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Imagining America

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Imagining America Newsletter

Issue 1, Fall 2000

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This newsletter is for you. It serves Imagining America's constituency-- people who are doing public cultural work that links campuses and communities or who are interested in such work. Future issues will feature news and comment from network members. Please tell us what you want to know by sending in the response form on the last page of the newsletter.

From the Director What Is Cultural Engagement?

Imagining America is a learning community of artists and humanists who are doing public cultural work through campus-community partnerships. We think Imagining America announces-- though it has by no means invented--a turning point in the dynamics of making and understanding culture. Artists and humanists need to find their own path to citizenship, motivated by their core fascinations. In hundreds of projects around the country, artists and humanists are working across town-gown boundaries. Each project creates its own complicated, hard-won network. The members of each project team pass through innumerable changes of mind and revisions of perspective. Their relationships are formed by hard listening and questioning, through the process of inventing a common language.

As universities take civic engagement more seriously, they are developing the cultural programs and centers needed to support new commitments. But because there has not been a national network of participants, the true dimensions of this movement toward cultural work that crosses the town-gown border have been invisible. We started Imagining America in order to spark a national coalition of artists and humanities working at this intersection of higher education and community life.

continued next page

Updates

Woodrow Wilson Awards Imagining America Public Scholarship Grants

As a founding partner in Imagining America, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation offers competitive grants to university-based projects that engage the community. In 1999 Woodrow Wilson awarded seven \$5,000 grants to support public scholarship in the arts and humanities. In 2000, through the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, they will award another seven Woodrow Wilson Public Scholarship Grants.

Woodrow Wilson President Bob Weisbuch explains why he is a fan of Imagining America: "The Foundation believes that the interchange between community goals and scholarly and artistic endeavor is crucial to the vitality of both. No community can BE a community without the binding fabric and exploratory energy of the arts and humanities. And no academic discipline can be more than merely academic without the informing and freshening influence of public interests.

The Woodrow Wilson Public Scholarship Grants offer awards to those coalitions that most boldly exemplify the potential of this new kind of partnership. Weisbuch remarks, "Each of the awarded projects put forward an idea that we never could have predicted but which, in each case, seemed to the evaluators a compelling and natural mingling of academic and community interests."

Announcing Fall 2000 round of Imagining America Public Scholarship Grants. For application information visit the Woodrow Wilson website: www.woodrow.org/imagining-america/. Due date is November 1 2000.

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation also awards up to 30 grants per year of up to \$1,500 to Ph.D. students in humanities disciplines who find a meaningful internship to utilize their academic discipline in a context outside of college teaching and research. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. For full details of the Woodrow Wilson Practicum Grants program and information about previous recipients, please visit: <http://www.woodrow.org/phd/practicumbasis>. For information on the Practicum Grants, visit: <http://www.woodrow.org/phd/practicumbasis>

10 Steps to Cultural Engagement

Successful campus programs:

- Proclaim the social and cultural value of public work in the arts, humanities, and design;
- Operate on democratic principles and guarantee the equality of project partners;
- Understand the substantive intellectual contribution of public scholarship to the university;
- Take seriously the meaning of place and the link between local and global cultures;
- Make sustainability central to their mission;
- Receive strong support from key academic leaders in the university;
- Seek strategic partnerships and tap into existing local, state, and national networks;
- Nurture robust projects that combine the teaching, research, and engagement missions of the university;
- Connect artists and humanists from on and off campus in ways that enable them to develop a common culture;
- Understand and support the economy of the project and the needs of project teams.

From the Director continued

Imagining America is grounded in a startling--and little noticed--degree of cultural consensus about what matters, a consensus that spans the exaggerated divide between academic and public culture. The big ideas are shared: citizenship; migration; justice; identity; civil society; place and geography; history and memory; health and the body. And my own favorite cultural trend, a surprising boom in poetry. When American artists, humanists, and designers talk about what most interests them, they agree more often than not.

Imagining America is defined by practices as well as by themes. Although consensus on cultural priorities establishes the bases for collaboration, the real test of campus-community relationships comes in the agonies and ecstasies of project-based work.

The project is the building block of collaborative cultural undertakings. The project connects people from diverse settings for as long as it takes to accomplish the task at hand. The task could be designing a park, performing a play, researching church records, building a web archive, developing a curriculum.

Seven projects were funded through Imagining America's founding partner, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, in the first round of Woodrow Wilson's Public Scholarship Grants. Our web site lists over 100 "best practices"--projects in the arts, humanities, and design undertaken by community and university partners. You may have received this newsletter because your work is featured on our web site.

The best projects have legs. They create further, revised working relationships because new vistas of possible work open up. When one project yields another, and then another, we know that the collaborators have not burned out. They have achieved sustainability. Sustainability is the real goal of Imagining America. How, concretely, can we help our national network of campus-community partners in the arts and humanities to forge relationships that endure beyond the life of a single project?

An excellent project is contagious and complex. The best projects have several missions, not just one: teaching, research, public

engagement, and creative activity. A local history curriculum project for the third grade spins off a project on the poetry of place for fourth graders that draws on members of a university freshman seminar. The team that is designing the history curriculum overlaps with another group developing a county museum of African-American history, and a new joint research project on the Underground Railroad emerges, powered by community-based museum organizers, undergraduates, and archive staff.

What does it take for a project to exfoliate like this? Colleges and universities should be "non-dominant partners" in the enterprise, as Marilyn Wheaton, head of Detroit's cultural affairs office, once told a university audience. But much depends on effective campus-based programs. These can take different forms: programs and institutes, curricular initiatives, community service learning centers, the NEH centers for regional culture. Whatever the format, successful programs share 10 fundamental principles. (See sidebar at left)

What top-10 lists fail to capture is how multi-stranded inquiry by diverse individuals working together actually feels. So, to put it another way:

A ferry moves between the banks of a river. On the ferry, people talk across differences in profession and geography. They exchange news. Then they disembark with new baggage--maps, supplies, and each other's addresses. On their best days, the people on the ferry--commuters, tourists, immigrants, refugees, crew--make it a place of mutual transformation. That's what Imagining America feels like: a network of sociable adventurers ranging beyond their accustomed place in the cultural landscape, eager to find and learn from one another.

Julie Ellison





Photo of Abe Rybeck and Noelia Ortiz-Cortez from a Performance piece, "Immaculate Infection," by The Theatre Offensive in Boston. A collaboration of La Alianza Hispana, MIT, and The Theatre Offensive, the project received a Woodrow Wilson Public Scholarship Grant.

(Photo: Craig Bailey)

Updates Continued Conference News

American Studies Association Reinvents the Convention

On October 12-15, Imagining America will be highlighted at the national convention of the American Studies Association (ASA) in Detroit. The Convention will draw 2000 scholars and students to the city. Working with community partners, ASA's local Program Committee integrated the interests of the host city with the intellectual work of ASA members.

The ASA will introduce new kinds of events and programs, starting with pre-convention community-based workshops involving ASA members and local organizations. On Saturday, October 14, Julie Ellison, Director of Imagining America, will join a plenary session responding to an address by William Ferris, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities. Finally, Imagining America will co-sponsor a cultural celebration at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History: a "community commons" at the Detroit Institute of Arts. A poetry reading will be followed by a dance performance by the convention's Artist-in-Residence, Jawole Willa Joe Zollar, founder of the Urban Bush Women dance company. Imagining America's Associate Director, Kristin Hass, will chair a panel on campus-community projects at the convention, entitled "American Studies as Public Work: Thinking Through Three Models."

Imagining America National Conference

**November 13-14 at the Chicago
Historical Society**

Co-sponsored by the Chicago Historical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Northwestern University, the White House Millennium Council, and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

This year's national conference will focus on the theme, "Supporting Public Cultural Work through Practical Structures of Encouragement." The theme reflects the roll-up-your-sleeves approach of this small work-

ing conference. We will bring together Woodrow Wilson Public Scholarship Grant project teams, directors of innovative programs, leaders of public and non-profit cultural institutions, representatives of national associations, and Presidents Council and National Advisory Board members to forge a practical strategy for enabling campus-community partnerships in the arts, humanities, and design. The next issue of the newsletter will contain a full report.

Imagining America Presidents Council Press Release

On April 3, 2000, the 21 college and university presidents who founded Imagining America's Presidents Council issued the following statement

As founding members of Imagining America's Presidents Council, we strongly support this national alliance of people working to link the resources of campuses and communities. Our American colleges and universities, like many other institutions, are committed to civic engagement. The arts, humanities, and design are integral to this mission.

Culture seems intangible, but its force can make a profound difference in communities where history, language, performance, ethics, imagination, and a sense of place are valued. From the forms and stories of our world, new kinds of citizenship arise. University and community partners who take these realities seriously are the agents of a healthy democracy. For these reasons, we believe that cultural work in the public interest should be at the heart of American higher education and public life.

The goal of the Presidents Council is to affirm the practical importance of culture-making for American communities. We want to promote engagement through the arts, humanities, and design on our own campuses, in our regions, and across the nation.

We believe, first, that the University must stand behind the faculty member or student involved in a collaborative enterprise. Second, we are convinced that the best programs are fully integrated into the life of the institution

continued next page

"What do the following cities have in common -- Baltimore, Birmingham, New Haven, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Providence, Provo, San Diego, San Francisco? The answer is that in each of these cities a college or university is the largest employer."

-- Yale University President, Richard C. Levin, at Imagining America's White House Conference.

The poems in this issue were exhibited in "A River of Words and Art" at the Ann Arbor District Library. They were written by Bach School students in Chris Maxey-Reeve's 4th grade class working with members of a University of Michigan first-year seminar, English 140, 'The Poetry of Everyday Life.'

Electric Dirt

Electric dirt
uncovered by the
curious person
is near a busted
pipe.
Is a water main
going to burst?

Updates continued

and its schools or departments. Third, the most successful collaborations draw on genuine expertise that students, faculty and staff bring to the relationship. And fourth, sustainable collaborations must be shaped by the strength and aspirations of our community partners. Projects must have real roots in the community.

In order to realize these goals, the Council will:

- Foster new networks connecting higher education, K-12 schools, state arts and humanities councils, and the non-profit cultural sector regionally and nationally;
- Support concrete, long-term ways of supporting and rewarding faculty in the arts, humanities and design who are involved in community projects; and
- Provide a forum for the ongoing evaluation of public engagement through the cultural disciplines in American colleges and universities.

Citizens are doing the work of the public arts and humanities in the belief that inspiration has real effects on individuals, institutions, and communities. We support Imagining America because it aims to focus the energies of higher education on helping to realize that belief.

See our brochure for full listing of Presidents Council members.

Imagining Your State: New Collaboration with State Arts and Humanities Councils

In partnership with the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Imagining America is developing a resource that will promote models of collaboration by state arts and humanities councils with colleges and universities. An information packet, "Imagining Your State," will be available soon. Use response form in this newsletter to request a copy.

Visit the web sites of the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

<http://www.acls.org/fshc.htm>
<http://www.nasaa-arts.org/>

This initiative grew out of several events at the state level that drew higher education and the public arts and humanities together. On April 3, 40 educational, cultural, and civic leaders met at the University of Michigan for a one-day meeting. Imagining Michigan: A Cultural Caucus was co-sponsored by Imagining America, the Michigan Council for the Humanities, and the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs. (More information can be found on the web at <http://www.ia.umich.edu/ImaginingMichigan.html>.)

The idea for Imagining Michigan came from similar gatherings in several states. A year ago, the Georgia Humanities Council convened the Humanities Leadership Forum at the Carter Presidential Library and Museum. The Forum brought together faculty nominated by deans and academic vice presidents from higher education institutions throughout Georgia. 45 nominated participants came together for an informal conversation about the question, "What difference do we believe our work makes--as scholars, as teachers, as citizens?" The conversation was sparked by four papers which were circulated before the event.

And Max Harris, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Humanities Council, talks about the Governor's Cultural Congress in his state on page 5 of this newsletter. We would like to know about other convenings of this sort, so please alert us to model programs that we may have missed.

Plying Crayola 24s and sketch pads, participants in Imagining Michigan were guided by Michigan Humanities Council board member Frank Ettawageshik and led in a closing ceremony by Marquette community artist Mary Wright. Attendees asked: How can we alter the perception of the university as a bloc and open it up? What instances of competition between higher education and community organizations can be converted to collaboration? How can we educate artists and humanists across the lifespan? What cultural happenings could link sites across the state?

The co-sponsors plan a larger, more action-oriented cultural caucus next year.

Introducing Imagining America National Advisory Board

Kathleen Woodward, Chair
Director, Walter Chapin Simpson Center
for Humanities, U of Washington

Harry C. Boyte
Co-Director, Center for Democracy
and Citizenship, U of Minnesota

Ken Fischer
President, University Musical Society
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Michael H. Frisch
Professor of History, University at
Buffalo, President, American Studies
Association (2000)

Douglas Greenberg
President and Chief Executive Officer
Survivors of the Shoah Visual History
Foundation

Michael R. Halleran
Divisional Dean of Arts and
Humanities, U of Washington

Robert Hass
Former Poet Laureate, Professor of
English, U of California, Berkeley

Elizabeth Hollander
Executive Director, Campus Compact

Gregory Jay
Director, Cultures and Communities
Program, U of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Barry Qualls
Associate Dean for the Humanities,
Rutgers U

David Scobey
Director, Arts of Citizenship Program,
U of Michigan

Baraka Selé
World Festival Producer, New Jersey
Performing Arts Center

Eric J. Sundquist
Dean, Weinberg College of Arts and
Sciences, Northwestern U

Jerry Yoshitomi
Founding Director (ret.), Japanese-
American Cultural Center, Los
Angeles

Jamil Zainaldin
Executive Director, Georgia
Humanities Council

State Column: WISCONSIN

From Max Harris, Executive Director, Wisconsin Humanities Council

The Wisconsin Idea, for a hundred years or so, has proclaimed the conviction that the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state. There are multiple UW campuses. All are committed, in one way or another, to community outreach. UW-Extension, of which the Wisconsin Humanities Council is officially a department, is a very active outreach arm of the university statewide. Nancy Zimpher, the new chancellor of UW-Milwaukee, has made outreach into the urban community the theme of her administration. The Wisconsin Idea is still very much alive.

UW-Madison recently established a Center for the Humanities to coordinate interdisciplinary humanities activity on campus and to lead in humanities outreach to the larger community. The Center, together with the Madison School District, just received a major NEH grant to bring humanities professors and high school humanities teachers together for a series of interdisciplinary workshops. The WHC helped put the grant together and is very excited about the project. The Center will also be submitting a grant proposal to the WHC for a major Jane Austen conference, which will appeal equally to university and public audiences. UW-Madison also received, again in close cooperation with the WHC, an NEH Regional Center planning grant. Should it receive an implementation grant in due course, that Center will be very much oriented to public outreach.

I've always found the university to be an active partner in our mission. I might wish that an even greater number of professors were committed to the public humanities, but it's a very small complaint. As it is, I'm impressed by the very large number of professors who are so committed.

Moreover, the Wisconsin Humanities Council and the Wisconsin Arts Board have a very positive relationship. We are both members of the Cultural Coalition of Wisconsin, which

also includes UW-Extension, Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Television, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters. WPTV is leading us in developing the Wisconsin Portal, which would be the web entry point for anyone wanting to know about culture in Wisconsin. The Coalition was a major player in the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial a few years back. We'll be holding our second Governor's Cultural Congress this November.

From Gregory Jay, Director of Cultures and Communities Program, U of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Excerpts from "The Community in the Classroom" in *Academe* July-August 2000.

What was the deconstructionist doing at the Social Development Commission, anyway? As I sat in the office of the commission's executive director, Deborah Blanks, listening to her discuss race, education, and public service, I felt both inadequate and inspired. That appointment was one of a series of meetings with community leaders that I had begun to attend off campus as part of my commitment to the Milwaukee Idea, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's new effort to build bridges between the ivory tower and the city street. Blanks, an articulate African American community activist, clearly had much to teach me, though this was hardly the kind of seminar table I had been accustomed to after twenty years as a professor. My place at this table was not at the head, and the syllabus was not of my devising. There were no students in the room, except perhaps for me....

Clearly the mandate lay in turning the university's attention toward addressing worldly concerns. But what, I wondered, could the place of the arts and humanities be in a redesigned "engaged university," especially one known as a "commuter school" in a hyper-segregated, working-class town with a public school system known nationally for its crises? I accepted the invitation partly because I feared that the trend toward seeing universities primarily as job-training centers would only be accelerated if arts and humanities faculty gave up in advance. But the 1960s idealist in me also

continued next page

Features of the UW-Milwaukee "Cultures and Communities" Program

- Instructors and learning sites reflect rich resources of community
- Arts and culture portfolio helps students participate in celebrations of the community
- Alternative set of foundation classes fulfills the university's distribution requirements
- Partnerships across academic disciplines
- Problem-based and service-learning
- First-year cohorts help students with diverse backgrounds learn from and with each other

Our idea...was this: why not propose a new, optional core curriculum focused on 'cultures and communities'?

Gregory Jay

Gregory Jay continued

became excited about the possibility of really transforming the curriculum by mainstreaming much of the best progressive scholarship and pedagogy developed over the last thirty years....

I was in dialogue with occupational therapists, sociologists of race, elementary education specialists, bookstore owners, dancers, librarians, community organizers, and a whole host of others who became my friends and allies in the months to follow....

What I found most interesting about [the] meetings [of campus and community partners] is their intellectual, even scholarly, content. Our off-campus neighbors include many people we have come to call "community scholars," individuals who are deeply learned in their fields through real world as well as academic experience. They articulate sophisticated analyses of their work and concerns, give us bibliographies, and treat us to seminars.



Keynote speaker Mel King, professor emeritus at MIT, speaks with Marsha Smith, instructor of music education at UWM, during the August 2000 Conference of Teaching and Learning.

Photo Credit: Deb Generatzky

Four Tops: A Web Itinerary

This issue features the sites of four campus-affiliated programs.

**Arts of Citizenship Program,
University of Michigan**
<http://www.artsofcitizenship.edu>

**Center for Democracy and Citizenship,
University of Minnesota**
<http://www.publicwork.org/>

**Cultures and Communities Program,
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**
<http://www.uwm.edu/MilwaukeeIdea/CC>

**HOT (Humanities Out There),
University of California-Irvine**
<http://e3.uci.edu/programs/hot/>

Imagining America's Home Office at the University of Michigan

Julie Ellison, Director and Professor of English Language and Literature, published *Cato's Tears* and the *Making of Anglo-American Emotion* last year.

Kristin Hass, Associate Director. Dr. Hass teaches in the Program in American Culture and is the author of *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*.

Pattie Postel, Administrative Assistant, is returning to school part-time, aiming to teach science at the elementary school level.

Seunghee Ha, Graduate Student Research Assistant, masterminds IA's web strategies. She is a doctoral student in English and is writing her dissertation on Asian-Pacific-American fiction.

Please Respond

We hope that you will become an active participant in Imagining America.
Please fill out this form and return to us by fax or mail:

Imagining America
Rm 232C, West Hall
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1092
(734)615-8370
fax:(734)615-0617

The form is also posted on our web site for on-line submission.

I would like to join the IA network and receive all IA print and e-mail communications

Name: _____

Position: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone and fax: _____

E-mail: _____

I am currently involved in campus-community partnerships in the arts, humanities or design.

My role is:

I am sending you the following materials about my project or program:

- Newsletters and brochures
- Website
- Information about events and meetings
- Documentation (photos, videotapes, news coverage, assessments, non-academic essays)

I am willing to serve on IA working groups on:

- Conferences and convenings
- Model programs
- Communications
- Other (please specify) _____
- Please send me a copy of the resource packet, *Imagining Your State*, when available.

A Haiku

On the bumpy-
ground
you bounce all
around when you
walk on the
bumpy ground.

Tree

top glimmering
reproducing gold
eager scientists
(us)
examine tree
(looking for
describing
words)

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**America**

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