (such as podcasting, arcGIS mapping, or oral history). Institutions also offer grants to support the creation of new pedagogy: curricular innovation grants, which are often quite small, have supported faculty in retooling a core course or kickstarting a new course and can be paired with a cohort program to support faculty as they approach new teaching modalities. Ideally these programs that support faculty development also include funding that faculty can offer to community partners to compensate for their time, expertise, and supervision of student work.

Even small amounts of money have proven effective in kickstarting a new pedagogical approach, creating a low-cost, high-impact humanities initiative. Sources of funding can come internally from humanities departments and centers, or academic research offices charged with encouraging pedagogical innovation, or from provosts' offices that fund institutional mission driven initiatives. External grant funds can also catalyze or scale up sustainable internal funding for engaged pedagogy. Toward this end, staffing and institutional support in writing grants for external funding is imperative and can seed future institutional projects embedded across units.

PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

At **San Jose State University**, **H&A In Action** is an initiative of the College of Humanities and the Arts that involves faculty, students, and the surrounding off-campus community with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions. Partially supported by an internal grant program and under the direction of the director of public programming, Katherine D. Harris, H&A in Action sponsors the development of curricular communities, the creation of H&A in San Jose, and approximately 500 events each academic year, including the Beethoven Nature Walk, Mother Language Day, and Public Art as Resistance in San José: A Walking Tour. As part of this college-wide initiative, Harris hosts a monthly meeting for faculty grantees to help them think about curricular integration and public programming in the city of San José and the greater South Bay Region. The initiative also supports faculty by building bridges across campus in order to connect individuals for interdisciplinary research and pedagogical projects, resulting in integrated curriculum and grant proposals.

With support from a three-year Mellon Foundation grant, **DePaul University's HumanitiesX Collaborative** offers year-long fellowships to teams of faculty, community partners, and students. Each team works to design and teach a co-taught, project-based course in the humanities in the spring of the fellowship year, with students providing teaching support. Courses are focused on a shared annual theme, and include projects with local community organizations whose work relates to that theme. In its inaugural theme year focusing on Immigration and Migration in 2021, community partners included the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, the Japanese Culture Center, and the Midwest Human Rights Consortium. While faculty and students are trained in community-engaged teaching methods, a core aim of the fellowship program is also to fully engage the partnering organizations in the course- and project-design processes.

Through the Transformative Learning in the Humanities initiative, the **City University of New York (CUNY)** invites full- and part-time faculty and graduate adjunct lecturers from across CUNY's campuses to apply to become **Transformative Learning in the Humanities (TLH) Faculty Fellows**. Funded by a three-year \$2 million grant from the Mellon Foundation and housed in the Central Office of Academic Affairs, TLH Faculty Fellows receive a \$1,800 stipend to collaborate to develop courses that incorporate participatory learning practices. Through a summer institute and regular peer-to-peer seminar meetings during the semester, fellows develop one community-engaged assignment, lesson plan, or activity.

FACULTY

Through the **University of Massachusetts, Boston's High-Impact Humanities (HIH)** initiative, faculty have developed 24 engaged humanities courses with the help of curricular innovation grants. Faculty—who receive grants of up to \$5,000—are supported by Faculty and Student Advisory Boards that assist in the creation of events like poetry readings, theater performances, lectures, and visits to local museums. Examples of courses taught through the HIH initiative include a comparative ethnographic tour of diverse religious communities of Boston; an analysis of pandemic narratives involving the nation's first public health museum; a poetry and creative writing course engaging patients at Boston's hospitals; and literature courses immersing students in rich local archives and the former homes of authors Malcolm X and Pauline Hopkins. Faculty who are selected to teach HIH courses are placed into small cohorts and collaborate with each other to hone their pedagogy, as well as receive training in high-impact pedagogical practices from faculty with proven expertise in each area. (See profile in "Strategies for Recruiting Students to the Humanities" report by S. Muir and Y. Oliver).

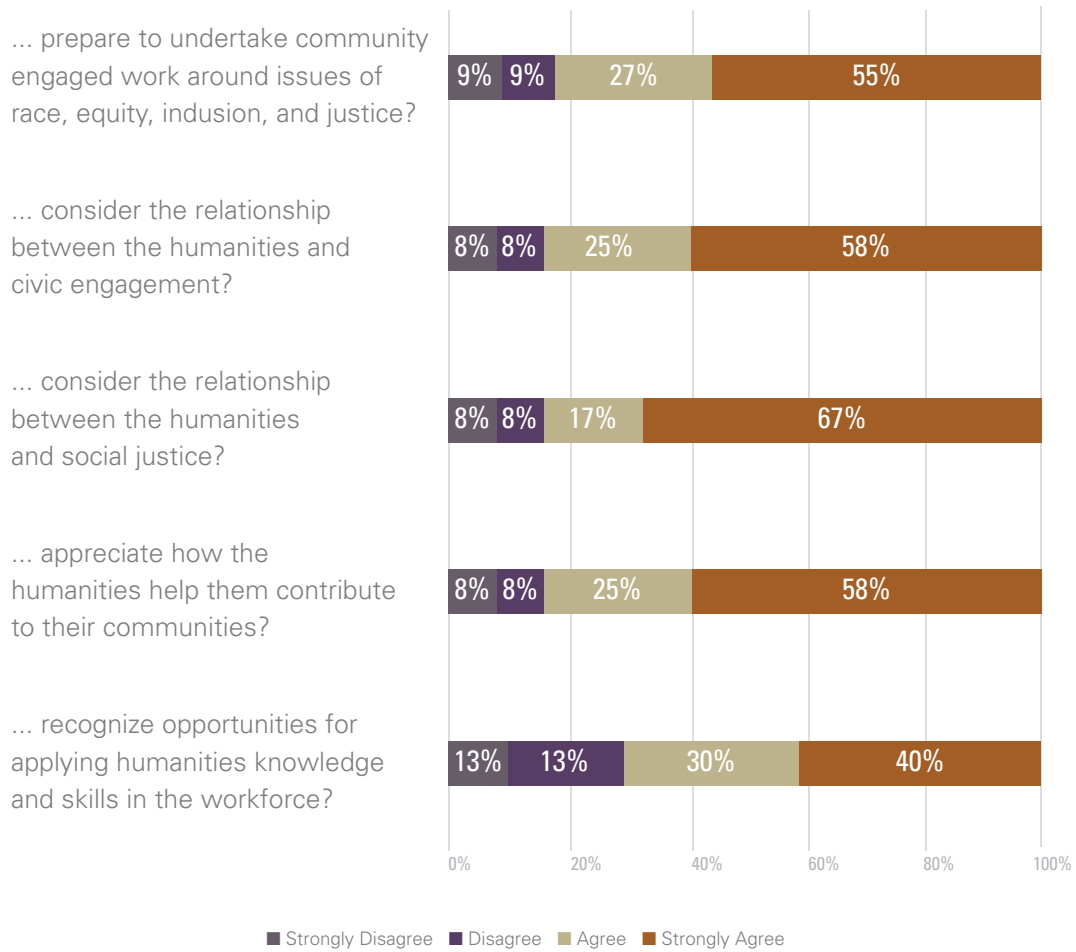
At **Grinnell College's Center for the Humanities, Cantwell-Wegman Grants for Public Engagement** support publicly-facing humanistic work by faculty and staff. These grants of up to \$3,000 per year help faculty translate existing scholarly work into mediums or formats accessible to a wide audience as well as new projects meant for a public audience. Cantwell-Wegman grants especially encourage research proposals that include collaboration with students, with additional funds available for those who use grant money for student wages.

Through the **University of Maryland, Baltimore County's (UMBC) Inclusion Imperative initiative**, a major six-year Mellon Foundation-funded initiative promoting diversity and inclusive excellence in the humanities, faculty at UMBC, Bowie State University, Coppin State University, and Howard University have created a teaching network for those interested in being trained in community-engaged methods. Among other types of funding support for faculty and community members, the program includes monthly Humanities Teaching Lab workshops. Recent workshop topics include Photovoice: Art at the Center of Public Humanities Research & Teaching; In Harmony: Building and Sustaining Community Partnerships; and Telling Intercultural Tales: Digital Storytelling for Building Community.

Faculty Perspectives: University of Maryland, Baltimore County

“” *The HTLabs have helped solidify my understanding of how humanities work can be community engaged. It's one thing to know it SHOULD or COULD be—another to begin to get practical knowledge and hands on experience learning how to do it. Particularly for those of us whose main research is NOT directly community-engaged, the labs have been really helpful to see small ways we can begin to incorporate that ethos into our classrooms and encourage our students to step beyond the usual.*

Through participating in the teaching lab, do you feel that you learned new ways to help your students/participants ...



CASE STUDY

CUNY Graduate Center's Doctoral Curriculum Enhancement Grants

The PublicsLab at the Graduate Center at The City University of New York (CUNY) is a Mellon Foundation-funded initiative supporting efforts to transform doctoral education in the humanities and interpretive social sciences to be more inclusive and encouraging of public scholarship. Included among its many offerings are fellowships, internships, workshops, and curriculum enhancement grants for both graduate students and faculty who are interested in doing work that directly impacts the public good. As part of this initiative, the PublicsLab distributes Doctoral Curriculum Enhancement Grants (DCEGs) of up to \$8,000 annually to teams of faculty and students at the Graduate Center who propose curricular changes, such as new courses, revisions to exam structures, and dissertation requirements, that support publicly engaged work.

Creating Racially Just Schools: Lessons Learned from Fanny Jackson Coppin

Using a PublicsLab DCEG, the doctoral programs in Urban Education and English partnered with the Center for the Humanities to draw attention to and build curriculum inspired by the efficacy of Black women in the schoolhouse. The pillar of this project is a course taught by Dr. Terri N. Watson titled *Creating Racially Just Schools: Lessons Learned from Fanny Jackson Coppin*. The course, taught in spring 2022, addressed how the impacts of race and racism are reflected in the long-standing disparate educational outcomes between Black and white children in New York City schools.

In addition, the course highlighted Black women in the schoolhouse, whether in their roles as teachers, school leaders, education researchers, or community othermothers. Several groundbreaking Black women school leaders served as guest lecturers. These conversations were proffered to the public and remain available. As a final component of the course, students utilized media to facilitate class discussions centering a pivotal Black woman teacher, school leader, or othermother not discussed in class.

Last, the project launched a Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) platform that invited educators across the NYC public school systems into Graduate Center courses to connect with their university peers and complete professional learning credits. A new graduate assistant position was also created for a student in Urban Education to act as a CTLE resource expert and advisor, guiding other graduate students and instructors on how to work with the office of strategic advancement and the New York Department of Education to transform courses into CTLE training workshops.

Graduate Student Perspective

“” It was an incredibly impactful experience TA'ing for Dr. Watson alongside fellow Urban Education doctoral student Adelia Gibson. Not only were we learning about the pedagogies created and maintained by Black foremothers of education, we experienced them in action through Dr. Watson's work with us during class. We learned about the historical and critical work of Black educators like the namesake of the course, Fanny Jackson Coppin and many others. That context coupled with the many conversations with contemporary powerhouse educators illuminated essential longstanding and current work of creating racially just schools. A highlight for me was our work with portraiture as a methodology. We applied what we learned by interviewing and presenting on Black women educators in our lives. The classroom was opened up to the broader community of each of my classmates in this way, and we could live out the values of the course through highlighting critical work that has directly impacted us.

- NOELLE MAPES

It is also worth noting the lack of higher ed-based programs specifically designed to train community leaders and members in community-engaged humanities methods. While this is a common practice at service learning centers and non-department-based institutes on campuses, what would it look like for departments—as part of their commitment to service and the enrichment of community life—to offer non-degree courses in public humanities theories and methods for community members? One such way of ensuring these commitments across training programs is to build partnerships with the local community into the framework and founding of the programs themselves, reflecting collaboration from inception to degree conferral.

While public humanities training programs are an essential component of the campus-based infrastructure that supports faculty, students, and community partners in carrying out this work, there are various other ways that campuses can (and in some instances already do) support the public humanities. Looking forward, we hope to explore approaches to funding and housing the public humanities, including the creation of public humanities centers and institutes and the support of existing hubs of engagement on campus (such as museums, service-learning centers, and Title VI National Resource Centers) that do publicly engaged humanities work. In doing so, we hope to equip faculty and administrators with robust advocacy tools for building campus-based structures that encourage creative, productive, and mutually beneficial engagement with communities through the humanities.

WANT TO
LEARN MORE?

Interested in learning more about how the National Humanities Alliance is supporting higher ed faculty and administrators in creating and sustaining public humanities training programs?

Reach out to Humanities for All project director Michelle May-Curry (mmaycurry@nhalliance.org) for information on consultations, workshops, and impact research.



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