

# Artistic Excellence Programming Grants

## College of Humanities and the Arts

### SSETF-IRA Funds – Project Update and Project Observations

#### Year End 2019-2020

Starting in Fall 2017, the College of Humanities and the Arts was awarded \$150,000 in base IRA funding to use for Artistic Excellence Programming Grants (**AEPG**) across all of the arts, including culinary arts and the humanities or letters. This money was intended to provide robust educational enhancement and support for students' classroom and educational experiences. These funds were meant to support events including, but not limited to: master classes; lectures engaging the letters; professional residencies; art exhibits; literary readings; theatrical and musical performances; and film productions. Each year preceding the programming season for the next year, the College has issued a call for proposals, and members from the Hammer Programming Board have evaluated proposals and awarded funds based on criteria that have stressed impact for students, numbers of students involved or connected to the event, curricular linkage or support, and educational value of the event. Over the last two years, a proposal could also receive an additional point in the review process if it connected to two College of Humanities and Arts programming themes, "Borderlands" and "Deep Humanities and the Arts." (The current application form is attached). The awards have supported co- and extra-curricular events across all departments in the College of Humanities and Arts as well the Department of Hospitality (in CHSS) and the Department of Communication (COSS).

This program has been immensely successful. In the performing arts, seventeen dramatic events were supported by these SSETF funds, 21 music events, and 4 dance events. Five film events and one radio event were produced through these funds. In the fine arts, 6 art events and 8 design events were sponsored by these funds, as well as one event in the culinary arts. In the humanities and letters, 10 events in English literature and 3 events in world literature were supported by the SSETF funds, as well as an event in Philosophy. 77 events total were supported by these monies over the last three year. The variety and quality of the events has been exceptional. Theatre and musical events produced in the Hammer Theatre Center include: the sold-out Lin-Manuel Miranda musical "In the Heights" in 2018; an original 2019 play, "The Dreamer Project," which utilized interviews with our own undocumented students as a basis for the script; the musicals "Urinetown" and "Three Penny Opera"; and the musically-demanding Leonard Bernstein's "Mass." All of these occurred on the Hammer Theatre's main 532 seat stage. Many of the theatre performances supported by these grants including original works by faculty that included students working alongside SAGE (professional) actors, and drew audiences from San Jose State and the entire surrounding community. These funds have supported the cost of using the Hammer Theatre and their technical staff, an opportunity for our students to work in a professional venue with a crew of trained theatre professionals, as well as guest directors, choreographers, and performance professionals. Performing in the Hammer has significantly elevated our students' exposure to the world of actual theatre practices. As a

result, it has significantly professionalized the experience of our students in theatre, dance, and music.

Musical and dance events supported by the grant over three years have included residencies by the Catalyst String Quartet, Verona String Quartet, and Jessica Lang Dance Company; these events allow students to engage with professional musicians and dancers to elevate the craft and the skills of our students. Training with working professionals in these fields is considered a central part of training in these performance fields. The Film program has received funds to make professional videos to learn the skills necessary for a film maker. For example, a recent short film by our students, "Breakfast," allowed them to produce a film with professional SAGE actors as well as make the first film of Steinbeck material since 1992; this film is currently in competition at a range of film festivals, including Sundance. Exhibits have supported arts, music, and humanities students, while monies from these funds have allowed Design students to participate in an international Design symposium, showing their work amongst their peers. Numerous departments have brought in speakers for animation or art history students, as well as speakers at the intersection of art and technology; many of these events have been interdisciplinary and have involved students from multiple departments. Many events are co-curricular, part of the requirements for certain classes, such as readings by nationally-acclaimed novelists T.C. Boyle and Jonathan Franzen. (For a full list of the 77 events that this SSETF money has supported over 2017-2020 across 10 departments across the university, see the attached lists of sponsored events)

We have also worked over the last two years (for programming years 2019-2020 and upcoming 2020-2021) to integrate the programming into specific classes, especially those in the letters, while establishing thematic programming activities. This was in keeping with the original goal within the SSETF application to create a coherent arts and culture programming series. We begin this process in 2018, when five different events across music, theatre, radio, film, and English, engaged the 200th anniversary of the publication of Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein. This kind of thematic programming allowed students to explore the themes in the novel across many genres and allowed faculty to integrate the events into their curriculum. It also allowed radio students to produce a professional radio play, film and literature students to engage the history of the presentation of the Frankenstein story, and literature and philosophy students to engage major themes in the text through a panel of faculty speakers.

The College decided last year to extend this idea into two programming themes, "Borderlands" and "Deep Humanities & Arts." This has proved to be an enormous success. Students are now able to interrogate the many issues within a complex issue like immigration and migration through a musical performance, theatre productions, an author discussing an award-winning book, a poetry reading, or a film festival. Twenty-one events are occurring within the Borderlands theme this year (see attached postcards of events), touching every department in the college. Attendance for our Borderlands events this year have been 30-40% higher than events in the past, engaging more students across all disciplines and different colleges. We have also integrated many events more fully with the curriculum within classes, such as students in a Spanish class producing translations that

they then read on-stage with an award-winning Mexican poet. This level of engagement for our students has become the hallmark of our AEPG program, and we look forward to continuing to extend the reach of the program as we continue with our thematic programming.

The interest in the program has grown substantially, as have the applications to the AEPG process. In year one, we received 31 applications in the first round, and additional 10 applications in the second round. \$240,923 in programming funds were requested in the first year out of the \$150,000 available from these IRA funds. In years two, three, and four, the number of applications has continued to rise, from 37 in 2018-2019 to 41 for the 2019-20 programming year, to 49 for the 2020-21 programming year. The total requests for grants have continued to rise with that, from \$245,230 in 2018-2019 to \$281,690 for the 2019-20 programming year, to \$320,00 for the 2020-21 programming year. As faculty have seen how much these events can support their students across every discipline, the competition for this funding has continued to rise.

The number of students impacted by these funds has easily exceeded the 10,000 to 15,000 students predicted in the original proposal. In 2018, the sold-out "In the Heights" reached 5852 audience members alone, with another 80 members of the student cast, crew, and musicians supported by the grant. (Outcome reports from all events available upon request.) Both the quality and quantity of the impact of these funds is extraordinarily high, and it is deepening the educational experience of almost all students in the College of H & A and many in other colleges, building imperative skills in the performing and fine arts and deepening educational experiences in the letters and the humanities more generally.

### **Future Plans for Artistic Excellence Programming Grants (AEPG)**

Moving forward, we are very pleased with our process for funding programming for the performing and fine arts and Letters; we will continue to follow this process with infusing \$150,000 into all of the kinds of programming we have supported over the last four years. We hope to continue to enrich all of the disciplines in the college with more interdisciplinary integration of this programming into courses within the College of H & A and then for the entire University. We also hope to have even more cross-pollination across our college programming themes, which we will continue to use to organize our programming into a coherent series. Next year, in coordination with a series of forums we hope to co-sponsor with the Knight Foundation, the College will be looking to expand on the Deep Humanities & Arts initiative event even more. This past programming year, we have assigned a COHA faculty member .2 of assigned time per semester to help coordinate our college programming themes and to work with faculty to embed the programming into curriculum into courses within the College of Humanities and the Arts. We have been pleased with the deepening of engagement with programming into the classroom experience. We will be looking to further engage faculty to make the most of all of these programming experiences, which has been evident in raised numbers of students at events this year. Looking forward, we also hope to draw in students and faculty from across the university to engage these programming events in curricularly rich ways.