

A Programming Model for a Potential GSU Humanities Center

First Five Years of Activity

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Theme 1		YEAR OF PUBLIC ACTIVITY	<p>THE BASIC CONCEPT: Every year a new 3- or 4-year initiative would seek grant support for ongoing research done by humanities faculty, with a view to <i>public activity mainly occurring in the third year</i> of each team's work. If faculty interest ends up not supporting so ambitious a schedule, teams could be organized every other year. Of course not all teams will attract grant support, but organizing the effort to <i>seek it</i> will help showcase faculty work and strengthen curricular offerings (potentially for FLC, honors and scholarship students). These benefits could be achieved (on an admittedly modest scale) even with internal funds.</p> <p>Teams would be assembled by identifying <i>research projects already underway</i> (either at the research or writing stage) by humanities faculty, and then using that information to organize a major theme to facilitate those projects. Although each team might be built outward from a cluster of faculty from a particular department, each three-year trajectory would (ideally) be broadly defined to potentially include a wide range of faculty and to connect to existing initiatives. This scheme creates a rolling schedule of activity, where teams would <i>plan</i> in year one, undertake <i>on-campus and internal activity</i> on the topic in year 2 (mainly faculty and graduate program-connected), and <i>major public and outreach activity</i> in year 3 (which would bring GSU undergraduates into involvement).</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify interested faculty Identify potential grant sources Strategize years 2 & 3 activity Identify statewide resources Apply for external grants Seek internal grant resources Gather materials to facilitate seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure potential postdocs Organize YR 3 FLC sections Plan conference or book Try to fund faculty leaves in the area GSU year-long seminar Potential GSU library exhibition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public lecture series Major website materials Potential public conference FLC / Honors activity connected Showcase GSU faculty area work [Co-sponsor public events with other GSU centers] 		
	Theme 2		YEAR OF PUBLIC ACTIVITY	
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		Theme 3		YEAR OF PUBLIC ACTIVITY
<p>A POTENTIAL OVERSIGHT MODEL: Because the humanities broadly defined dovetail with existing research centers and significant well-established departmental activity, this proposal envisions a center director who would work in more of an <i>executive director</i> model, reporting to and implementing the will of a broader <i>executive committee</i>. That committee is configured to include representation from all interested departments, related research centers and university initiatives (such as Honors, FLCs, Presidential Scholars, etc.), and also include the university's most visible and productive senior humanities scholars. Three- or four-year themes will be selected by this committee to assure that topics are guaranteed to <i>rotate through all the humanistically-connected departments</i>, to connect where possible to other <i>interdisciplinary and international initiatives</i>, and with the <i>university strategic plan</i>.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify interested faculty Identify potential grant sources Strategize years 2 & 3 activity Identify statewide resources Apply for external grants Seek internal grant resources Gather materials to facilitate seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure potential postdocs Organize YR 3 FLC sections Plan conference or book Try to fund faculty leaves in the area GSU year-long seminar Potential GSU library exhibition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public lecture series Major website materials Potential public conference FLC / Honors activity connected Showcase GSU faculty area work [Co-sponsor public events with other GSU centers]

Potential GSU Humanities Center Activities

This list was assembled by reviewing activity reports at comparable public/state university humanities centers...

Organize a series of *three-year thematic projects* which would be staggered, and where the first year mainly centers on *project planning* and the solicitation of external support, the second on *GSU activities and programs* designed to support faculty research, and the third on *public programs* intended to spotlight GSU humanities activity.

Coordinate the input of a *board of directors* consisting of high profile (perhaps even all full professor ranked) humanities faculty and interested senior administrators. Name qualified faculty as *Research Associates* or *Senior Scholars* in the humanities.

Seek to provide *expanded* and *targeted support* for faculty pursuing humanities research fellowships, or who have book projects under contract, or who have already been provided with leave support. Such support might include some limited hideaway office space, research assistance, limited travel monies to accomplish archival work, access to a retreat center to accomplish sustained writing, opportunities and publicity for public lectures that help provide a broader audience for research outcomes, etc.

Coordinate Center efforts with already networked humanities centers, both in the Georgia university system and elsewhere.

Consider hosting an *annual conference* on the GSU campus which relates a different humanities-focused topic each year to other on-campus initiatives and the university's strategic plan.

Investigate the potential for *on campus interdisciplinary collaborations*, such as new certification programs or jointly organized efforts with other related units (GSU Honors, International Programs, Student Activities, Presidential Assistants, etc.).

Solicit GSU humanities faculty input regarding strategies for Center support of their work.

Sponsor a limited high visibility annual lecture series (perhaps one per semester) that showcases the humanities at Georgia State University and connects to the conference theme, again coordinated with existing support for lectures on campus.

Coordinate with FLC planners to designate humanities-based FLC's connecting to that year's (conference) topic of priority.

Look for ways to *encourage humanistic faculty research that connects to existing College centers* and GSU international and interdisciplinary initiatives.

Create a more significant web presence to showcase GSU humanities activities.

Produce a *low-budget hard copy journal*, perhaps to appear once or twice a year, which disseminates material produced by the conference, high profile visitors, and honors undergraduates. Each issue could be focused on a different topic, something like the University of Virginia humanities center accomplishes with its *Hedgehog Review*, and used at GSU as a way to stay in contact with interested donors and alumni.

Produce a *regular online or hard copy newsletter* calling attention to high profile/quality GSU humanities work, and more fully educating faculty to available funding and visibility opportunities. A newsletter could also supplement efforts to promote research center work.

Seek to negotiate *collaboration arrangements with other local research facilities* (Carter Presidential Library, Auburn Avenue Research Collection, etc.) and related programs at other *area universities and colleges* (especially Emory, AUC, Spelman, Agnes Scott, Tech, U of Georgia). Provide targeted support for faculty interested in creating discipline-specific area consortium arrangements with colleagues from the region who do similar humanistic work. Provide additional GSU coordinated participation in metro-Atlanta humanities activities.

Monitor in a systematic way granting activity in the humanities, as a supplement to work done by the university's research operations.

Coordinate and *advocate for initiatives that would benefit from inclusion in the university's capital campaigns*, and potentially provide support for GSU Foundation efforts to secure funding for the new Humanities Building. Provide support where appropriate to departments seeking to attract support for high profile humanistic initiatives (e.g., departments seeking to fund raise for chaired professorships or humanities-related endowed scholarships).

Provide opportunities for faculty to publish in a *Working Papers* series.

Considering Some Potential Responses to a GSU Humanities Center Proposal

THE POTENTIAL RESPONSE

Why create another new Center?

Humanities research is usually not supported by external funding agencies and foundations in the same way as social, computational, or natural sciences research, and so isn't the model of using modest College money to "leverage" outside support naive?

Given the number of research Centers that already receive COAS support, is a new Center really the best way to strengthen humanities activity? Isn't there a significant risk this will simply make new work that doesn't really benefit anyone?

Is a new Center a productive way to add new net resources to humanistic work? What about the risk that this Center will not result in new resources, but will merely repackage existing activity?

For the typical humanities scholar, writing books and articles along remains the "coin of the realm." How would a Center help our faculty do that kind of work?

What's to prevent new Center activity from being dominated by a single department or small group of faculty?

HOW THE ISSUE IS ADDRESSED IN THE PROPOSAL

A humanities center would provide a mechanism to focus attention on dispersed research activities, marshal potential expanded external support, and more fully connect GSU faculty to external groups interested in the humanities.

The limits on governmental and foundation funding for the humanities are well understood. Nonetheless, an increasing amount of support from those sources stipulates team faculty involvement, a clearly documented connection to university curricular development, and sometimes granting agencies (NEH, Mellon, Ford, etc.) require evidence of interdisciplinarity. The idea of a Center would be to package existing work to try to leverage outside funding; in some cases that work will not pay off, but in some cases it may. It seems sensible to try.

No one wants a center that simply makes new work, invents conferences no one wants to attend, or ties up faculty in unproductive busy work. The proposal is specifically designed to generate activity that comes from the grassroots up, which is to say, starts by identifying research programs already underway and receiving departmental support, then builds on those efforts. The proposal to organize a center so that its activities are held accountable to an oversight executive committee is intended to assure that center activities do not duplicate or get in the way of already planned activity.

Other COAS centers have a good track record of generating net new activity and support. It is also worth noting that even if a center merely consolidates and showcases existing efforts, there is an important benefit in that alone, since GSU humanistic research is sometimes not well understood, nor humanities faculty in close contact with others working in their area who are appointed to other units.

By identifying what those research projects are, organizing broader thematic activity that will support it, and earmarking support for faculty who need specific assistance (a course buyout, graduate research assistance, etc.).

An oversight committee representing all involved departments is envisioned that would organize and sign off on all center activity. The envisioned annual themes would be organized to rotate among and reflect work done in all departments including faculty at work on humanistic research.