PRESS RELEASE

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CIC Selects 24 Colleges and Universities to Participate in Public Humanities Program; “Humanities Research for the Public Good” Grants Will Support Projects

(WASHINGTON, DC) Twenty-four CIC member institutions have been selected to participate in the second cohort of “Humanities Research for the Public Good,” a national initiative to promote student research and public engagement at private colleges and universities while showcasing the rich archival, library, and museum collections held by these institutions. The program is generously supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and has received a prestigious J. Franklin Jameson Archival Advocacy Award from the Society of American Archivists. Anne M. Valk, historian and executive director of the American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning at the CUNY Graduate Center, leads the program.

Each participating institution will receive $10,000 to support a year-long undergraduate research project that draws on institutional collections to address a topic of interest to the local community. To assure community engagement, each college will collaborate with a community-based partner organization to share the results of student research with community members through public programs including exhibits, presentations, podcasts, and documentaries.

Funded projects will explore such topics as the human ecology of Nebraska’s tallgrass prairie, popular reading habits in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, the cultural history of sexual consent as reflected in sex education pamphlets, oral histories of Muslim immigrants in Minnesota and Hispanic immigrants in Connecticut, and the legacy of Mr. Rogers. Institutional teams will work with a wide variety of community partners, ranging from public libraries to houses of worship, historical societies to art museums, and hospitals to social advocacy groups.

CIC president Richard Ekman notes that “independent colleges are stronger when they share their resources with their communities—and so are their communities. Those resources often include significant archival or library collections that can illuminate issues of real public importance.” The enthusiasm shown by the participating institutions and their community partners highlights the relevance of humanities scholarship and scholarly collections for public audiences.

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Participants were selected through a rigorous and highly-selective application process. “I was impressed by the good work that faculty and staff are already doing to support community engagement and humanities research,” says Dr. Valk. “So many independent colleges are committed to public-facing scholarship and exploring the hidden potential of their collections.”

Each project is led by a three-person team including a faculty member, a collections expert (such as an archivist), and a senior campus administrator. CIC will host a virtual workshop for the new cohort of program participants in June and July 2021. A highlight of the workshop will be a keynote panel featuring Dr. Valk and Modupe Labode, curator for the division of cultural and community life at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Project leaders and the student researchers they supervise will convene for a closing workshop in Baltimore, MD, in spring 2022.

For more information on the Humanities Research for the Public Good initiative, visit www.cic.edu/PublicHumanities.

List of participating institutions:

- Augsburg University (Minneapolis, MN)
- Bushnell University (Eugene, OR)
- Carlow University (Pittsburgh, PA)
- College of St. Benedict (Saint Joseph, MN)
- Columbia College Chicago (Chicago, IL)
- Defiance College (Defiance, OH)
- Doane University (Crete, NE)
- Ferrum College (Ferrum, VA)
- Fontbonne University (St. Louis, MO)
- George Fox University (Newberg, OR)
- Goucher College (Baltimore, MD)
- Muhlenberg College (Allentown, PA)
- Saint Peter’s University (Jersey City, NJ)
- Saint Vincent College (Latrobe, PA)
- Springfield College (Springfield, MA)
- St. Lawrence University (Canton, NY)
- Thiel College (Greenville, PA)
- Trinity College (Hartford, CT)
- Tusculum University (Greeneville, TN)
- University of the Incarnate Word (San Antonio, TX)
- Wagner College (Staten Island, NY)
- Washington & Jefferson College (Washington, PA)
- Wheaton College (Norton, MA)
- Widener University (Chester, PA)

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