

Next Generation Humanities PhD
The Graduate School of the University of Texas at El Paso
White Paper
June 25, 2017

The Graduate School of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) implemented the National Endowment's Next Generation PhD planning grant in collaboration with the University's two humanities PhD programs: Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) and Borderlands History—together enrolling between 70 and 80 students.

UTEP is 102 years old, having been founded as the Texas School of Mines. It has developed into a national research university by remaining focused on the interests of the El Paso-Cd. Juárez Border Region. The University, which is located directly adjacent to the U.S.-Mexico border, currently enrolls approximately 24,000 students. More than 80 percent of students are Hispanic and an additional 5 percent are Mexican nationals.

In response to a law suit filed by the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund in the 1980s, UTEP began the development of doctoral programs. Until that time there had only been one doctoral program in the entire Texas border region. Since then, the University has established 22 doctoral programs, most of them in STEM disciplines. The development of these programs was intended to provide education opportunity and promote economic growth in the border region and to contribute to the expansion of Hispanic participation in doctoral programs and in the professions nationally. UTEP has already made an important contribution to changing the face of doctoral education. Almost 50 percent of UTEP doctoral students are Hispanic. The programs in Rhetoric and in History date from ca. 2000 and each have attracted a large number of Hispanic students.

The History PhD program was designed to prepare graduates for careers and teachers and scholars, but the Rhetoric program envisaged graduates pursuing non-academic careers. In practice, however, most graduates of the Rhetoric program have pursued academic careers, and the professional curriculum in the program reflects that.

A critical theme in the UTEP proposal for a Next Generation PhD pilot grant was to explore the relationship between career diversity and diversity in PhD programs and in professional occupations. A strong effort was made to include Hispanic professionals in the programing. Also, data indicates that Hispanic students participated in project activities at a higher rate than non-Hispanic.

At the same time that UTEP was awarded the NEH Next Generation Planning Grant, the UTEP History Department received a modest career diversity grant from the American Historical Association (AHA). The Graduate School worked closely with the History Department to integrate the two initiatives. However, the focus of the two grants was slightly different: The History AHA project concentrated on exposing students to history-specific careers outside of academe. The Graduate School NEH project incorporated that approach but focused more on general career areas that might be appropriate for humanities PhD

graduates and on the transferrable skill sets required to be competitive for and successful in such career areas.

Although this was a planning grant, the UTEP project was designed to move into implementation, in particular with the goal of developing strategies and programing that would be sustainable with minimal institutional commitment.

Although not part of the planned grant activities, the meeting of project leaders organized by the NEH and CGS in Washington in January proved to be extremely useful in focusing the project direction.

What Happened

Note: UTEP received a no-cost extension on the grant. Some grant activities will continue through the Fall 2017 semester. As a result some of what is reported here is preliminary.

The grant project included the following:

- Pre and Post Surveys to ascertain PhD student awareness of and interest in career diversity and career diversity programing. The post-survey is not yet complete.
- Meetings with faculty and other stake-holders to design and implement the program.
- Integration of humanities focused professional development programing in the existing graduate school professional development calendar.
- A series of workshops (partly in collaboration with the History Department) that brought in Humanities professionals working in non-tenure track academic roles. The workshops were designed to have two elements: one directed toward faculty in the relevant departments and the other oriented toward students (there will be at least one more workshop).
- An intensive week-long summer workshop for humanities PhD students that exposed participants to career opportunities beyond traditional academic roles and worked with participants to identify and develop appropriate skill sets.
- Creation of a web page on the Graduate School site targeting humanities PhD students that provides information on career diversity and links to key resources (in progress)

Survey:

The survey was disseminated to all current PhD students in the humanities: 37 in History and 41 in Rhetoric and Writing Studies. 41 students completed the survey. 58 percent of those who responded identified as Hispanic. Respondents were roughly evenly divided between the two disciplines. Some key results:

- 100 percent of history student respondents rated the job market for tenure track positions as extremely limited.
- 63 percent of history respondents rated their awareness of non-academic careers for history PhDs as extremely limited.
- Reflecting a more robust job market, only 14 percent of Rhetoric respondents rated the academic job market for Rhetoric PhDs as limited or extremely limited.
- 67 percent of Rhetoric respondents however rated their awareness of non-academic career options as limited or extremely limited.

- In general, respondents appeared to have over-rated their awareness of the skills needed in non-academic careers and to have over-rated their related skills sets, notably in areas such as quantitative literacy.
- Although respondents indicated a lack of awareness of diverse careers for humanities PhD graduates, they indicated considerable confidence in their abilities to pursue such careers.
- Respondents indicated that faculty were generally modestly supportive or very supportive of student interest in diverse careers. Only three respondents reported faculty hostility.

The results of the survey proved particularly useful in the development of the curriculum for the summer workshop as well as in discussions with faculty from the relevant disciplines.

Professional Development Workshops: The Graduate School offered a number of existing workshops with a focus on the needs of humanities students. These included: Making Use of the Versatile PhD software; Crafting the CV (CV v. Resume; customizing a resume for alternative careers); Organizational Planning and Budgeting; Discussions on Diversity; and Business Writing for Humanities Students.

Workshops on Career Diversity: Offered in collaboration with the History Department. Each visitor gave a public presentation and met informally with students and faculty. Several of the visitors also met with the project team to provide advice on development of the program.

- “Working in the Park Service,”
Mark Calamia & Dwight Pitcaithly, 24 February 2017
- “Humanities PhDs Working for State Archives, Historic Preservation, and Cultural Affairs,”
Jeff Pappas & Scott Crago, 24 March 2017
- “Humanities PhDs Working in the Private Sector,”
Emily Greenwald, 17 April 2017
- “Humanities PhDs Leading in the Nonprofit Sector,”
Antonio Lopez, 13 June 2017

Summer Workshop: The workshop took place from 8:00 to 3:00 for five days, June 5-9. Participation was by competitive application. 14 participants were selected, 13 of whom received a stipend of \$500 (the other was employed as a graduate assistant and funded by the institution’s cost share). Each of the 14 participants attended all of the sessions. The program involved meetings on and off campus with leaders from higher education, non-profits, and the public sector. Among the presenters were the UTEP University President, the local community college’s VP for Academic Affairs, the head of the largest foundation in El Paso, and the head of museums and cultural affairs for the city. In addition, the participants met informally with humanities PhDs working outside of academic roles and took part in skills-building sessions, including leadership, professional writing, budget management,

planning from data, and public relations. A detailed description of the program is found in the appendix.

What Worked and What Didn't

The lists of “what worked” and “what didn't” would essentially be the same. Each element of the project was at least modestly successful, but each also could have been designed and implemented more effectively.

Two elements of the UTEP project stand out as most successful: the survey of humanities PhD students undertaken at the beginning of the grant period and the intensive summer career diversity workshop involving 14 humanities PhD students.

1. **Student Survey.** Key conclusions from the survey are listed above. In addition, two related responses deserve emphasis: most respondents understood non-academic career options to include professional positions in museums and archives (and other similar institutions), universities, community colleges, and not-for-profits. Few respondents expressed interest in government employment (other than public institutions such as museums) or especially in the private for-profit sector. This reflected in part respondents' interests in social justice-related careers, but also their apparent lack of understanding of the transferability of skills developed in humanities PhD programs. The survey results came too late to shape the over-all structure of the project, but they did inform the design of the summer workshop.
2. **Summer Workshop.** This was designed as an intensive week-long (June 5-9, 2017) workshop that would expose participants to a variety of career areas appropriate to humanities PhDs, help them to identify and describe generic skill sets that they were developing as PhD students, and engage them in hands-on activities related to crucial skills for professional employment. Workshop participation was determined through a competitive application process and participants were offered a stipend of \$500. Given the relative low level of interest in Next Generation activities during the academic year, the project leadership anticipated that there would be relatively few applicants. However, 27 PhD students from the two programs applied. It had initially been planned to include 10 students in the workshop, but given the demand, that number was increased to 15. Each of the participants attended all sessions.

A copy of the workshop schedule is included in the Appendix. Among session highlights were presentations on:

- the future of universities and humanities PhDs by UTEP University President Diana Natalicio (herself a humanities PhD, in linguistics)
- Trends in community college opportunities by El Paso Community College Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Leadership by the UTEP Dean of Liberal Arts
- An overview of non-profits and foundations by the Executive Director of El Paso's largest foundation
- A description of professional opportunities in museums by the head of the El Paso City Arts and Cultural Affairs department (which operates the city's major museums)

- Working in the business environment, but the former publisher of El Paso's weekly business newspaper

Participant evaluations were particularly favorable to hands-on sessions, including those on planning with data, marketing, business writing, grant writing, the career software Versatile PhD, and conceiving and developing resumes from CVs.

Many participants also expressed appreciation for the comradery that developed within the group over the course of the week. They valued the opportunity to engage (in some cases for the first time) with students from other PhD programs and indicated a willingness to build on those relationships.

Challenges: What didn't work so well developed from five key challenges: 1. Faculty engagement; 2. Student engagement; 3. (lack of) resources in the region; 4. (lack of) project leadership networks extending beyond academe; and 5. Absence of clarity regarding the issue of Next Generation and diversity.

1. **Faculty Engagement.** The proposal outlined a project that would pilot a set of programs aimed at students. It quickly became clear that faculty were as or more important than students as a target audience if a program was to be sustained. The project had very strong support from PhD program and department leadership, but connection with faculty was sporadic. Meetings involving faculty provided very useful insight, but we lacked a coherent approach to educating the faculty to career diversity—so that they could work with their own students. Although professors of practice and lecturers did not play direct roles in advising PhD students, they represent an important resource for faculty engagement. In general faculty were supportive of the initiative and of career diversity, but lacked any knowledge base from which to advise and support students.
2. **Student Engagement.** The project relied on the survey and on program leadership to reach PhD students. This was clearly inadequate. The initiative needed to directly reach students face to face, with activities such as those included in the summer workshop to make the case for career diversity. Programing during the academic year was well received, but attracted relatively small numbers.
3. **Regional Resources.** The El Paso Border Region lacks the kind of corporate and institutional infrastructure present in larger metropolitan areas from which to draw expertise. There is a strong Federal presence in El Paso, however, that might be capitalized on more effectively. There was a great deal of interest, for example, in the development of internships, but local opportunities for these (at least paid) appear limited. In addition to standard challenges relating to time, this also made it difficult to convene groups of individuals from off and on campus for planning purposes.
4. **Lack of Networks.** The project leaders were themselves Humanities PhDs in university leadership positions. We were thus able effectively to draw on University resources and some local contacts, but lacked larger networks reaching beyond academe to, for example, corporate and not-for-profit executives. On the basis of the student survey, the project leadership determined that it was very important to expose humanities students to corporate opportunities and culture, but it was difficult to arrange this.

5. Diversity. The project proposal emphasized UTEP's role as a Hispanic Serving Institution in which substantial numbers of students in PhD programs were from underrepresented minority backgrounds. But there was a lack of clarity about how the issue of diversity would or should be incorporated into a career diversity program. The project leaders launched an informal discussion group on "diversity in higher education" that involved a number of PhD students, but both faculty and students pointed to a broad concern that career diversity programs could become a kind of "tracking" mechanism for students of color. At the same time, students and faculty also emphasized that it was important for students of color to have the background and skills to make career choices. One important element of a strategy to address these issues would have been a strong emphasis on engaging with professionals who are themselves from minority groups.

What Does It All Mean?

Because the UTEP project will continue through the fall semester and because a key element of the project occurred in June, it is difficult to assess the project. However, key elements of the impact of the UTEP project are clear. The single key impact is that career diversity is now very much in the conversation. For UTEP, NEH funding and being part of a national initiative has given visibility to the humanities PhD programs and to the issue of career diversity. Because UTEP developed PhD programs only within the last 25 years in a climate not generally supportive to PhD program creation, the idea of diverse career outcomes for graduates has been integral to the discussion of PhD programs from the start—in all fields.

- Incorporating leading university administrators in Next Generation programming has expanded awareness of the issue of career diversity for PhD graduates across the campus, among students, faculty and administrators.
- Involving leaders from city government, the non-profit sector, the community college, etc. has expanded awareness of UTEP PhD programs and the potential of humanities PhD students for engagement in those areas. In some cases presenters were not clear, for example regarding the characteristics of humanities programs, e.g. in distinction from those in the social sciences.
- Although we have not yet administered a second survey, we are confident that the survey results will show a substantially expanded awareness of career diversity issues and options among humanities PhD students. The issue remains how to best capitalize on that increased awareness to develop a sustainable program.
- In contrast to programs at some of the Next Generation campuses, we did not encounter opposition or resistance on the part of the faculty. A very high proportion of the relevant humanities faculty are aware of the initiative and modestly supportive. However, they lack the knowledge base and the time to commit to develop a knowledge base to be true partners in the career diversity enterprise. How to address this? This certainly seems like an area in which engagement among the Next Generation programs could be advantageous and broadened initiatives from the disciplines. Faculty generally proposed addressing the issue through training *outside* the existing curriculum, e.g. by the creation of a course or a program of workshops, rather than by building elements of career diversity into existing courses.

- Various kinds of university/higher education employment clearly represents one of the most important avenues for career diversity. However, it was not always easy to convey to university staff the meaning of career diversity initiatives. For example, staff and colleagues involved in providing instruction in grant design and grant writing assumed that the grants would involve research relating to the student's dissertations.
- In the planning for the implementation of the Next Generation program at UTEP—especially through the experience of the programming itself—it became clear that the distinction between “academic” and “non-academic” careers is exaggerated in relationship to the kinds of skills needed. We were struck repeatedly at how valuable it would be for future faculty to have the skills that are generally associated with diverse careers. For example, it would certainly be advantageous if young faculty knew how to prepare reports from data, prepare a persuasive memo, understand a budget, work in teams, or build support for a project.
- An unintended benefit of the UTEP program involved interaction among students across the humanities programs. This in turn fostered a capacity for students to understand diverse disciplinary perspectives. The UTEP proposal involved a plan to engage humanities students with students from disciplines, e.g. in engineering, that typically have a broad career focus. This would seem desirable.
- The project activities revealed that humanities students did not always, or even usually, have the communication skills—in writing and especially in speech—that one might anticipate among humanities students. Although perhaps skilled in discussing scholarly issues, they were generally not effective in professional presentation.
- Humanities PhD students at UTEP are often, perhaps even usually, planning to enter careers, whether academic or not, that involve a commitment to social justice work. Programming for a career diversity initiative should take this into account by incorporating examination of “grass roots” type organizations as well as larger and more established not-for-profits. The general resistance among students to content that might be characterized as business oriented or “establishment” related is connected to this perspective. In June our project offered a workshop led by Dr. Antonio López, a UTEP PhD history graduate and a non-profit administrator and consultant in Chicago. In his presentation, however, he emphasized strongly the importance of having the capacity to be listened to by broad spectrum of individuals, group, and organizations. He also emphasized the importance of basic management skills, since people like him are likely to be required to take on multiple roles.
- In the late 1970s (when the UTEP Project Director was studying for his PhD) there was a similar shortage of permanent academic positions for PhD graduates in the humanities. In that context the Business Schools at NYU (with NEH support) and at the University of Pennsylvania established “humanities doctoral student business intensive summer bootcamps.” Humanities programs (e.g. at Yale) also made some effort to expose PhD students to careers outside of academe. The assumption at that time, however (and as the bootcamps suggested), was that these careers would somehow be in “business,” notably consulting or banking. It is of interest that currently there has been no move to establish similar kinds of programs, perhaps

reflecting a broader idea of the career spectrum but also that it is the responsibility of PhD programs themselves to incorporate such training.

- The UTEP program has not incorporated any training in the concepts and practice of teaching and learning, assuming that these are covered in programming for graduate assistants and in preparing future faculty initiatives. This may be a mistake, since teaching, broadly defined, is often a key element of professional roles in many different kinds of organizations.
- Although this is less visible at UTEP than at some other institutions, key shifts in research and teaching in humanities disciplines represent opportunities for career diversity initiatives and for PhD students considering a range of professional options. These shifts in particular relate to the broad category of “digital humanities.”
- Racial and ethnic diversity is an issue across the professional career spectrum. Strategies have been in place for some time (with limited success) to address lack of representation in postdoctoral fellowship positions and in the faculty ranks, but there has been less attention paid to achieving diversity in other professions—both from the point of view of those hiring and from the point of view of PhD graduates of color (or from other groups that are underrepresented). In some areas this means that there will be a lack of diverse role models currently working in professional and leadership positions outside of academe. The current NSF Includes initiative represents one attempt to view increased representation more holistically.

What’s Next?

The experience of the Next Generation project at UTEP has certainly made clear the need for serious attention to career diversity for students in the humanities PhD programs (and in other disciplines as well). The UTEP project will conclude during the Fall 2017 semester with additional student workshops and efforts to engage faculty, students, and other stakeholders in the planning for institutionalization of the initiative. This will also include careful analysis of feedback from student and faculty participants and from advisers and presenters. It will also include a post-project survey, related to the initial survey. These are the Next Steps:

- Analysis of evaluation and survey materials.
- Development and administration of the post-project survey to all humanities PhD students.
- The Project Director, Charles Ambler will co-present with Carol Genetti, Dean of the Graduate Division at the University of California, Santa Barbara, a “Dean Dialogue” on “Fostering Diverse Careers in the Humanities,” at the Council of Graduate Schools, Summer Workshop in Denver in July 2017.
- Individual meetings and informal focus group meetings with humanities faculty, PhD students, and project presenters. The purpose of these meetings is to report on progress in the project and to get feedback from these key stakeholders.
- Engagement with faculty to explore integration of career diversity in the existing PhD programs through incorporation in the curriculum and through other strategies.
- Planning team meetings including key UTEP participants and participants outside of UTEP, including UTEP humanities PhD alumni.
- Development of a strategy for faculty development around career diversity.

- Development of a plan for a permanent Humanities PhD student career diversity program, as a joint endeavor of the UTEP Graduate School and the History and English Departments.
- Creation of a webpage on the Graduate School site focused on career diversity.
- Development of a strategy to provide internships in non-academic contexts for humanities PhD students.
- Work with El Paso Community College to identify possible partnerships to provide professional development opportunities for UTEP PhD students.
- Working with colleagues at other institutions and others with an interest in diversity develop a broader strategy for addressing the challenge of diversity in career diversity initiatives.
- Speaking to a particular need that emerged from UTEP programming, work with Dr. Antonio Lopez, a graduate of UTEP's doctoral program in history, to develop a network of Hispanic non-profit and community-based organization leaders/administrators. Particular attention would be paid to identifying those with PhD level training.

APPENDIX

Summer Seminar for Career Diversity

June 5-9, 2017

The Graduate School of the University of Texas at El Paso and



Program Overview

	Monday 6/5	Tuesday 6/6	Wednesday 6/7	Thursday 6/8	Friday 6/9
	Mike Loya Academic Services Building, Rm. 207				MLASB 131
8-9am	Welcome, Introductions, & Goalsetting	Data-driven Decision Making: Roy Mathew, Cathe Lester, & Denise Carrejo	Career Diversity Website	Marketing 101: Dr. Fernando Jimenez	Follow-up: Resumes & Career Planning
9-10am			Working in the Private Sector: Tom Fenton		Working in a Team: HR Training Team
10-11am	UTEP Edge: Donna Ekal	Theory of Change / Logic Models: David Knight	Grant Writing: Elizabeth Hall & Malu Picard- Ami	Field Trip: Higher Ed Operations: Steven Smith	Business Writing: Teresa Quezada
11am-12pm	Professionalism , Career Diversity, & Versatile PhD				President Natalicio
	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
1-2pm	Leadership: Patricia Witherspoon	Field Trip: El Paso Del Norte Health Foundation	Using Data: Charles Ambler	Field Trip: MCAD	Business Writing (working lunch): Teresa Quezada
2-3pm					
	Social 5-7pm				

UTEP Next Generation Project Contributors

UTEP Core Team

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Jeffrey Shepherd, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program in History, UTEP

Aaron Waggoner, Assistant Director of Professional Development for the Graduate School, UTEP

Workshop-Seminar Presenters

Mark Calamia, PhD, Independent consultant and Cultural Resources Management Expert, currently Cultural Resources Program Manager and Tribal Liason for Chamizal National Memorial and Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

Scott Crago, PhD, Senior Archivist, New Mexico State Archives

Emily Greenwald, PhD, Vice President, Shareholder, and Senior Historian, Historical Research Associates, Inc.

Antonio Lopez, PhD, Community organizer, Coordinator, Midwest Environmental Justice Network

Jeff Pappas, PhD, Director of the Historic Preservation Division and State Historic Preservation Officer, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

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