

Mellon Philadelphia Area Creative Collaboratives Grant  
Awarded September 2016

## **Background**

Thanks to a series of grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the support of other donors, and through the organizational structure of the John B. Hurford '60 Center for the Arts and Humanities (HCAH), Haverford has been able to transform the ways in which the arts find integrated expression within our liberal arts curriculum. The HCAH fosters regional and national collaboration, experimentation, and civic initiatives through programs that connect with communities of artists, thinkers, and activists. A critical interdisciplinary node at Haverford College, the HCAH also oversees the program and operation of the Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery (CFG) as part of an overarching mission to expand community and artistic engagement across the humanities and sciences on campus and in diverse public contexts.

The central impetus for this decade-plus history of development has been to inculcate our students and faculty a broader vision of what a humanities and liberal arts education prepares one to do in the world through the development of creative partnerships with organizations beyond the campus. Thus, the HCAH has funded and organized an arts and humanities internship summer program, pairing students with over 20 area organizations. The HCAH-operated Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, in conjunction with these initiatives, has also partnered with local organizations in the past six years, including *A-Space*, *Wooden Shoe*, *Revolution Recovery (RAIR)*, *Raices Culturales Latinamericanas*, *People's Paper Co-Op*, and *SCI Graterford*, to name a few. As a result, Haverford has established itself as a resolute community participant building on faculty development and student engagement with diverse area partners: we have an excellent track record for sending students out to rich cultural arenas in the Philadelphia area and for bringing organizations in to our liberal arts community for various forms of exchange, including exhibitions, residencies, and talks.

Perhaps most essential to these collaborations has been substantial input from these local organizations, whose working modes have transformed the way the Center thinks about pedagogy and engagement that reaches beyond semesters and less reciprocal versions of experiential learning. Within the two phases of the Mellon Creative Residencies Program, faculty, students, and community members alike witnessed the potential for more sustained and cooperatively-led community partnerships whereby the structures of engagement were defined through authentic dialogue and creative production

These projects became *de facto* pilots for a program that imagines not just patterns of movement between Haverford and the greater Philadelphia community but new structures of sustained and evolving cohabitation. The partnerships we propose are premised on mutually beneficial projects defined by new amalgams

of dynamic, interactive creation, cultivation, and knowledge-production across local organizations, arts communities and educational institutions. The PACC is designed to take what we and our collaborators have learned from the Mellon Creative Residencies Program and internship/gallery partnerships to develop an integrated, sustainable model of collaborative, interdisciplinary civic engagement in a polity that extends beyond educational institutions and singular notions of community.

Importantly, we will pilot in these partnered models new structures for joint ownership of programs and projects as they are being developed. With the advent of our new Visual Culture, Arts, and Media (VCAM) facility and its opportunities for regular and reciprocal exchanges with other arts and nonprofit hubs, Haverford is poised to join the surrounding community (local high schools, nonprofit partners listed above, film houses, and makerspaces) in richer creative collaborations that will build upon new intersections, and physical spaces, across diverse publics, artists, student and faculty participants, and social advocacy groups.

### **Philadelphia Area Creative Collaboratives (PACC)**

Through a series of collaboratives organized by community partners and faculty across semester-long courses, the initiative will bring together artists, faculty, students, nonprofits, and other community members over a four-year period to build new models and co-curricular infrastructure for:

- Collaborative social change arts projects rooted in local nonprofits and anchored in courses, fostering multidirectional knowledge production and sharing among local artists, nonprofits, faculty, staff, and students;
- Creative programs that a) challenge us to think differently about curriculum through intentional and reciprocal exchanges with expert partners versed in creative civic engagement and innovative advocacy; b) gather practitioners in community roundtables to cultivate dialogue about the creative potential of partnerships between nonprofit social change organizations and liberal arts colleges; and
- Creative alliances that a) pair local and regional artists with students to work within community nonprofit gallery and civic advocacy spaces, including co-ops, prisons, and environmental education programs; and b) offer regional and campus workshops with constituencies who will run summer workshops (in film, 3D making, mural arts, and theater) for greater Philadelphia and Haverford community members and secondary-school students

Each collaborative will be co-led by nonprofit arts, cultural, and social change organizations in partnership with Haverford faculty, who apply in a formal process with two annual deadlines. Cooperative structures will include elements of the following:

- Interdisciplinary collaborative projects with co-curated public interface
- Collaborative summer workshops that invite new publics into dialogue and praxis
- Interactive exhibits and arts creation in locations on and off campus
- Public multimedia engagements for project afterlife, sharing, and assessment
- Community-led evaluations helping to articulate the initiative's goals

## **Program Model**

### **I. Collaboratives:**

Each year, the HCAH will support one to two major Philadelphia Area Creative Collaboratives (one per year *or* one per semester given the scope of the project). Some of the collaboratives will build further on relationships already established with community partners; others will provide new entry points for the community partners and faculty to begin an exploration of reciprocal needs, desires, and opportunities for embedded and sustained future exchanges. Where relationships already exist this new phase of engagement between campus, community, and visiting artist will prompt all participants to move into new configurations of exploration on a personal, professional, and structural level.

Faculty will be invited to apply using courses across all levels of the curriculum, both newly developed and those renovated within the framework of the initiative. Experience has shown us that students learn differently when they experience intentionally structured connections between a course for which they are registered and cognate courses being offered simultaneously, especially when those courses are taught across different disciplines and levels of the curriculum. Faculty will also be invited to reflect on the role this work will play in larger institutional conversations about diversity's place in Haverford College's educational mission and cultural experience. We expect the work of the PACC to help enunciate more clearly two of the current goals of these groups—1) to develop a pluralistic ethos that builds on the affirmation of diversity as an educational value integral to our fundamental mission; and 2) to bring the full force of our institutional commitment to a process through which we can sustain equity in teaching, learning, and the holistic development of every member of our communities writ large.

Some partnerships are already alive in inchoate form through previous successful projects or small-scale engagement among individual faculty, artists, and non-profit administrators. In these cases we see the potential to catalyze and model more structured and cyclical future partnerships that can evolve with community liaison interests and curricular evolution. In other cases, the collaboratives and exploratory grants will offer a first point of mutual contact between non-profits,

artists, and the campus community. As we work closely with community partners to gauge the scope, focus, and potential of such collaborations moving forward, we imagine that some of these experiences will blossom (with the appropriate structure and administrative support) into long-term programs while others will address critical and immediate issues that are then refracted into diffuse future projects.

## II. Collaborative Seed Exploratory:

These smaller grants will invite faculty working across at least two courses to experiment with arts community collaborative projects. We imagine that some of these pilots may evolve into full collaboratives in subsequent years. Qualifying projects could include:

- Work with a local arts nonprofit and a local/national artist or curator;
- A course project that explores the intersection of arts-community-curriculum that can be completed in one week or one month;
- An on-campus workshop that invites the public and campus together in dialogue with a particular organization and collaborating artists, and/or;
- A community dialogue, project presentation, or performance off-campus around which students, faculty, artists, and non-profits converge to set and assess the goals of future collaborative programming in this area.

These grants will also be awarded on an application basis and the HCAH will offer up to four grants per year to faculty/community partners who wish to explore a possible project.

## III. Community Roundtables and Regional Workshop:

Annual community roundtables will serve as focus groups for collaborative and exploratory participants. We see these as critical to our assessment of the program, which will build on a community feedback model, and integral to sustaining future networks of exchange.

In the second year of the program, we will also host diverse constituencies of nonprofits, artists, students, faculty, and community organizers who comprise the universe of our regional partners to discuss best practices across collaboratives.

The roundtables and the regional workshop will encompass both evaluation (with formal student, faculty, and community organizer focus groups) and planning, with a view to maximizing the realized and potential synergies resulting from the network that each collaborative will cultivate and establish. The roundtables, in particular, will be structured to provide formative assessment for each of the collaboratives over the four-year-period. Our hope is that we can integrate points of information and insight into the evolving collaborative structure and use the

accumulation of qualitative and quantitative data in providing a report and list of discoveries at the end of the grant.

#### IV. PACC Program Manager:

Critical to the realization of the PACC will be a full-time program manager. Our experience with the Mellon Creative Residencies program proved how essential having this dedicated staff support is to the realization of complex multi-institutional projects. This position will include as one of its core mandates expanding the network of possible community organizations and creating a database of participants. The PACC program will be especially ambitious, because it involves cultivating sustained relationships with regional nonprofits and coordinating events and audiences at diverse locations with a wide range of participants. The activities of this grant, and the non-semester timeline of our artists and nonprofit organizations, also offer the opportunity to expand our programming into the summer months, thereby providing the potential to engage community members on a year-round basis with particular opportunities for more extended work with secondary school students.

The program manager will administer these pilots and work closely with the participants to model a sustainable collaborative program within the new VCAM facility and the greater Philadelphia community. The manager will also oversee the assessment of these outcomes in coordination with the campus offices listed above. The position will support the process of documenting the work undertaken, e.g. the new courses and curricular structures created; maintaining and developing a PACC archive as an ongoing resource to disseminate materials to a broad network of participating community participants; and analyzing the multiple structures developed for creative collaborative engagement, the qualitative data garnered through focus groups, audience responses, and surveys.