

**Interdisciplinary Opportunities Mini-Grants
Proposal Cover Sheet**

Project Title: Planning a Humanities and Social Science Learning Community

Institution: Morehouse College

Faculty/Staff Name: Leah Creque, Ph.D. and Samuel Livingston, Ph.D.

Faculty/Staff Department: English, African-American Studies and History

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Amount requested: \$8,350.00

Please check the appropriate boxes: curricular proposal co-curricular proposal
 planning & implementation planning only

Date grant submitted: October 15, 2007

Proposed grant period: January to July 2008

Type of project:

Planning grant for faculty development to implement an interdisciplinary learning community

Signature of faculty/staff submitting proposal _____

Date _____

Signature of student submitting proposal _____

Date _____

Name of appropriate dept./div. Chair

Dr. Terry Mills _____

Signature of above chair or officer

Date _____

Name of Chief Academic Officer:

Or chief student affairs officer

Dr. Willis Sheftall

Signature of Chief Academic Officer

Date _____

Evidence of institutional support is required for each curricular mini-grant proposal in the form of a letter of support from the proposal author's Department/Division Chair. For co-curricular proposals institutional support is required in the form of a letter of support from the faculty/staff mentor/sponsor and a letter from the chief student affairs officer. All proposals must be signed by the chief academic office.

For Office use only

Date received _____ By _____

Date sent to review Committee _____

Action _____ Notification sent ____

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

Summary Page

Issue: Morehouse College has an academic divisional structure that is implicitly designed for the ideals of interdisciplinary cooperation and endeavors. Yet, an integrative mechanism for faculty to consider and apply these principles has not yet emerged. This proposal suggests a structured process and opportunity that engages the Departments of English and history with African-American Studies to develop a social justice-centered humanities and social sciences learning community (*Social Justice Learning Community*). The *Social Justice Learning Community* would serve as an organization within the Division to demonstrate and coordinate its interdisciplinary linkages through an interdisciplinary course, *Ethical Texts across the African Diaspora – Exploring Black Atlanta’s Legacy of Writing and Social Ethics (Ethical Texts)*; explore co-curricular activities with the new *Humanities and Social Sciences Lecture Series* and plan for sustainable interdisciplinary activities in the future.

Goal: To develop a social justice-centered humanities and social sciences learning community as an infrastructure for sustained interdisciplinary course development, co-curricular activities and future academic programming.

Objectives:

1. To explore intersections and linkages among themes of social justice as a rigorous scholarly and pedagogical criterion through the refinement of the course, *Ethical Texts*
2. To provide faculty development and training in the learning community concept and interdisciplinary course development with integrative course assignments
3. To structure faculty input into interdisciplinary co-curricular activities and integrative opportunities related to the *Humanities and Social Science Lecture Series*
4. To develop a plan for sustained activities that will foster the Humanities and Social Science learning community as a resource for interdisciplinary endeavors in the Division.

Anticipated outcomes and benefits:

- At least one interdisciplinary course pilot approved with integrative course assignments
- Faculty development for the Humanities and Social Sciences Division that results in an interdisciplinary learning community
- A Humanities and Social Sciences Lecture Series that incorporates interdisciplinary values
- An infrastructure to effect greater awareness, coherence and unity among faculty teaching, research and service initiatives within the division

Collaborative relationships:

- African-American Studies, English and History Departments, AUC Woodruff Library, English Multi-Media Lab for course development
- The 13 departments and programs within the Humanities and Social Sciences for lecture series
- The 8 member UNCF/Mellon Professional Development Initiative for dissemination and replicability

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

Social Justice Learning Community Activity Goal:

To develop a writing intensive interdisciplinary course that emphasizes critical thinking, writing skills, and an appreciation of the role of research writing in social justice discourse and activism.

Project Description:

Scholars from the disciplines of English, History and African American Studies will collaborate to describe the relationship between writing and social justice amongst Atlanta-based activists. Morehouse College's acquisition of the Martin Luther King, Jr. papers offers local scholars and students the challenge to explore the role of writing in the lives of some of the Twentieth century's most significant social justice activists. This proposal engages faculty from three disciplines within the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences to collaborate with the AUC's Woodruff Library and its Special Collections and Archives Division in creating research and learning opportunities within existing courses. The Woodruff Library's particularly salient holdings are the John Henrik Clarke Africana Studies Collection, the papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Walter Rodney, C. Eric Lincoln, Hoyt Fuller and the Institute of the Black World. Faculty from History, English and African American Studies will align their disciplinary theories and applications to achieve integrated coursework and assignments to demonstrate the interrelatedness of these disciplines in the great works of world leaders.

Methodological Assumptions of African American Studies, History, & English

The African American Studies program, and departments of History and English have proposed the interdisciplinary course, *Ethical Texts across the African Diaspora – Exploring Black Atlanta's Legacy of Writing and Social Ethics*, which will facilitate an integrated approach to critical thinking and writing skills in a social justice-centered humanities and social sciences curriculum. Both the traditional disciplines of history and English share a common concern with the examination and treatment of texts. Whether the attempt is to explicate the inner life through literature or to reconstruct the past, both disciplines attempt to enrich the human experience through explorations of texts. The interdisciplinary field of African American Studies has emphasized the significance of texts since its inception, through its chosen nomenclature, "the Black experience." African American Studies scholars as diverse as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Molefi K. Asante, Robert Farris Thompson, and John Henrik Clarke have explored the African American experience through the disciplined examination of texts.

Morehouse College pursues its mission of developing,

men with disciplined minds who will lead lives of leadership and service. A private historically black liberal arts college for men, Morehouse realizes this mission by emphasizing the intellectual and character development of its students. In addition, the College assumes special responsibility for teaching the history and culture of black people.¹

¹ Morehouse College Mission Statement, <http://www.morehouse.edu/about/mission.html>, Nov. 21, 2007).

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

Principal Investigators, Creque and Livingston pursue Morehouse College's mission statement as we seek to train socially ethical men with minds disciplined through critical and clear thinking about African American history and culture as it interacts with the larger world. Our course on writing, social ethics and texts will apply significant elements of each discipline's methodology. The discipline of English contributes an approach to establishing a voice for those often voiceless in Western society as well as the tools of writing composition and research for expression of one's values and opinions.

From history the emphasis on exploring the past through the creation of narratives based on primary sources will provide a significant element of our research and teaching project. African American Studies contributes the specificity of subject matter and the heuristic use of an African American ethical perspective as a disciplinary focus. This notion of restoring voice by centering or relocating texts within the African American experience is shared by African Americanists who have chosen literature, history, anthropology, sociology and other disciplines as their methodology of choice. It is our hope to provide a structured research and teaching field through a creative application of humanities-based methodologies.

Social Justice Learning Community Activity Plan

Beginning in December of 2007 faculty will meet monthly in an array of activities to achieve the desired level of interdisciplinary input for the Social Justice Learning Community. First, Dr. Creque and Dr. Livingstone will advertise the opportunity and seek participants in an introductory session. After this session, at least 2 participants from each department will be selected to serve as the core group to develop the learning community. In order for these participants to understand the learning community concept and its full potential to achieve interdisciplinary activities, they will be given three workshops. The first workshop will be entitled, "The Learning Community Option" conducted by Dr. Phyllis Dawkins of Johnson C. Smith who is an expert on the creation of learning communities and the design of integrative assignments. The second workshop will be on "Interdisciplinary Integrative Writing Assignments" conducted by Sandra Flowers, Director of Writing for Success and Empowerment at Clark Atlanta University. The third workshop will focus on "The Research Imperative: Finding Commonality Among Disciplines". Members of the AUC Woodruff Library Staff will conduct this workshop and an invited featured scholar in African American Studies to be identified. In addition to the six-core faculty, these workshops will be open to all Humanities and Social Science Faculty. One session will be a part of the Division's spring meeting.

These workshops will assist faculty in seeing the possibilities for interdisciplinary activities around the theme of social justice. Most importantly these workshops will reinforce the interdisciplinary core values that must guide their input and participation. These values are that faculty must share in all decisions in course development; faculty must commit to teaching theories and texts of others' disciplines and that syllabi must reflect integrated assignments.

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

The second tier of activities will include faculty development for the conveners through attendance at training conferences. One convener will attend a conference on the scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the other will attend a conference on Critical Thinking and Writing.

Faculty engagement will be fostered through a web portal. The lecture series will be fostered through a divisional brochure that also highlights the interdisciplinary course as an exemplar of the Division's interdisciplinary commitment. Additionally, faculty teaching and assignments will be supported by acquisition of software and course materials for use in the English Multi-media Lab.

Background and Campus Context

This project leverages the energy of new administrative leadership and emerging leadership among junior faculty with the synergistic elements of curricular assessment in preparation for SACS re-accreditation and new program initiatives at Morehouse College. Morehouse College has a new President, Dr. Robert Franklin, who seeks to build upon the College's legacy of academic excellence by ushering in a "renaissance" in which Morehouse reclaims key elements of its institutional identity to "serve as a global resource for ethical students and leaders." In this same time period, the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences obtained a new Dean, Dr. Terry Mills, who envisions that the humanities and the social sciences would lead the way in the shaping of Morehouse as a global resource through interdisciplinary modes of scholarship and pedagogy.

In addition to the fall semester's beginning with a new president and Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences, two tenure-track faculty members began a three-year program with the UNCF/Mellon Faculty Institute. At the direction of the Provost's Office, Leah Creque, Ph.D. of the English Department and Samuel Livingston, Ph.D. of the History Department and African American Studies Program submitted a successful application that articulated their willingness to undergo professional development that would result in interdisciplinary course development and the leadership of integrative pedagogical strategies to improve student learning and retention at Morehouse. Creque and Livingston completed the first workshop of the UNCF/Mellon Institute and have fulfilled the goal of the creation of an interdisciplinary course proposal entitled, *Ethical Texts across the African Diaspora – Exploring Black Atlanta's Legacy of Writing and Social Ethics*. The next step is for them to seek and incorporate input from colleagues in the division to make the course components more solid and reflective of learning outcomes that faculty in the division share. Based upon research and the skills learned in the UNCF/Mellon Institute a learning community provides the best infrastructure for interdisciplinary sharing and course development

There is another compelling reason for the faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences to come together. Dean Mills will launch a new Humanities Lecture Series in the spring semester. It will be necessary for faculty to exchange ideas and viewpoints about the theme of the series and how the speakers and the content of their address could support course content. The initial proposal is for the Humanities Lecture Series to

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

thematically center and complement the notion of global ethics and social justice issues, also.

Faculty development is the essential foundation for the establishment of a learning community as an infrastructure for scholarship and pedagogy. Dr. Creque and Dr. Livingston would co-chair this effort and convene faculty from each department in the humanities and social sciences in a faculty workshop in which they will learn about the learning community concept and plan for its implementation at Morehouse College. Additionally, the faculty participants would provide the greatly needed input into the planning and implementation of the Humanities Lecture Series and the integrative course elements for the proposed course. In this way, the division will begin the dialogue on interdisciplinary efforts.

Detailed Interdisciplinary Plan

The Interdisciplinary Plan for the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences focuses on strengthening its two interdisciplinary programs in African-American Studies and Urban Studies with faculty development opportunities to improve faculty ability to teach interdisciplinary courses and to share in the creation of syllabi with integrative assignments. At Morehouse, these two interdisciplinary programs rely heavily on the input of other departments. Faculty in these two programs generally has joint appointments in other humanities and social science departments. The Dean is committed to encouraging the dialogue regarding discipline specific theories and practice and areas of intersection and integration of concepts among the disciplines.

This project works well with the interdisciplinary plan in that it would foster dialogue around interdisciplinary course development and a co-curricular support through the Humanities Lecture Series. This project creates the infrastructure of a learning community that is necessary for faculty to learn the concept, define the role of a learning community at Morehouse and implement the concept with the inclusion of students. Ultimately the proposed course and the management of the Humanities Lecture Series are housed in one of the interdisciplinary divisions.

Prior Activities or Research Related to the Proposal

As described in the previous sections, this proposal is based on the College's new emphasis in internationalization, ethics and social justice. This proposal is based upon the development of a Humanities Lecture Series with a similar theme that intersects the departments of the humanities and social sciences. This proposal is also based on the College's commitment to and participation in the UNCF/Mellon Faculty institute in which the creation of a learning community and interdisciplinary course development are goals.

The proposed faculty development workshop for Morehouse's Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences will be developed based upon the principles of the scholarship on teaching and learning and the best practices of learning communities. The resources of the UNCF/Mellon network will be used as well as the standards of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education and the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning.

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

Projected Timetable

December 2007	Identify key faculty for the Learning Community Workshop
December 2007	Identify guest speakers for the Learning Community Workshop
January 2008	Host faculty participants in an introductory session
February – May 2008	Host monthly faculty participants workshops regarding course development and lecture series
February – May 2008	Develop website and learning community brochure
March 2008	Host division wide faculty development workshop on Learning Community
February-May 2008	Co-conveners attend faculty development training in respective areas; meet to share information learned
April 2008	Course syllabi completed with integrative assignments
May 2008	Faculty input and reports due
May 2008	Learning Community Planning Document completed
May 2008	Assessment and Final Report to ACS

Budget

Line Item	Cost	Qty	Total
<i>Faculty Development</i>			
Guest Speakers for Faculty workshops	\$800.00 ea.	3 Guest Speakers	\$2400.00
Conveners' Faculty Development Training Conferences	\$2700.00	2 faculty at one conference and 1 add'l conference each (Creque and Livingston)	\$2700.00
Texts and Workshop Training Materials	\$150.00 ea	6 faculty	\$900.00
<i>Social Justice Learning Community Resources</i>			
Website/Brochure	\$1000.00		\$ 1000.00
Course Materials/ Software/ Supplies	\$1500.00		\$ 1500.00
Grand Total			\$8,500.00

Budget Explanation

Faculty Development Costs consists of:

- 3 Guest speakers for 3 workshops at \$800.00 each inclusive of transportation and lodging
- One local conference for both conveners; one a Faculty Development Training Conference each in the field of Scholarship on Teaching and Learning and/ or Writing/Assessment for Creque and Livingstone
- Workshop Training Materials @\$150.00 each to cover a common text and other printed material

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

- Clerical and technological staff support for the development of a website and brochure are requested for communication via a web portal and a brochure to market the lecture series and learning community concept
- Course materials, writing software and supplies in support of the interdisciplinary course are budgeted for review and adoption.

Context Of Interdisciplinary Offering In The Curriculum/ Faculty Research Agenda

The proposed planning project is situated in the context of renewed interest in interdisciplinary cooperation and programming in the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The proposed planning project will enable faculty to focus on two thematically compatible initiatives: the development of a new interdisciplinary course entitled, *Ethical Texts across the African Diaspora – Exploring Black Atlanta’s Legacy of Writing and Social Ethics* and the Humanities Lecture Series in Social Justice and Ethics.

This course development initiative and the learning community concept were developed as a result of the professional development commitment over the next three years to participate in the UNCF/Mellon Professional Development Institute. Dr. Creque and Dr. Livingston are committed to explore faculty and professional development in the creation of interdisciplinary courses over the next three years; develop and seek adoption of an interdisciplinary course proposal and the context of a learning community and to share their experience in workshops and publication in regards to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Institutional support was provided for this team to undertake this endeavor with UNCF/Mellon.

The College has committed to the identification of funding for the Humanities Lecture Series to be launched during the spring semester of 2008. Although the College will support the stipends and travel for the guest lecturers, there is a need for the Humanities and Social Science faculty to come together to shape the theme and content of the series and determine the appropriate connections of the series to course content.

Anticipated Impact on the discipline, the institution and the students

The impact on the discipline will be significant in that there is rarely the combination of the humanities and social sciences within one division. This opportunity then bodes well for the future of interdisciplinary academic discourse between these two fields. Moreover, the issues of social justice and ethics are not easily discussed or navigated without the full engagement of each of the humanities and social sciences departments.

Morehouse, as an institution, will be greatly enhanced because this endeavor will better articulate Morehouse’s legacy and contribution in the areas of social justice and ethics as exemplified by Martin Luther King and Howard Thurman. Their global vision and impact on the world through the Civil Rights Movement and their moral teachings and writings have already had enormous global impact. It would be well for students to see how their theories and doctrines can have twenty-first century applications. This

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

interdisciplinary effort will better situate Morehouse College as a global resource for ethical leadership.

Our highest and most desired goal is to improve student learning and student retention. Learning communities have demonstrated efficacy in learning outcomes. We are confident that this endeavor will increase student mastery of discipline specific theory while understanding interdisciplinary connections and how these competencies will better prepare them for global leadership and problem-solving.

Evidence of Institutional Support

The attached letter of support and the signatures on the cover sheet attest to the institutional support for the development of a plan that results in interdisciplinary course development and a learning community in the humanities and social sciences.

The College's commitment is clear through its support of the Humanities Lecture Series and the participation in the UNCF/Mellon Professional Development Initiative.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be undertaken at optimal stages of the development and implementation process; the results of the assessment will be used to determine the formal adoption of the learning community concept, the proposed course and the direction of the Humanities Lecture Series. A formal evaluation plan will be designed that incorporates formative and summative measures. Both internal and external review will provide feedback and guidance. Among the outputs and proposed measurements will be:

- The level of faculty engagement through attendance and input
- The evidence of a faculty process for joint decision making
- The evidence of an infrastructure plan for a learning community
- The quality of course syllabi with integrative assignments
- The number and level of curricular connections keyed to the lecture series
- The congruence of the efforts with SACs accreditation goals, existing curricular goals and efforts
- Longitudinal student pre and post test data

Toward Pedagogy of International Ethics: Developing a Social Justice-centered Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Community at Morehouse College

Dissemination

The results of this endeavor will be shared at conferences on the Scholarship on Teaching and Learning and at the annual UNCF/Mellon Professional Development Workshops. Additionally, the faculty conveners will develop publications that describe the program and its successes.

Sustainability

The conveners will seek additional funding to implement the plan that is adopted by the faculty. Additionally, the College has committed funding to sustain the Humanities Lecture Series so that it will always be a focal point for faculty interaction. The UNCF/Mellon Professional Development programs will provide training for the conveners in the management of their professional goals and course development over the next three years. As a part of that commitment, outside funding sources will be identified to promote interdisciplinary research and development.

The Chair of the Division of Humanities and the Social Sciences is currently working on a resource development plan with the College's Office of Institutional Advancement to provide funding and resources to continue engagement of faculty in interdisciplinary course development and programs.

This grant from ACS will provide a beginning for faculty to come together to shape the Division's goals and objectives in this regard and the best vehicle for its sustainability.

Disclosure

There are no current proposals or funding in effect for the proposed project to provide faculty development to plan a Humanities and Social Science Learning Community. The Humanities Lecture Series and the UNCF/Mellon Professional Development Institute that are referenced provide discrete funding for compatible efforts upon which this proposal is built.