NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously-funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at https://www.neh.gov/program/spotlight-humanities-higher-education.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Expanding Opportunities for Place-based Storytelling With(in) Community*

Institution: Coastal Carolina University

Project Directors: Alli Crandell, Scott Mann

Gr ant Program: Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education Exploration Grants

Narrative

Humanities Content and Activities
The Athenaeum Press at Coastal Carolina University (the Press) is a student-driven publishing lab. Established in 2013, we have produced over 13 multimedia projects that focus on expanding the presence of underrepresented stories of the American South. In addition to its projects, the Press has been awarded numerous local, regional, and national grant awards for its work in storytelling, and its team have also worked as consulting partners on conferences, community events, and grant partnerships that showcase the unique heritage of our region. The Press is one of the primary community and social engagement initiatives at Coastal Carolina University, a mid-sized public regional liberal arts university in one of the fastest growing regions in the United States, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The university lies within the federally-recognized Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, the Revolutionary War trail, and one of the last unmitigated black waterways in the nation.

As it approaches its tenth production year, the Press is seeking to spread the impact of its process and the presence of community-based storytelling at the university. This spread will continue to serve and make visible the rapidly developing cultural landscape, from Gullah Geechee communities facing gentrification and displacement to the changing demographics of individuals experiencing homelessness. The Press looks to increase the impact its already successful models of community-based storytelling in three ways: create opportunities for coordinated course-based projects and extracurricular events, diversify its methods of community engagement, and identifying more regional partners and national models.

The Press is seeking an Exploration grant through the NEH Spotlight to allow us to focus on the first and third tasks: identifying and developing curricular and extracurricular activities and locating more regional partners and national models for community-based storytelling labs. This grant initiative will assist our leadership team to:
1. Hold four summer workshops with faculty collaborators to develop curricular integrations and multiple collaborative project tracks
2. Network with storytelling and digital humanities centers across the nation for best practices
3. Develop an online institutional story bank for future projects and collaborators.

This grant will prepare for future funding requests from our institution and other federal and regional grant programs. This preparation will ensure that community-based storytelling has a sustainable and integrated future at Coastal Carolina University.

Workshops
The core of this Exploration grant is identifying opportunities within our university's curriculum for community-based storytelling. The Press has often drawn students from traditional humanities and arts programming such as Graphic Design, English and History, as well as innovative programs such as Digital Culture and Design, but community-based storytelling is not an established part of the university's curriculum or extracurricular activities. Equally, the Press' current project model does not represent the diversity of ways that the Press collaborates and consults with faculty and course projects.

To form our faculty group, we are drawing on past collaborators and program leads who understand the power of community-based storytelling and their program's student needs (see Project Personnel and Biographies). We have consciously pulled from both traditional humanities and production-based programs, as well as tried to represent faculty from varying ranks and course loads. These workshops will be organized and led by the Press Director and Production Manager to help keep accountability and follow-up centralized.

To prepare for these workshops, the Press Director and Production Manager will consult with academic leadership, from the Provost and President to our college Dean, to ensure we are integrating questions and considerations that have full institutional support. We will also work with Institutional Research to help identify courses and student bodies that may be affected or inform some of these curricular changes.

The four workshops will focus on the following areas:

1. *Introduction and Identification:* A collective introduction and reflections from our past collaborators on the purpose and impact of the Press and community-based storytelling; document and narrow goals and obstacles to collaboration; discuss case studies of past projects and examples of storytelling; testimonies from community partners and collaborators; identify goals and questions needed for next meeting.
2. *Analysis:* A collective exploration and identification of trends and demographics of graduation and retention within our programs; finding common strengths from our current colleagues and identify areas of need; identify stakeholders to ask further questions (students, community groups); question and answer session with administrators.
3. *Drafting:* Collectively develop lists of courses and modules that are needed for integration of stories and courses; identify collaborative extracurricular and professional development seminars for faculty and students; draft
4. *Finalizing:* Draft report of findings and strategize for presentations to leaders on developing courses; draft common goals for syllabi and discuss next steps.

We will create a series of presentations that can be shared amongst the group and will be included in the final report. At the end of the session, the faculty will be asked if they would like to serve on the faculty advisory committee for The Athenaeum Press moving forward.

Model Interviews

Along with consulting with our internal faculty on already-present opportunities, our grant project will also involve interviews with five other humanities storytelling and design labs, formed in consultation with our faculty committee. These interviews serve two purposes: to connect our community-based storytelling initiative to innovators in the field, and to define expectations for students wishing to continue their humanities-based work within experiential programs.

Our models and potential external leaders are Greenhouse Studios (University of Connecticut), WeGoja Foundation, Digital Storytelling Lab (Columbia University), Media Lab (MIT), Diaspora Solidarities Lab, Annenberg Innovation Lab (USC), and the d school (Stanford). We will look to translate project models into a form that makes sense and serves our institution's diverse student body and practices that encourage participation from local and underrepresented students at our mid-sized regional public institution. We seek this guidance from these programs to also prepare students for the rigors of both media production careers and highly-ranked graduate schools.

Story and Collaborator Bank

Within the Press, we have found that community-based storytelling, research, and learning is one of the most active and engaging ways to make authentic and lasting relationships between community organizations and individuals and our student body. For example, the Press has been the primary operational collaborator and advisor of the university's Charles Joyner Institute for Gullah and African Diaspora Studies. Our collective work with the surrounding Gullah Geechee communities and the Joyner Institute has resulted in an international biannual conference, four grant initiatives, and the increased visibility of Gullah Geechee history and culture within our region. However, there has been very little change in the institution's curriculum and course and degree offerings for the students enrolled at our university.

Typically, the Press takes on officially two or three projects at a time, working with two to three sections, each dedicated to a particular project from conception to execution. Most projects require two or more semesters to finish because of their complexity. In addition to projects, the Press staff and faculty team have been partners and consultants on multiple initiatives outside of our project catalog, from historic rehabilitation projects to conference planning. We have encountered many other community stories that needed to be told, but we lacked collaborative power to be able to accommodate them. In recent years, we have fielded projects to other campus and community initiatives, but we have had little coordination after their referral.

A vital part of our planning is to solicit and create an institutional story bank and story contacts that can serve as ideas for courses, student projects, interviews, or related initiatives. This story bank will be hosted on the Athenaeum Press website and will be accessible to all affiliated faculty. Like Press project submissions, we will accept story ideas and requests from all areas of our community, and our advisory team of faculty, community members, and students. We will actively review and refer stories or return them to the story bank for future referral or use.

The development of the story bank is important even prior to the formal expansion or implementation of curricular changes, as it will allow us to begin the solicitation and build excitement about new curricular models to test them when we move into development after the grant period.

Timing and Simultaneous Projects
Concurrent with this Exploration grant, the Press will be researching and working to address the recent and historic barriers to engaging students in project-based work throughout their undergraduate career. As we watch Press students navigate the graduate and job market, the project-based experience they gain through community-based storytelling can make a positive difference in graduate school applications, job interviews, and career development for our students.

Over the Spring 2023 semester, the Press is piloting a series of professional development workshops focusing on presenting the power of storytelling for both academic and freelance work. This pilot is funded by an institutional Quality Enhancement Program grant. In 2023-24, we anticipate applying for internal funding to supplement the Spotlight grant by collaborating on professional development opportunities with campus partners (both student- and faculty-led) outside of the humanities and including community members in these workshops.

In terms of timing, 2023-24 is a perfect time for the Press to focus on strategic planning and sustainability. Over the current (2022-23) academic year, we are completing a three-year grant project, The Gullah Geechee Digital Project, and our first international project collaboration with the Hochschule Mainz in Germany. We are also forming an external and internal advisory team for a traveling exhibit on Appalachian music and culture, which will travel across the Southeast in Spring of 2024, which we hope will serve as a model for inter-institutional projects and showcase the power of a regional public university in engaging its regional community.

Project Personnel
Project Leads
Alli Crandell, Director of The Athenaeum Press and Digital Initiatives, will lead the project with Scott Mann, Production Manager and Professor of Graphic Design. Crandell and Mann have worked together closely on all the Press' projects since 2013. Crandell has been a key collaborator on multiple federal grant initiatives, including the Gullah Geechee Digital Project (NHPRC Major Grant), and organized multiple conferences and seminars. Mann has led the design of the university-wide student media and the design production of the Press, which has resulted in numerous regional and national ADDY design awards.

Humanities Faculty Advisory Team
We selected our humanities and faculty workshop team from past Press faculty collaborators, interdisciplinary leaders, and production faculty. Each of these faculty bring significant expertise in serving underserved students, production, and innovative pedagogy. Former collaborators include: Tripthi Pillai, Assistant Dean of DEI and Global Initiatives (*Trans/South*); Tim Fischer, Program Coordinator for the Master of Music Technology and Associate Professor of Music (Gullah Geechee Digital Project); Pam Martin, Professor of Politics and Sustainability and Coastal Resilience (*Powering a New South*); and Maggi Morehouse is the Burroughs Distinguished Professor of History and Culture (*War on Two Fronts*). Additional faculty include Elizabeth Baltes, new chair of Interdisciplinary Studies and the MA Liberal Studies program; Sara Laiola, Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Digital Culture and Design; Kim Schumacher, Senior Lecturer in Journalism; and David Johnson, Assistant Professor of Photography.

Institutional Context and Benefit
Coastal Carolina University is a regional mid-sized public university with a total undergraduate enrollment of 9,790 undergraduates and 683 graduate students. The Edwards College of Humanities and Fine Arts, in which the Press sits, is the second-most diverse college at the university, with 31.6% of its 1,620 students identifying as non-white. Our student body has 50.4% in-state students, and 27% are first-generation. The institution, though rapidly growing, also suffers from relatively low retention and low four-year graduation rates. The University's most recent Quality Enhancement Plan, "Succeed @ Coastal," focuses on creating a sense of belonging for the three most least-retained populations: Pell Grant-eligible students, underrepresented minorities, and male students. The institution, through the Quality Enhancement Program, is working to increase curricular and co-curricular programs to both increase student retention and graduation rates.

Coastal Carolina University has also seen rapid growth from a small institution to a mid-sized institution within the last twenty years. In 2002, our population was just over 5,000 full-time undergraduates. In 2022, our enrollment is just under 10,000. Despite the population growth, the percentage of underrepresented minorities has stayed relatively stable. The growth of the institution's population mirrors that of our surrounding community. The Myrtle Beach area has consistently been in the top-five growing metropolitan areas over the last four years, with much of that population being white. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of Horry County has grown by 35.3% (the state average was 12%), with the percentage of underrepresented populations decreasing slightly. The institution's five-county service area has seen similar increases, with 3-4% decreases in minority populations.

The five-county service area, despite the increase in population, is still largely rural and largely poor, with a median earnings income of $30,000 or less. Coastal Carolina University is one of two universities within a 90-mile radius, and the only one that offers graduate programs in the humanities. The university has also been ranked as one of the "Best Values in the South" and is still within the lower third of tuition costs for in-state students.

With so much population growth, it is difficult both for newcomers and new students to understand the cultural landscape (as it is rapidly changing) and the impact of this population growth upon the local history and social issues. The Athenaeum Press' student worker and course enrollments focus on diversity student representation; between 25% and 75% of our interns and students identify as non-white, and a majority of our students receive in-state tuition. Almost all our students, no matter their background, have very little knowledge prior to coming to the Press of the underrepresented community histories and cultures that surround them.

Benefit
The Press is a primary pathway for students to become meaningfully involved in community-based humanities research. We have found that community-based storytelling, research, and learning is one of

the most active and engaging ways to make authentic and lasting relationships with our surrounding community.

Because the Press' mission is to focus on the underrepresented stories of the South, we engage with an equally diverse set of community nonprofits and cultural heritage institutions, from Gullah Geechee collectives and LGBTQ+ support networks. We believe in the power of bringing our student body, particularly those populations most at-risk for low retention, into meaningful collaborations made possible by community-based storytelling.

We have seen first-hand the transformative experience and sense of belonging students gain in participating in community-based storytelling. In their post-semester evaluations, students cite the power of a "sense of place" that working on locally engaged projects provides them. Press students have gone on to be leaders and accomplished professionals in local museums, design firms, and graduate schools. They have learned how doing projects with a small budget and an equally creative team can transform and amplify underrepresented voices and stories.

We believe that integrating community-based storytelling throughout the curriculum will provide two benefits in strengthening humanities learning for our undergraduates:
1. Connect students with the place of their learning through meaningful collaborations with community stories.
2. Prepare students to participate and lead iterative, interdisciplinary, inclusive, and collaborative processes in their graduate work and/or career.

Similarly, we see this project's immediate impact on the faculty and staff involved in building a coalition and meaningful collaborations between faculty doing community-based work.

While these programs will hopefully lead to retention and graduation, and we will have evaluations and tracking mechanisms for these programs once they are implemented, we want to spread the positive impact we have already seen within the community.

Workplan

Notification: April 30, 2023
Grant Period: July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024
Pre-Grant Work:
- Pilot professional development seminar and initial findings from focus groups (Spring 2023)
- Begin discussion about story bank with community members
- Finalize commitments from humanities faculty
- Apply for additional funding through institution

Summer 2023 (starting August 1)
- Project Leads:
  o Assemble faculty/student teams for pre-semester workshop
  o Schedule and prepare for first and second faculty workshops
  o Schedule interviews with external centers
- Faculty: Prepare and Hold Workshop 1 (Introduction and Identification)
- Faculty: Prepare and Hold Workshop 2 (Analysis)

Fall 2023:
- Project Leads/Interns:
  o Begin developing story bank submission and repository
  o Conduct first round of interviews with external centers
  o Seek feedback from university administration on directions and initiatives
- Find additional funding sources for work

Spring 2024:
- Faculty:
  o Work on curricular and extracurricular integrations
- Project Leads:
  o Hold individual check-ins with faculty on curricular drafts and integrations
  o Soft launch and user testing of story bank
  o Conduct final round of interviews with external centers

Summer 2024:
- Faculty/Project Leads:
  o Conduct Workshop 3 (Draft)
  o Conduct Workshop 4 (Presentation)
  o Collate presentations, integrate best practices from external interviews
  o Hold presentations with chair leadership team
  o Seek feedback and revise presentations
- Project Leads:
  o Develop strategic plan to move forward
  o Officially launch and promote story bank

Post-Award: Write report, publish, and present where appropriate