

## **Report of the Provost's Strategic Advisory Council for the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

### **Executive Summary**

In spring 2009, the Provost convened a committee of thirteen faculty, co-chaired by Leslie Tolbert, Vice President for Research, and Miranda Joseph, Associate Professor of Women's Studies and Chair of SPBAC, to provide strategic advice to the President and Provost on the current status of and future directions for investment in the Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. While not exhaustive, this report represents the work of five meetings and extensive email discussion in response to that welcome charge.

The University of Arizona excels across a wide range of fields in the Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. In addition, the geography, history and culture of southern Arizona constitute important resources for strategic advancement. With relatively modest investment, the University can galvanize departments, interdisciplinary programs and individual faculty members to make powerful contributions to addressing grand challenges, enhance its reputation and garner new external support.

In developing our recommendations, the committee was guided by the following principles: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences are integral to excellence across the campus; foundational departments must be stabilized through the hiring and retention of tenured/tenure-eligible faculty who contribute to interdisciplinary projects but also serve departmental needs; the University must invest in infrastructure to enable flexibility, mobilize resources (including human resources), and attract external funding; advancement requires support for both "basic" and "applied" scholarship and creative activity; advancement of scholarship, creative activity and reputation requires the enthusiastic, vocal and knowledgeable commitment of university leadership.

#### **Grand Challenges:**

Given the existing strengths and unique context of the University of Arizona, we are particularly well positioned to make major contributions to the following grand challenges.

- Human Identity and Complex Systems: Exploring how humans understand themselves and confront difficult choices within the enormous conglomeration of interdependent systems—including the ecological, economic, political, social, linguistic and cultural.
- Transnational and Intercultural Dynamics: Addressing the challenges faced by individuals, communities, and governments at the intersections of places (real and virtual), societies, cultures, languages, identities and ideas.
- Creativity and Society: Deploying Creativity through the Arts to strengthen the social fabric.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Protect and Invest in Building Blocks of Excellence**

The UA features particular strengths in: Anthropology; Border, Mexican American and Southwest Studies; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Geography; Human-Nature Interaction; Indigenous Studies; Language Studies; Middle/Near Eastern Studies; Performing Arts, Creative Writing and Photography; Philosophy; and Sociology. In addition, there are a number of art collections, galleries and museums and performances spaces that are likewise crucial building blocks of excellence that must be sites of protection and investment such as the Arizona State Museum; the Center for Creative Photography; the UA Poetry Center; and the Stevie Eller Dance Theatre.

In the following areas, investment in new faculty who would contribute to addressing the grand challenges should be viewed as an emergency to avert serious risk of undermining established excellence:

- American History
- Art History
- Creative Writing (Poetry)
- Dance
- Latin American studies
- Musical Theater

The following new efforts deserve support as potentially significant contributors:

- Border Studies Concentration within the Spanish and Portuguese PhD
- Institute of Archaeology
- Institute for Arts of the Americas
- International Journalism
- New Media and Digital Technologies (various programs)

### **Opportunities for Strategic Advancement**

While the UA already features much of the necessary expertise to address the grand challenges, we have identified the following gaps that might be filled through hiring in a variety of departments:

- Critical Studies of Media
- Environmental Studies (especially Indigenous Knowledge and Policy; and International Politics/Social Movements/Governance)
- Language Studies (especially Arabic Language Pedagogy; Language Pedagogy Assessment; Latin American Indigenous Languages)
- LGBTQ Literary/Cultural Studies or History
- Migration Studies
- New Media and Information Technologies
- Science and Technology Studies/Cultural Studies of Science
- World Music

**Infrastructure: The Contact Zone for Creativity, Culture and Society**

In order to make the most of our current resources and advance scholarship and creative activity in the areas we have identified, we strongly recommend the establishment of a major institute/center that would provide branding, infrastructure and financial support for collaboration and "scaling up" of scholarly and creative projects. The key elements of this entity would include: Faculty Leadership, including a director and an advisory council; Fellowship Program; Project Funding; Virtual Space (a powerful web portal); Physical Space; Consortium members (existing interdisciplinary institutes and centers); administrative and technical support for managing programs; and professional support for funds development.

## **Report of the Provost's Strategic Advisory Council for the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

### **Introduction**

In spring 2009, the Provost convened a committee of thirteen faculty, co-chaired by Leslie Tolbert, Vice President for Research, and Miranda Joseph, Associate Professor of Women's Studies and Chair of SPBAC, with the directive to provide strategic advice to the President and Provost on the current status of and future directions for investment in the Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. This report represents the work of five meetings and extensive email discussion in response to that welcome charge.

The University of Arizona excels across a wide range of fields in the Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, featuring highly ranked departments, award winning faculty, and extraordinary art collections and performance spaces. In addition, the geography, history, and culture of southern Arizona constitute important resources for strategic advancement. The immediate context of the university--in a desert, on the border with Mexico, and in the midst of twenty-two American Indian nations--provides great opportunities for learning about and contributing to the political, economic, social, linguistic and cultural dynamics of cross-cultural, cross-border and human-environment relationships as they evolve over time. Tucson and southern Arizona enjoy a rich tradition and reputation as an arts community, a repository of vernacular culture, and a gathering place for writers, visual artists, musicians and other performers. The arts provide a crucial public face for the University and stimulate local and state economies while serving a community hungry for and supportive of cultural and artistic expressions. The University of Arizona must continue to be the crucible of this synergistic environment.

These university and regional resources provide exceptional opportunities for advancement. With relatively modest investment, the University can galvanize departments, interdisciplinary programs and individual faculty members to make powerful contributions to addressing grand challenges, enhance its reputation and garner

new external financial support. To do this, the University must stabilize and rebuild key departments and programs, fill critical gaps in expertise, and provide institutional infrastructure that will maximize efforts in these areas. The University needs to create networks, “scale up” particular projects, brand strengths and make a concerted effort to attract the support of individuals, foundations and government agencies willing to invest in universities that address the “big questions” and societal challenges from cultural, social and scientific perspectives.

### **Guiding Principles**

In developing specific recommendations, the committee was guided by the following principles:

- Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences are integral to excellence across the campus, including flagship areas such as Environment and Biomedicine.
- Strong disciplinary departments and signature interdisciplinary programs, projects, and institutes enable the university to address grand challenges. Foundational departments must be stabilized through the hiring and retention of Tenured/Tenure Eligible faculty who contribute to interdisciplinary projects but also serve departmental needs.
- The University must invest in infrastructure for scholarship and creative activity. Effective infrastructure enables flexibility, mobilization of resources (including human resources), and attracts external funding.
- Groundbreaking work in the Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences requires support for both “basic” and “applied” scholarship and creative activity -- as in the sciences.
- Advancement of scholarship, creative activity and reputation requires not just the investment of financial resources but also the enthusiastic, vocal and knowledgeable commitment of university leadership.

## **Grand Challenges**

Given the existing strengths and unique context of the University of Arizona, we are particularly well positioned to make major contributions to the following grand challenges:

### Human Identity and Complex Systems:

The Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences address the profound challenge of understanding the dynamics of human identity and agency in the context of complex systems. Humans come to understand themselves and confront difficult choices within an enormous conglomeration of interdependent systems—including the ecological, economic, political, social, cultural and linguistic. Scholars and artists across the University address these issues in multiple dimensions. We have groundbreaking social and cultural theorists in anthropology, gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality studies, geography, language studies, philosophy, and sociology. Award winning scholars of archaeology, film, history, literature, performing arts and visual arts locate the complex interrelations of identity, agency and systems in particular historical and cultural contexts. Meanwhile, through programs and projects such as the Southwest Center, the Southwest Institute for Research on Women, the Rogers Program on Law and Society, and the Institute of the Environment among many others, scholars develop these historically and culturally specific understandings in relation to policy and practice in fields such as behavioral health, criminal justice, economic development, and environmental and cultural sustainability. And members of our distinguished faculty in the fine arts (creative writing, as well as the visual and performing arts) develop new ways of exploring and expressing the deceptively simple notions that “people are different from each other” and that “life is complicated.”

### Transnational and Intercultural Dynamics

Human beings inhabit, migrate between, move through and connect places (real and virtual), as well as societies, cultures, identities and ideas. Compelling issues that inspire and challenge individuals, communities, and governments occur at intersections.

Intersections are sites of mixture, merger, synergy and conflict: among cultures; across

disciplines; between academia and communities; and at the borders between nations. *Global competence* in dealing with the interrelationships among countries, cultures and communities requires critical/analytical understanding of the histories and contours of: *borderlands* as spaces of physical, cultural, linguistic and political boundaries, crossings, interactions; *language(s)* as the core of human communication and creative expression, connecting and dividing people; *translation* as critical to communication and knowledge production across differences of time, space, culture, social location, and political borders; *human rights, social justice and democratic participation* insofar as borderlands and contact zones are too often sites of inequality, exclusion and violence. The University of Arizona's location in the culturally diverse Southwest near an international border enhances our impressive strengths and experience in interdisciplinary, international, Indigenous, area and language studies to make the UA an ideal site to analyze and understand these contact zones. We have impressive faculty resources across many departments and disciplines to address the complexities of the US-Mexico borderlands specifically, as well as the expertise of the American Indian Studies GIDP, the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy, the Center for Latin American Studies, Linguistics, the Department of Mexican American and Raza Studies, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Department of Near Eastern Studies, the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching GIDP, and many other units to extend and deepen our knowledge and understanding of these issues across the regions and cultures of the globe.

### Creativity and Society

Creativity through the Arts has the potential to stimulate human imagination, promote disciplined collaboration, transcend boundaries of time, space, culture, language, spirituality, social location and political identity, express and explore the culture and community of a particular region, and provide an eternal record of human achievement. The Arts play a crucial role in the creation and dissemination of new knowledge in Engineering and Science as well as Humanities and Social Science. The Arts reflect community identity and communicate political ideals. Visual and aural literacy – the ability to analyze and contextualize the power of images and sound, and their potential

for good or ill—is a central ability of a culturally literate and informed citizenry. The Arts explore how technology and humans interact; how technological developments expand creative expression; how to manage, disseminate and utilize exponentially growing sources of information with technology; how the human experience changes as technology influences what we do. Our challenge and strength at the UA is to provide leadership in creative arts to the region. Drawing on extraordinary resources such as the UA Poetry Center and the Center for Creative Photography, using performance and museum spaces where the arts and community intersect, and working in collaboration with the extensive network of community-based arts organizations, our stellar Fine Arts and Humanities faculty are poised to transform the quality of citizenship, culture and community in Southern Arizona, fundamentally strengthening the social fabric.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

We offer three sets of recommendations. First, keeping in mind the grand challenges outlined above, we identify critical contributing fields and those areas in which sustained investment is needed to stabilize our building blocks of excellence. Second, we identify areas in which we have strategic opportunities to improve our ability to address the grand challenges and make the most of our ongoing investments through a few key hires. Third, we propose the institutional infrastructure that we believe would be best suited to advance our scholarly and creative productivity, reputation and ability to galvanize external support.

### **Building Blocks of Excellence**

The UA features particular strengths in: Anthropology; Border, Mexican American and Southwest Studies; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Geography; Human-Nature Interaction; Indigenous Studies; Language Studies; Middle/Near Eastern Studies; Performing Arts, Creative Writing and Photography; Philosophy; and Sociology.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these academic fields, there are a number of art collections, galleries and

---

<sup>1</sup> While we focus only on departments and faculty lines within the Colleges of Humanities, Fine Arts and Social and Behavioral Sciences, we fully recognize that contributions from faculty members and units in other colleges, including Law, Eller, Public Health and Education among others, are critical and substantial participants in many of our endeavors.

museums and performances spaces that are likewise crucial building blocks of excellence that must be sites of protection and investment such as the Arizona State Museum; the Center for Creative Photography; the UA Poetry Center; and the Stevie Eller Dance Theatre.

In the following areas, we believe there is a serious risk of undermining established excellence through faculty attrition. In these areas, investment in new faculty who would contribute to addressing the grand challenges should be viewed as an emergency:

- American History
- Art History
- Creative Writing (Poetry)
- Dance
- Latin American studies
- Musical Theater

In addition, there are new efforts afoot (at different stages of development) that could and should be significant contributors and for which we recommend support:

- Border Studies Concentration within the Spanish and Portuguese PhD
- Institute of Archaeology
- Institute for Arts of the Americas
- International Journalism
- New Media and Digital Technologies (various programs)

### **Opportunities for Strategic Advancement**

Success in addressing the grand challenges described above requires not only strong departments and programs but also the presence of faculty with particular sets of expertise. While the UA already features much of the necessary expertise, we have identified the following gaps. Faculty with such expertise might be placed in a number of different units but would enhance scholarship and collaboration across the wider university:

- Critical Studies of Media
- Environmental Studies (especially Indigenous Knowledge and Policy; and International Politics/Social Movements/Governance)
- Language Studies (especially Arabic Language Pedagogy; Language Pedagogy Assessment; Latin American Indigenous Languages)
- LGBTQ Literary/Cultural Studies or History
- Migration Studies
- New Media and Information Technologies
- Science and Technology Studies/Cultural Studies of Science
- World Music

### **Infrastructure: The Contact Zone for Creativity, Culture and Society**

In order to make the most of our current resources and advance scholarship and creative activity in the areas we have identified, we strongly recommend the establishment of a major institute/center that would provide branding, infrastructure and financial support for collaboration and “scaling up” of scholarly and creative projects. The programs and projects of the Contact Zone would be organized through a small number of thematic rubrics. As initial rubrics, we suggest the three grand challenges articulated above. The key elements of this entity would include:

- 1) Faculty Leadership:
  - a. a director (with at least .5 FTE appointment devoted to this position), who would bring relevant scholarly expertise, national/international reputation and administrative experience to the endeavor.
  - b. advisory council: to advise the director; participate in the design of programs; devise evaluative criteria; serve as the jury for the competitive funding programs described below.
- 2) Fellowship Program: To facilitate the development of intellectual community and collaboration, competitive funding should be provided for faculty and advanced graduate students to be “in residence” at the Contact Zone in order to pursue their research and creative activity and participate in Contact Zone activities.

- 3) Project funding: To encourage collaborative large-scale research and creative projects, funding should be provided to groups of faculty for such projects on a competitive basis.
- 4) Virtual Space: the Contact Zone must have a powerful web presence that provides a portal to the vast array of activities (lectures, conferences, performances, etc) offered across the campus in the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. This portal would also provide information on all “Contact Zone” programs and projects. And further, it could be an interactive networking site for participants in collaborative projects or other “Contact Zone” activities.
- 5) Physical Space: while initially the need for physical space would be minimal, ideally, a dedicated space including offices for fellows and visitors, and flexible rooms for meetings and events, would enhance the success and profile of this effort. Ideally, we would also provide housing for short-term visitors.
- 6) Consortium members: existing interdisciplinary institutes and centers might become “members” of the Contact Zone. As members, they would contribute resources towards sponsoring collaborative projects; their own projects and programs would receive featured placement on the website.
- 7) Administrative and technical support for managing programs and professional support for funds development.

## **IMPACT**

The investments recommended above, in concert with enthusiastic commitment from the university leadership, would have major impacts across several dimensions, especially scholarly achievements and societal contributions. Equally important in this fiscal climate, branding and galvanizing key aspects of our work in the Fine Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities would give us access to a broader range of funding sources in both the private and governmental sectors.

Framing our research efforts in terms of grand challenges and scaling them up, as our proposed “Contact Zone” allows, would give us the opportunity to pursue support from the foundations that provide a substantial portion of funding in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Mellon Foundation pre-selects an elite group of universities for access to its support for basic humanities research. The MacArthur Foundation likewise initiates its own selection of scholars for funding (not only through its so-called “genius” awards but also through its research networks program). For these funders, the steps we propose here would help to put the UA on the map. The Templeton Foundation, among others, has made a commitment to projects that address “the big questions,” especially with regard to ethics and human potential. The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations have both recently refocused their funding on programs that address critical social issues (poverty, human rights, environmental sustainability, etc).

In addition, government agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Science Foundation are potential sources of support. Cross-cutting its various funding programs (from individual fellowships to major challenge grants), the National Endowment for the Humanities has made endowment-wide commitments to supporting scholarship in American History and to the Digital Humanities. The National Science Foundation, other federal agencies and several major foundations are allocating new funding for environment, science and technology that include opportunities to explore the socioeconomic, international and cultural contexts for sustainability. The National Science Foundation has recently solicited proposals linking human and social dynamics with complexity science, large-scale interdisciplinary research, and infrastructure; they are also interested in projects that link the STEM disciplines with the Humanities. U.S. Department of Education funds (e.g. Title VI) flow to strong centers for area and language training and outreach. And should any of the projects we develop involve creating or using digital archives, examining or deploying new media technologies or otherwise be marketable as “digital,” we would also likely gain access to funding from a variety of internet- and software-related corporations (and/or their foundations) that have previously supported humanities

projects at the University of California Humanities Research Institute and the Stanford Humanities Lab, among other sites.

The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences already inspire the generosity of individual donors to UA. An institutional entity such as the Contact Zone would provide expanded and attractive opportunities for support from individual donors as well as private corporations. For instance, donors might wish to provide funding for an endowed lecture series, a named fellowship or the physical space in which the Contact Zone is housed among many other possibilities.

By making the modest investments recommended in this report, which would allow us to leverage significant external support, the University could dramatically improve the impact and visibility of its research, scholarship and creative activity across and beyond the Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Council Members:

Maribel Alvarez, Assistant Research Professor and Assistant Research Social Scientist,  
Southwest Center

Anne Betteridge, Associate Professor and Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Peter Beudart, Professor and Head, Design/Technical Division, School of Theatre Art

Javier Duran, Associate Professor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Paula Fan, Regents Professor, School of Music

Terry Horgan, Professor, Department of Philosophy

Jory Hancock, Professor and Director, School of Dance

Fenton Johnson, Associate Professor of Creative Writing, Department of English

Steve Johnstone, Associate Professor, Department of History

Diana Liverman, Professor of Geography and Regional Development and Co-Director,  
Institute of the Environment

Tsianina Lomawaima, Professor, American Indian Studies Program

John Olsen, Regents Professor, Department of Anthropology

Linda R. Waugh, Professor of French, English, Anthropology, Linguistics, and  
Language, Reading and Culture; Chair, Graduate Interdisciplinary Doctoral  
Program in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching; and Co-Director, Center  
for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy