

**We the People Challenge Grant Budget**

<b>Total NEH funds requested:</b>		<b>\$625,000</b>
Year 1:	\$225,000	
Year 2:	\$200,000	
Year 3:	\$200,000	
<b>Total nonfederal contributions:</b>		<b>\$1,875,000</b>
<b>Total grant funds (NEH plus match):</b>		<b>\$2,500,000</b>

**Planned expenditures:**

**Direct**

Purchase, renovation*, and furnishing of Fellowship Residence:	\$750,000
Purchase of electronic history resources for Library:	\$150,000

**Endowed**

Invested in Endowment:	\$1,600,000
Annual expendable endowment income:	\$80,000
Fellowship stipends:	(\$40,000)
Grants for research travel:	(\$2,500)
Grants for books and materials:	(\$2,500)
Operation and maintenance of Fellowship Residence:	(\$12,500)
Administration and publicity for Fellows program:	(\$7,500)
Merit-scholarship program:	(\$15,000)

\*Washington College is familiar with the requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act, and commits itself to complying with them in every aspect of this renovation, as well as to seeking necessary approval from the State Historic Preservation Officer.

# **National Endowment for the Humanities** ***We the People* Challenge Grant Proposal**

**C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience,  
Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland**

*submitted by*

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**and**

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“It is History that, by presenting bright patterns to the eyes of youth, awakens emulation, and calls them forth steady Patriots to fill the offices of the State. It is not by forming them mere scholars that the State can become flourishing, but by forming them Patriots.”

- *Dr. William Smith, founder of Washington College, 1753*

### **Introduction: History**

The C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience is a young institution – inaugurated only in 2001 – but it is part of a very old tradition at Washington College.

Indeed, the Center’s genealogy can be traced back to the spring of 1782, just a few months after the American victory at Yorktown. With the nation’s political independence barely secured on the battlefield, a group of visionary educators on the Eastern Shore of Maryland declared: “We must attend to the rising generation. The souls of our youth must be nursed up to the love of LIBERTY and KNOWLEDGE ... for LIBERTY will not deign to dwell, but where her fair companion KNOWLEDGE flourishes by her side.”<sup>1</sup> No new college had been chartered on the continent since Dartmouth in 1769, in the days when Americans were subjects of George III. Now, it was time to found an institution that would educate its students to be not subjects, but rather citizens of the new United States.<sup>2</sup>

The prime mover behind the founding of Washington College was Dr. William Smith. Born in Aberdeen, a product of the Scottish Enlightenment, Smith had earlier been involved in the founding of King’s College (which would become Columbia University) and the College of Philadelphia (which would become the University of Pennsylvania). As longtime provost of the College of Philadelphia and secretary of the American Philosophical Society, he had associated closely with Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse, Dr. Benjamin Rush, and other leading intellectual lights of the revolutionary generation.

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<sup>1</sup> *An Account of Washington College, in the State of Maryland* (Philadelphia, 1784), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Although several other institutions claim founding dates between 1770 and 1781, none possessed college charters or were empowered to grant degrees, and most were merely “log-cabin grammar schools” that evolved much later into full-fledged colleges, according to the authoritative book on the subject, Donald G. Tewksbury’s *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities Before the Civil War* (Columbia University Press, 1932). Tewksbury accorded Washington College standing as the nation’s tenth-oldest institution of higher learning, directly after the renowned “Colonial Nine.”

Like many of his contemporaries in the first years of national independence, Smith was preoccupied with the question of how to render Americans fit for self-government. As the historian Drew McCoy has written, “Many of the Revolutionaries were inspired to hope that the American people might ... conform to the classical notion of virtue and thus become the special kind of simple, austere, egalitarian, civic-minded people that intellectuals had dreamed of for centuries.”<sup>3</sup> Yet they simultaneously worried that the nation’s fragile experiment in democracy might eventually – like past republics – devolve into demagoguery and anarchy, especially after George Washington and the other unifying, inspirational figures of the Founding generation had passed offstage.

For William Smith – as for Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and others – the solution was education. But what is distinctive about Smith’s particular vision is that it also involved a profound faith in the instructive power of history. As early as the 1750s, in proposing a course of study for King’s College, he had recommended the inclusion of American history in the curriculum (the earliest American educator to do so), and written eloquently of how, by studying the past, students would learn to “behold the dreadful effects of tyranny” and “set a just value on ... civil and religious liberty.” He even promoted historical education as an antidote to bigotry and intolerance: “The study of history ... teaches [youth], as citizens of the world, to do impartial justice to the virtues of every people and nation.”<sup>4</sup>

And now, in the 1780s, with the American republic newly established, these ideas took on a fresh urgency. In order to preserve the ideals and virtues of the Founders into the far-distant future, Smith proposed, young Americans must be taught to keep their memory and legacy alive. Especially, as he envisioned it, they must keep alive the memory of George Washington, whose self-sacrifice and disinterested public service had set a shining example before the entire world.

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<sup>3</sup> Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (W.W. Norton, 1982), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> William Smith, *A General Idea of the College of Mirania* (New York, 1753), pp. 50 ff.

In July 1782, Smith wrote to General Washington himself, who was still encamped with his army along the Hudson awaiting word of the final treaty negotiations across the Atlantic:

In every possible way, your country wishes to erect public monuments to you, even while living, and posterity, without doubt, will greatly increase the number; but none, it is believed, can be more acceptable to you, than a *seminary of universal learning* expressly dedicated to your name, with a view of instructing and animating the youth of many future generations to admire and to imitate these *public virtues* and *patriot-labours*, which have created a private monument for you in the heart of every good citizen.<sup>5</sup>

Washington, taking time from his military duties, graciously consented to the fledgling college's use of his name, pledged a generous monetary gift to its establishment, and extended his warm wishes for the "lasting and extensive usefulness" of the institution.<sup>6</sup> He would later serve on Washington College's Board of Visitors and Governors (his only such involvement during his lifetime), pay a visit to its campus, and, shortly after his inauguration as President, receive one of its first honorary degrees. This distinguished connection – along with Washington College's status as the first college founded in the new nation – would remain a central point of its institutional identity for more than 200 years.

The new college's location – in Chestertown, the flourishing seat of Kent County, Maryland – must have seemed, in 1782, ideal for an institution of national prominence. A busy Chesapeake port, it also lay squarely astride the main north-south overland route along the Atlantic seaboard, halfway between the plantations of Tidewater Virginia and the burgeoning urban center of Philadelphia. (Indeed, Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and others had frequently passed through town on their way to and from sessions of the Continental Congress.) Some of the wealthiest and most influential citizens of the new republic, like Gen. John Cadwalader and Benjamin Chew, had country estates nearby. The first national Census, in 1790, would even pinpoint Chestertown as – statistically speaking – the center of population in the United States. The lofty ambitions of Washington College's founders are vividly attested by the

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<sup>5</sup> *An Account of Washington College, in the State of Maryland* (Philadelphia, 1784), pp. 24-5.

<sup>6</sup> George Washington to William Smith, August 18, 1782. George Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

fact that the first college building, on a hilltop above Chestertown, was the largest structure of any kind in North America when it was built.

But alas, such aspirations would be thwarted by harsh realities. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, as the Chesapeake region's economic center shifted rapidly westward, to Baltimore and beyond, Chestertown found itself increasingly a backwater, its prestige and capital quickly draining away. Washington College's budgets were slashed by legislators and trustees, and a disastrous fire in 1827 destroyed its original building and nearly finished off the school. Thanks to a small cadre of dedicated professors and administrators, it would stay alive through the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: a fine liberal-arts college devoted to teaching and public service, as its founders had wished – but hardly the nationally preeminent institution that they had envisioned.

Washington College was reborn in the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of several farsighted presidents, beginning with Dr. Gilbert W. Mead. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself traveled to attend Dr. Mead's inauguration, and in a speech on campus called Washington College to rededicate itself to the vision of its founders by connecting America's past to its present: "We need people who can look not just at the history of things in the past, but also into the application of that history to the problems of the moment and of the future."<sup>7</sup>

By the 1990s, Washington College was attracting an increasingly national and international student body and gaining a reputation as a competitive, top-tier private liberal arts college, with strong offerings in history and political science, among other fields, and valuable connections to nearby Washington, D.C. Chestertown, too, had sprung back to life, both economically and culturally. The outside world had rediscovered this place where time seemed to have stopped in the 1780s – where an intact 18<sup>th</sup>-century streetscape and a vibrant community life bespoke the vanished world of America's Founding era.

It was in this context that Washington College, in 2001, established the C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience. Its mission was to reconnect with the college's

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<sup>7</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, address at Washington College, Chestertown, Md., October 21, 1933.

Revolutionary legacy: its sense of history as a living tradition, and as a fundamental ingredient in a successful and vital democratic society.

### **The C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience**

The guiding principle of the Starr Center is the idea – first espoused by William Smith in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – that a wider understanding of our shared past is fundamental to the continuing success of America’s democratic experiment. The Center is interdisciplinary, encouraging the study of traditional history alongside new approaches, and seeking to bridge the divide between the academic world and the public at large, especially by supporting and fostering the art of written history. America’s Founding era and the early republic are central to the Starr Center’s focus. Yet the Center also recognizes that while the Revolutionary period may represent an apotheosis of American ideals of freedom, it is also part of a much longer – and still unfolding – national narrative, which must be addressed as an organic whole. Although it therefore sometimes addresses the present as well as the past, the Center is strictly nonpartisan and strives for careful balance in all its endeavors.

In the few years since its founding, the Starr Center has rapidly achieved considerable stature. It has launched nationally significant programs, spawned dozens of publications, formed partnerships with prominent institutions, and put Washington College on the map as a rising star in the realm of American history.

The Starr Center was established with two major gifts: \$1 million pledged by Jack S. Griswold, Chairman of the college’s Board of Visitors and Governors, and \$5 million from the New York-based Starr Foundation. These established its endowment and also paid for the extensive renovation of the Custom House, a historic 1746 structure on Chestertown’s waterfront that houses the Center (along with the college’s archaeology lab and an environmental center). The Center’s first director, Ted Widmer, was appointed in 2000, and its public programs began in 2001. Widmer was a dynamic, Harvard-trained historian of the early Republic, the author of

*Young America* (Oxford, 1999) and *Martin Van Buren* (Henry Holt, 2005), and editor of the Library of America's two-volume series *American Speeches* (2006). He had also served previously as a speechwriter at the National Security Council, and thus brought to the Center a concern with contemporary issues alongside his dedication to historical scholarship. Widmer served as the Starr Center's director until July 2006, when he was appointed director of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. He was succeeded by the current director, Adam Goodheart, a prolific writer on history who had previously served the Center with the title of C.V. Starr Scholar.

The Center has sponsored a rich array of lectures, symposia, and other public events, covering topics that span early American history (Walter Isaacson, "Benjamin Franklin and America's Values") and current events (Taylor Branch, "Freedom, Faith, and Terror: Thoughts on the Dawning Age"). These free programs draw in students, faculty, and many members of the larger community, and several have also been televised nationally on C-SPAN. (See Appendix A.) Ongoing lecture series are devoted to early maritime history and to American history as reflected in the visual arts. An agreement has just been concluded with the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery that will bring the latter series to Washington, D.C., in 2007.

The "crown jewel" of these public programs is the annual awarding of the George Washington Book Prize. Conceived and administered at the Starr Center, the Prize honors the year's best book on Washington and/or America's founding era. The \$50,000 award is funded by the New York-based Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History, which serves as a cosponsor of the Prize alongside Washington College and George Washington's Mount Vernon. With the Starr Center's staff responsible for sifting through dozens of entrants each year, the winner is chosen by a jury of nationally distinguished historians with expertise in the Founding era. (See Appendix B.) In selecting jurors, the sponsoring institutions strive for a careful balance of scholars reflecting varying interests and viewpoints – and this balance has been reflected in the

jury's choices, too. The inaugural winner of the Washington Prize, in 2005, was Ron Chernow for *Alexander Hamilton*, a masterful portrayal of the Federalist theoretician, constitutionalist, and financial hero. The 2006 winner was Stacy Schiff for her narrative of diplomatic achievement, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*.

The Washington Prize recipient is feted at an annual dinner in May hosted by Mount Vernon on the grounds of Washington's estate, with a guest list that mingles Washington College students and faculty with prominent historians and dignitaries. In September, the winner visits Chestertown for a two-day celebration that includes a major lecture, a public conversation on the practice of history with students and faculty, Revolutionary War-era reenactments, and other events – all free and open to the general public. The Washington Prize receives coverage in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and many other national press outlets.

As part of their mission to engage the wider public, both academic and non-academic, and to uphold the literary craft of the historian, the Center's directors and staff have been actively engaged in research and writing about American history for national audiences. Publications originating at the Starr Center have included dozens of articles in such venues as the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *National Geographic*, *The American Scholar*, *American Heritage*, *Smithsonian*, *Washington Post*, *Slate.com*, and many others. Their topics have ranged from Jeffersonian architecture and the history of presidential inaugural addresses to the traces of slavery in the American landscape and Hamilton's current-day political legacy. (See Appendix C.) Starr Center directors and staff have also lectured widely (at Harvard University, the National Geographic Society, the Smithsonian Institution, and many other venues), and been interviewed by many broadcast media (including National Public Radio, ABC News, and Voice of America). In 2005, the Starr Center commissioned a major survey gauging Americans' knowledge of the Founding era. Results of the poll (conducted among 800 adults by the research firm Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas) drew coverage in literally hundreds of media outlets worldwide, and provoked wide public discussion on the role of Revolutionary-era history in American education.

Inspired by its founding principles, the Starr Center consistently uses history to address the issues and concerns of the present, and reaches out to public leaders as well as distinguished historians. In January 2006, former U.S. Senator Birch Bayh became a Fellow of the Center. Renowned in the Senate – on both sides of the aisle – for his deep knowledge of constitutional history, Senator Bayh is the only lawmaker since the Founders to have personally authored two amendments to the U.S. Constitution (the 25<sup>th</sup>, establishing the rules for presidential succession, and the 26<sup>th</sup>, lowering the voting age to 18). He also drafted the influential Title IX of the Higher Education Act, and cosponsored the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. At Washington College, Senator Bayh created and taught a special extracurricular seminar, the Senatorial Colloquy on American History and Politics, which examined how the nation’s founding principles have evolved into its present-day political institutions. The Colloquy began with a major public address (“Church and State: 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Principles, 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Politics”), televised nationally on C-SPAN. This was followed by a series of biweekly, two-hour closed sessions with the 22 Washington College students enrolled in the Colloquy. At each session, Senator Bayh addressed the historic and contemporary implications of a different theme (electoral law, the Supreme Court, etc.), and then continued the discussion with students over a casual dinner. He spoke passionately and knowledgably of the traditions and institutions of the Senate – making a case for a return to bipartisanship as he recalled his early mentor in Washington, Sen. Everett Dirksen. It was an exceptional opportunity for them to learn firsthand from one of the most respected legislators of recent times. Senator Bayh plans to expand the Colloquy in 2007 with a series of public conversations at the Starr Center at which both Republican and Democratic former senators discuss the Senate’s past and present.

Besides Senator Bayh, other occasional fellows have included Townsend Hoopes (the late Bancroft Prize-winning historian and public servant) and Sam Tanenhaus (the biographer of Whitaker Chambers and William F. Buckley and editor of the *New York Times Book Review*).

The Starr Center has even extended its reach far overseas. In 2003 and 2004, the Center received grants from the U.S. Department of State to create the American Studies Institute (ASI), a pioneering program to educate Muslim university students from South Asia about American history, democracy, and culture. Each summer, Washington College hosted 21 undergraduates from Islamic institutions in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, who spent six weeks of intensive study with faculty, Starr Center staff, and visiting lecturers. The ASI students, who had applied through U.S. embassies in their home countries, analyzed texts ranging from the Declaration of Independence to the speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Chestertown itself provided a living lesson in grassroots democracy, experienced through visits to the mayor's office and the volunteer fire company, to local businesses and Fourth of July parades. Washington College's successful ASI programs have served as models for similar State Department-sponsored initiatives nationwide, and received wide media attention, including a cover story in the *Washington Post Magazine* and pieces on Voice of America and in the *Los Angeles Times*. In 2005, the Starr Center and State Department hosted a five-day conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for alumni of the ASI, led by humanities faculty from Washington College and other institutions.

Another major federal partnership has been the Washington's Legacy Project, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Teaching American History initiative. A collaborative venture between the Starr Center and the Kent County school district, Washington's Legacy coaches elementary, middle, and high-school teachers from throughout the region – especially those from “at risk” schools – on innovative approaches to history education, encouraging them to incorporate original documents, archaeology, and hands-on learning into traditional lesson plans. It also aims to align their instruction with federal and state standards. The four-year program has served more than 300 teachers of American history (for grades 3-12) from 16 Maryland counties, plus four out-of-state schools. Washington's Legacy has included 14 five-day summer institutes, four annual conferences, 24 Saturday seminars, and two graduate-level courses, and has generated 25 original lesson plans covering the period from early colonization

through Reconstruction. The program has generated participation and support from the Smithsonian Institution, National Park Service, National Archives, and National Geographic Society, among other institutions. In the summer of 2007, as a capstone to Washington's Legacy, Starr Center Director Adam Goodheart will lead 12 select "master teachers" on an eight-day "Chesapeake Journey" to Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, Mount Vernon, and other sites.

For Washington College students – especially those in history, American studies, political science, archaeology, and related fields – the Starr Center serves as a portal onto a world of opportunities beyond campus. Undergraduates meet and converse with the Center's distinguished lecturers and fellows. Special weekend "road trips" led by Starr Center staff take them to historic sites throughout the Chesapeake region. A recently launched initiative called HistoryMuse matches Washington College students with internships, summer field schools and conferences, and post-college jobs.

To encourage hands-on learning experiences beyond the classroom, the Starr Center sponsors fellowship programs that pair students with faculty mentors for advanced independent research projects. The Comegys Bight Fellowships fund summer research in American studies, while the Frederick Douglass Fellowships support spring-semester research in African-American studies and related fields (and brings a visiting scholar to Chestertown each year to meet with students). More than \$10,000 is disbursed annually through the two fellowships, and subjects have ranged from a documentary study of a vanished 18th-century farming community to an oral history of integration in Chestertown public schools. Starting in 2007-8, the Starr Center will also send a Washington College student to participate each year in the Presidential Fellows Program, a prestigious yearlong institute run by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for the Study of the Presidency.

The Starr Center is actively involved in curricular programs at Washington College. Directors and staff members have taught regular courses in History, American Studies, Anthropology, and English. Striving for interdisciplinary approaches to the subjects at hand, these

have borne such titles as “Walt Whitman’s 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” “Jamestown and America’s Global Origins,” “Becoming American: The 18<sup>th</sup> Century,” and “Abroad in America: The Writer as Traveler.” Additionally, the Center’s staff collaborates with other Washington College faculty, across various departments, to create lectures and other extracurricular programs that complement their course offerings each semester. And a newly launched program of faculty enhancement grants under the Center’s auspices provides funding for research and other scholarly projects in the field of American studies.

Connecting Washington College to the larger world of historical study, the Starr Center has cosponsored scholarly conferences with the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture at the College of William and Mary, the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, and Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey. It also funds a special short-term fellowship at the Boston Athenaeum, whose holdings include George Washington’s personal library.

Thanks to Washington College, the Custom House today is again – as it was in colonial times – a bustling place and a window onto the world beyond Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Starr Center staff plan programs and lectures; faculty members work on research and writing; students pore over thesis projects and mingle with distinguished guests of the Center. A *We the People* Challenge Grant would greatly expand this activity in important new directions.

### **“We the People” Plans**

A. Since the days of the early republic, public memory of America’s Founding era has been kept alive through the written word. In the early 1800s, it was such historians as Mercy Otis Warren and John Marshall – themselves closely acquainted with Washington, Adams, and other Founders – who first narrated their story to a generation of Americans too young to remember it firsthand. Each generation since has found new ways to tell that story, and to make it freshly relevant to contemporary concerns. Even in today’s multimedia environment, it is still

largely authors, both scholarly and popular, who interpret our country's Revolution for present-day Americans.

Fostering excellence in historical writing about the Founding era has been at the core of the Starr Center's mission. Its co-sponsorship of the George Washington Book Prize recognizes and rewards authors who advance public understanding of the Revolution and its legacy. Its lectures and other public programs bring many leading historians to campus each year. The Center's directors and staff have also been extremely active in publishing essays, articles, and reviews on American history in national publications. (See Appendix C.) Adam Goodheart, the Center's new director, is an innovative writer whose work weaves together the past and present, and who contributes prominent pieces on American history to *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*, the *New York Times*, and other widely-read venues. Undergraduate courses offered by the Center's staff (such as Goodheart's "Making History: How Writers Bring the Past to Life") are teaching the literary art of history to a new generation at Washington College. A guiding principle is that historical writing should have an impact not merely on academic debates, but also on the way ordinary American citizens think about their nation and themselves.

The Starr Center would use *We the People* Challenge Grant funds to create a residential fellowship program at Washington College for historians who are working on books about the Founding era and its legacy. Recipients would spend the entire academic year in Chestertown while working on their projects, and would teach one course per semester at Washington College, as well as offer lectures to the general public.

A number of elements would distinguish this program from fellowships elsewhere. First, it would be open, not only to academics, but to historians working outside the academy. As Joseph J. Ellis recently wrote, "Most of the recent work [on the Founding era], especially books that have enjoyed a wide readership, has not been written by professional historians. ... There are exceptions, of course. (And I am pleased to be one of them.) But the huge readership currently

fascinated with the founders is not being served by card-carrying historians.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, both recipients of the George Washington Book Prize, Ron Chernow and Stacy Schiff, have been independent scholars; no fewer than 17 contenders for the 2007 prize are nonacademics. Such historians, especially early in their careers, are underserved by academic fellowship programs, which tend to focus on doctoral candidates and Ph.D.s. Among the few opportunities open to them are the Guggenheim and Radcliffe Institute fellowships, each of which draws huge numbers of applications and neither of which is specifically geared toward historians. Meanwhile, intense commercial pressures in American publishing make it increasingly difficult for independent, not-yet-famous authors of serious history to support themselves as they work on their books, especially multiyear projects that require extensive original research. The Starr Center’s fellowship program would fill a serious gap, and help nurture the next generation of Stacy Schiffs and Ron Chernows.

Second, instead of offering a research-focused fellowship, the Starr Center’s program would target authors in the final years of their book projects – the point when they need to buckle down and write, away from distractions, and also when financial pressures often become acute. The fellowship would immerse them in the peaceful, 18<sup>th</sup>-century setting of Chestertown, a perfect atmosphere for thinking and writing about American history. (See “Community,” below.) It would serve as a complement to the Washington Prize program, which has put the Starr Center on historians’ radar. A number of prominent individuals have already agreed to advise the Center on creating the program and promoting it among potential applicants. (See Appendix D.) Significant among them is André Bernard, Vice-President of the Guggenheim Foundation and former Editor-in-Chief of Harcourt Brace, who has generously offered to steer unsuccessful Guggenheim applicants in American history toward the Starr Center. (The Guggenheim Foundation receives some 3,000 applications per year, in all fields, and awards approximately

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, Foreword to Susan Dunn, ed., *Something That Will Surprise the World: The Essential Writings of the Founding Fathers* (Basic Books, 2006).

180 fellowships.) A secondary cosponsor of the Fellows program will be Washington College's O'Neill Literary House, whose director is the acclaimed Lincoln historian Joshua Wolf Shenk, and the program will complement the college's strong literary tradition (see "Washington College," below).

Since authors, even late in the writing process, often need to conduct additional research, we are discussing with Ted Widmer (former director of the Starr Center, now director of the John Carter Brown Library) the possibility of sending fellowship recipients to the JCB, which possesses one of the world's great collections of rare books on early America, during the fellowship term. The Library of Congress, National Archives, and other repositories in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Annapolis, and Baltimore are within easy day-trip distance of Chestertown.

Of the Challenge Grant funds, \$800,000 will endow annual stipends for the Fellows. With an additional \$100,000 of endowment, \$2,500 per year will be awarded in the form of funds for research travel, and \$2,500 more to purchase books and other materials on the Founding era, which will then become part of Washington College's library at the end of the fellowship year, benefiting students, faculty, and future Fellows. An additional \$150,000 in endowment will help support administrative and publicity expenses of the Fellows program. The \$7,500 in annual income will enable the Starr Center to advertise the program in selected journals and magazines, as well as online – publicity that will be critical in spreading word among a broad audience of potential Fellows, especially during the initial years. It will also help defray the cost of Starr Center staff work in developing, administering, and promoting the Fellows program.

**B.** A serious challenge in Chestertown is the shortage of affordable housing, especially rental housing. It would be difficult to find an appropriate residence for the Fellows each year. Therefore, \$1,000,000 in Challenge Grant funds will be used to purchase, sensitively restore, and endow the maintenance and operation of the historic Buck-Chambers House in

Chestertown, one block away from the Starr Center, which will be converted into a permanent Fellows' Residence.

Living in the Buck-Chambers House, Fellows would be immersed in the atmosphere of colonial America. Built in 1735, it is one of the oldest houses in Chestertown, and one of the few to retain its original interior largely intact. Its connections to American history, and to Washington College, run deep: an 18<sup>th</sup>-century occupant, Benjamin Chambers, was a Revolutionary War soldier who became the first treasurer of Washington College in 1782; his son, Ezekiel F. Chambers, was a hero of the War of 1812 who became a U.S. senator. Born in the house, Sen. Chambers served as president of Washington College's board for many decades, and is credited with saving the college from closure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As a side benefit, the Buck-Chambers house would be saved for the future. (Recently, a proposed renovation threatened to gut much of its interior.) The house would be furnished with books, artwork, and other materials on the Founding era (provided by private gifts, not Challenge Grant funds) and would be open to the public several times per year during Chestertown's historic house tours.

C. The past few years have seen an enormous expansion in digitized versions of original archival materials on early American history available through online subscription services. In 2006, thanks to a private gift, Washington College's Miller Library acquired *Early American Imprints, Series 1. Evans*, which includes full, searchable texts in microform-quality facsimile of every book printed in America before 1800. It has already proven a tremendous asset to students and faculty. Challenge Grant funds totaling \$150,000 would purchase additional online archives and databases, including *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (150,000 titles) and the *Readex Archive of Americana*, which encompasses early American broadsides and ephemera, 1760-1900 (30,000 items); 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century American newspapers (more than 1,000 titles); American books published between 1801 and 1819 (more than 36,000 titles) and historical government publications (including every legislative and executive document of the

first 14 Congresses, more than 12 million pages of later Congressional serials, etc.). Since Miller Library, with some 150,000 volumes, is a small college library rather than a major research institution, acquisition of these high-quality digitalized archives would be nothing less than transformative. They would level the playing field in the area of American history between Washington College and larger institutions – benefiting students, faculty, visiting Fellows, the Starr Center, and the greater community, and making the college an exceptionally resource-rich environment for historians. This aspect of the grant would also address the goals of the NEH’s Digital Humanities Initiative by fostering the use of digital humanities resources among both visiting Fellows and Washington College students, who would receive instruction from Starr Center and Miller Library staff on utilizing these resources.

**E.** If Washington College is to build and sustain a community dynamically engaged in examining America’s past, this community must include truly outstanding students. Therefore, the final \$300,000 in *We the People* Challenge Grant funds will be used to partially endow a new program of merit scholarships for gifted students in the field of American history. Supplemented by other funds, this program will complement Washington College’s extremely successful existing merit scholarships (see “Washington College,” below). In addition to receiving financial aid, recipients will participate in special programs run by the Starr Center, such as multi-day educational cruises with faculty members aboard the circa-1768 Schooner Sultana (see “Community,” below) and educational events at Mount Vernon. The college has learned from experience that such programs have an impact that far transcends the actual funds disbursed, by attracting highly-qualified applicants above and beyond those who actually receive the scholarships. The prestige and publicity of the NEH grant would also help the college to attract additional scholarship endowment funds from other sources.

In summary, the *We the People* Challenge Grant funds would allow Washington College to create a nationally distinguished, signature fellowship program that would help nurture the next generation of great writers on American history. The NEH’s sponsorship would lend this program

particular cachet. Together with the scholarship program and library acquisitions, the college would receive a major boost in its ongoing effort to create a community of students, scholars, teachers, and writers dedicated to keeping the legacy of the Founding era alive and vital, and using the past as a lens for understanding the present. The grant's impact would be especially profound at a place like Washington College – a small institution in a rural setting, with fewer financial and physical resources than those of many peer institutions.

### **Community**

Chestertown, Maryland, can be said to be both “in the middle of nowhere” and “in the middle of everywhere.” This unusual circumstance helps make it an ideal location for the programs to be funded by the Challenge Grant, and promises great potential for Washington College's future growth in the field of American history.

The town and its rural surroundings of Kent County both have populations barely larger today than at the time of the American Revolution (4,000 in the town, 19,000 in the county). This part of Maryland's Eastern Shore has been called “America's last great 18<sup>th</sup>-century landscape”: a patchwork of wheatfields and tidal waterways, sparsely strewn with farmsteads and crossroads villages. Many families at all socioeconomic levels have been in the area since colonial times. Traditions, oral histories, and a sense of place run deep.

Yet Chestertown also lies near the center of the United States' teeming mid-Atlantic corridor. According to data from the federal Office of Management and Budget, the town sits just past the eastern fringe of the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area (population approximately 8 million), less than an hour south of the Philadelphia-Delaware Valley metropolitan area (population approximately 6 million), and less than three hours south of the New York metropolitan area (population approximately 19 million).

Increasingly, Chestertown and its surroundings are attracting newcomers, retirees, and weekenders from these nearby metropolises. Affluent, cultured, and well-connected, such

residents have opened doorways onto the world beyond. Chestertown was noted in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century for its cultural energy – accounts tell of scientific lectures and Shakespeare performances – and the new arrivals have reawakened this long-dormant scene, launching galleries, bookshops, and theaters, often in partnership with area natives. With its proximity to the nation’s capital – the Beltway is barely an hour away – Kent County also draws many diplomats, public servants, and other Washington, D.C., figures. An April 2006 article in the *New York Times* hailed the community’s “intellectual and cultural life” and “a small-town atmosphere that is peaceful and stimulating at the same time,” noting the happy coexistence of locals and newcomers.<sup>9</sup>

In colonial times, Chestertown was a flourishing international port; its customs records note local vessels bound for the Caribbean, Europe, West Africa, and beyond. The town’s layout of streets and squares has barely changed since its era of peak prosperity in the mid-1700s, and its downtown – designated a National Historic Landmark – encompasses dozens of historic structures from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Like Williamsburg before its discovery by the Rockefellers, Chestertown was preserved by isolation and economic stagnation. (Henry F. du Pont, the founder of Winterthur, collected so many historic furnishings and interiors here in the 1920s that he named his Long Island estate “Chestertown House.”)

The community’s historical connections extend far beyond its architecture, however. Its story is intertwined with the long American narrative of freedom and slavery. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Catholics, Puritans, and Quakers settled on Maryland’s Eastern Shore in search of religious liberty. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Chestertown merchants led protests against British tyranny, Chestertown mariners commanded warships in the Revolution – and some of these same merchants and mariners also participated in the cruel trade that brought slave ships to Chestertown’s wharves. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chestertown’s loyalties were divided between North and South (its Civil War monument honors soldiers from both sides, many with the same last names), and more than 400 African-Americans from Kent County enlisted in the Union Army to

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<sup>9</sup> Julia Lawlor, “Chestertown, Md.: Charm, Not Politics, on the Eastern Shore,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2006.

fight for their freedom. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kent County's public schools were among the last in the country to desegregate, and the Freedom Riders marched up Chestertown's High Street.

Thus, Kent County represents a living laboratory of the American past for Washington College students and faculty. Its courthouse records stretch back unbroken to the 1650s, and many local attics hold caches of family papers almost as ancient, but few scholars have yet mined these riches. The Starr Center is already finding innovative ways to do so. To mark Chestertown's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006, the Center sponsored a weekend-long symposium examining three centuries of American history from the vantage point of this one community. The president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation delivered the keynote address, and Washington College students presented original research alongside historians and archaeologists from the University of Maryland, St. Mary's College of Maryland, George Washington University, and Vassar College, as well as representatives of the National Park Service, Mount Vernon, and other groups.

Resources in African-American history are especially rich here, spanning three-and-a-half centuries. In 2005-6, the Starr Center funded oral-history and archival research by Marlon Saunders, a Kent County native and professor at Berklee College of Music, that resulted in his composing a multimedia jazz suite on the history of his own family and the larger African-American community, stretching back into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Performances drew large and enthusiastic, multi-ethnic audiences, and Saunders continues to tour with his production. The Starr Center has also been instrumental in saving Chestertown's circa-1908 Charles Sumner Post, the only intact African-American Civil War veterans' hall in the United States.

Indeed, Chestertown has become something of a Mecca for public history of late. Each year, tens of thousands of visitors witness a reenactment of the Chestertown Tea Party, a 1774 incident in which patriots reportedly dumped British tea into the Chester River. And between 1998 and 2001, the entire community came together to build the Schooner Sultana, a faithful replica of a 1768 Royal Navy vessel that patrolled American waters in the years before the Revolution. Docked 100 yards from the Starr Center, the ship is owned by Sultana Projects, Inc.,

a local nonprofit that uses it for educational programs on history and the environment throughout the Chesapeake region. In 2006, Sultana Projects – with major support from the National Endowment for the Humanities – launched a replica of the shallop Capt. John Smith used to explore the Chesapeake, which will retrace Smith’s entire voyage as part of the 2007 anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. The Starr Center has worked closely with Sultana Projects on many of its public programs.

Washington College’s programs under the *We the People* Challenge Grant would complement these local endeavors, lend new cultural and intellectual energy to the area and to the Eastern Shore region, and advance Chestertown’s growing regional and even national prominence as a center of innovative developments in history education. The visiting Fellows and scholarship recipients would find a home amid a community that is passionate about the past, and rich in untapped resources – archival, archaeological, and otherwise – for understanding more than 300 years of American history.

### **Washington College**

For well over two centuries, Washington College has held steadfast to its founders’ vision of a dynamic liberal-arts college with particular strength in the humanities.

Washington College’s 1,300 undergraduates come from all over the United States, as well as some 40 foreign nations, and the college boasts more than 40 international exchange programs, more than any other independent college in Maryland. It was rated among “Top 20 College Gems” in Dr. Stephen Antonoff’s *The College Finder*, and ranked 9<sup>th</sup> among “100 Colleges That Are Better Than You Think” in a book by *Washington Post* education reporter Jay Mathews.

In 1996, the college’s Washington Scholars program began recruiting students who exemplify the qualities of leadership, scholarship, character, and service embodied by our nation’s first president. Today, more than 50% of all students enrolled at Washington College are

Washington Scholars, drawn from the National Honor Society's membership, comprising fewer than 10% of all American high school students. Each Washington Scholar receives at least \$40,000 in institutional financial aid. Since this scholarship program's inception, the number of applications received by the college has doubled, and the applicants' average high-school GPAs and SAT scores have risen sharply.

A student-faculty ratio of 12-to-one, with an average class size of 17, means that professors here are more than just teachers – they are mentors and friends. The Douglass Cater Society of Junior Fellows provides \$100,000 per year in funds for faculty-supervised student research all over the world. In a survey of recent Washington College graduates, 97% expressed satisfaction with their access to faculty.

Among Washington College's 91 fulltime faculty members, 89% have earned the Ph.D. or other terminal degrees. Washington College professors have won eight Fulbright awards and many other professional honors; they have received 21 individual grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Particularly distinguished faculty in fields relevant to this application include historian Dr. Richard Striner, author of *The Civic Deal: Re-Empowering Our Great Republic* (Pericles Institute, 2000) and *Father Abraham: Lincoln's Relentless Struggle to End Slavery* (Oxford, 2006); historian Dr. Carol Wilson, author of *Freedom at Risk: The Kidnapping of Free Blacks in America, 1790-1865* (U. of Kentucky, 1994); and political scientists Dr. John Taylor, author of numerous works on the U.S. Constitution, and Dr. Melissa Deckman, an expert on the interplay of local elections and national trends in American politics. Washington College's president since 2004, Dr. Baird Tipson (former president of Wittenberg University and provost of Gettysburg College) is a Yale-trained historian of religion whose research has focused on early American and English Puritanism. The College's recently-appointed Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Dr. Christopher Ames (former Provost and Senior Vice President at Oglethorpe University), is a Stanford-trained scholar of American and English literature.

For our undergraduates, Washington College's small faculty, lack of graduate students, and low faculty turnover present many clear advantages, fostering an atmosphere of intimacy, tradition, institutional loyalty, and personal attention on campus. However, these factors also mean that it can be rare for students to encounter new faces among their professors, especially in the humanities. The proposed Visiting Fellows program would do much to allay this, bringing new people and new ideas to campus, adding new courses to the curriculum, and infusing fresh intellectual bubble and fizz into Washington College and its surrounding community.

With its proximity to the nation's capital, Washington College already draws many distinguished politicians, journalists, and other Washington, D.C., public figures. Official visitors have included nine U.S. Presidents and First Ladies (most recently George H.W. and Barbara Bush). In just the past few years, campus speakers have ranged from Gov. Howard Dean to White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove; from Sen. John McCain to James Carville.

Along with the C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, two other "Centers of Excellence" reflect areas of particular academic strength at Washington College, and will contribute to the success of the Challenge Grant-funded programs.

Founded in 2000, the Center for the Environment and Society, based alongside the Starr Center in the historic Custom House, studies humans' interactions with the natural environment, particularly in the Chesapeake region. Its current director, Dr. John Seidel, is an archaeologist with particular expertise in colonial America, including Revolutionary War sites. Over the past decade, he has launched an ambitious and very successful laboratory- and fieldwork-based archaeology program at Washington College, including underwater work on 18<sup>th</sup>-century shipwrecks.

For more than 30 years, the Rose O'Neill Literary House has anchored Washington College's renowned programs in English and creative writing. The Literary House fosters an environment of intensive, hands-on instruction in the literary craft, and has hosted many world-renowned writers: Toni Morrison, William Styron, Joseph Brodsky, Grace Paley, Allen Ginsberg.

The Literary House's recently appointed director, Joshua Wolf Shenk, is an acclaimed young nonfiction author whose work analyzes American history in innovative ways. Shenk's book *Lincoln's Melancholy* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005) was named a New York Times Notable Book of the Year; his essays appear in *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, and other major publications; and he is a member of the advisory council of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. The Literary House will act as a cosponsor of the Starr Center's residential fellowship program in American history.

In its Strategic Plan for 2007-2013, titled "From Stability to Eminence," Washington College set the goal of transforming itself in the coming years "from a very good small liberal-arts college into a great one." The NEH's support of this *We the People* Challenge Grant proposal will play a key role in this transformation. It will significantly strengthen the college's offerings in an area of great strength and promise, advancing its goal of becoming a "magnet" for outstanding students and faculty in American history. It will boost the institution's prestige and national reputation, helping it to attract even more support in the future. And it will help fulfill the vision that George Washington, William Smith, and other farsighted founders had for this college more than 200 years ago.

### **Fundraising**

Washington College is committed to raising the \$1,875,000 needed to match the *We the People* Challenge Grant, and is already dedicating the resources of the President and the Advancement Office to meeting the challenge.

Indeed, the hope of receiving a Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities has already generated a very significant matching gift that will become our lead gift. In January 2007, Margaret Nuttle, an Eastern Shore resident with a strong interest in colonial history and mother of an alumna, committed \$1 million in matching funds in anticipation of Washington College's possible *We the People* Challenge Grant. Her \$1 million gift will cover

the entire purchase, renovation, furnishing, and operating endowment of the Buck-Chambers House as a fellowship residence. In 1999, Mrs. Nuttle had placed these funds in a revocable charitable trust that would benefit the Starr Center after her death – but she had recently spoken of possibly withdrawing them to benefit another institution. By speaking with her about the Center’s planned *We the People* Challenge Grant proposal, Director Adam Goodheart convinced her to convert this hypothetical bequest into a present gift.

As for the remaining \$875,000, Washington College brings to the task a strong fundraising record marked by steady, progressive growth and deep experience in matching challenge grants. Over the past 20 years the college has raised more than \$19 million in response to \$14 million in challenge grants from the Kresge Foundation, the Hodson Trust, the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, and others for capital projects and endowment.

Washington College is confident that its development track record will provide a solid foundation for success in meeting the *We the People* challenge. In little more than a decade, the college’s endowment has grown from just \$27 million to over \$160 million; much of this growth came from gift income. Between 1998 and 2003, the “Campaign for Washington’s College” raised \$103.4 million, \$31 million more than its initial goal, to support scholarships, faculty enhancement, academic initiatives, and capital improvements. More than 11,000 contributors to this campaign included 15 donors of \$1 million or more and 105 donors of \$100,000 or more. Members of the college’s Board of Visitors and Governors gave over \$25 million.

To build on these successes, two years ago, President Baird Tipson added Elizabeth Herman, a 22-year professional in educational fundraising, to his Senior Staff as Vice President for College Advancement. Prior to joining Washington College, she was Vice President for College Advancement at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA, where she managed 40 development, alumni relations, and communications staffers and launched new campaigns for a science center and Writer's House.

Since her arrival, Herman has reorganized her staff of 20, hired key new directors for the Washington Fund (annual giving), advancement services, donor stewardship, and alumni relations, and developed a new vision for the college's volunteer organizations. She and her staff are currently implementing plans for an expanded national alumni relations program, conducting a \$7 million arts center campaign (\$3.5 million is in hand), and preparing for a comprehensive campaign to follow. Consultant E. Burr Gibson, Executive Chairman of Marts & Lundy, is providing valuable advice in planning the campaign, of which an NEH Challenge Grant would be an important component.

Assisting Herman is Associate Vice President for Development Barbara H. Heck, a 21-year veteran of two major capital campaigns at Washington College that raised more than \$147 million. Responsible for fundraising from foundations and major individual donors and overseeing the stewardship program, Heck has managed four successful challenge grants from the Kresge Foundation totaling \$1.9 million that required matching funds of \$7 million, as well as numerous six-figure grants from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the Christian Johnson Endeavor Foundation, The W.M. Keck Foundation, the Henry R. Luce Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and The Starr Foundation, among others.

Leading the major gifts and annual giving staff is Director of Development Jeffrey Appel, who also has in excess of 20 years of development experience. Previously Assistant Head of School for Alumni and Development at Berkshire School in Sheffield, Massachusetts, he directed the school's Berkshire 2000 capital campaign that raised \$42.5 million, surpassing its original goal by 25 percent. At Washington College, he is responsible for the annual giving and major and planned gift programs, including a staff of six.

Our prospect pool, developed and monitored by the Advancement Services Office, currently includes more than 350 leadership prospects, and we are optimistic that, as we did with the Campaign for

Washington’s College, we will mobilize these donors to help us meet the *We the People* challenge.

Washington College projects the number and level of gifts required to meet its goal, as follows:

1	@	\$1,000,000	=	\$1,000,000
1	@	\$500,000	=	\$500,000
1	@	\$250,000	=	\$250,000
1	@	\$50,000	=	\$50,000
1	@	\$25,000	=	\$25,000
2	@	\$10,000	=	\$20,000
4	@	\$5,000	=	\$20,000
4	@	\$2,500	=	<u>\$10,000</u>
TOTAL				\$1,875,000

Naturally, this is just one scenario, and the gifts could fall many other ways.

Mirroring the College’s fundraising strengths, the Starr Center itself has an impressive fundraising track record, including a number of major benefactors that are potential sources of matching funds for the *We the People* challenge. In 1999, the New York-based Starr Foundation – one of the largest private foundations in America, with assets of approximately \$3.5 billion – gave \$5 million to launch the Center. Although it has not made gifts since then, it has been kept closely apprised of the Starr Center’s activities and has given numerous encouraging signals. On October 18, 2006, Washington College President Baird Tipson and Starr Center Director Adam Goodheart met in New York with Florence Davis, President of the Starr Foundation. They briefed her on this Challenge Grant application, and she agreed that they could inform the NEH that the

Starr Foundation would be interested in receiving a proposal to serve as a partner on the matching funds. On November 28, 2006, Tipson and Goodheart met with John Roberts, a member of the Starr Foundation's board and member emeritus of Washington College's board. He, too, lent his encouragement to the plan.

In December 2005, the Hodson Trust, a private foundation benefiting Maryland colleges and universities, made a \$1.25 million grant to support the Starr Center's endowment and operations. In December 2006, it followed with \$3.5 million to endow the director's position at the Starr Center (creating the Hodson Trust-Griswold Directorship), to endow additional administrative and staff support, and to endow other Center programs, including research grants in American studies for Washington College faculty. The Hodson Trust, which since 1920 has given over \$184 million to Washington College and three other Maryland institutions, has sent many signals of a strong continuing interest in the Starr Center. On November 29, 2006, Adam Goodheart was invited to brief the Trust's board on the Center's future plans, including the projects in the present proposal, which were well-received.

Besides the recent Nuttle gift, the Starr Center has received numerous other private benefactions. In 1999, Jack S. Griswold, Director and Senior Advisor of Brown Investment Advisory Trust Company and Chairman of Washington College's Board of Visitors and Governors, pledged \$1 million to help establish the Center. The Collier family of Chestertown and the Meslans-Holyfield family of St. Louis have each given \$10,000 annually to support student research fellowships at the Center. The Hon. Robert W. and Louisa C. Duemling – major benefactors of Washington College, Winterthur, and the National Gallery of Art – recently pledged \$19,500 to support the Presidential Fellowship under the Starr Center's auspices. (Ambassador Duemling is Chair of the Center's Advisory Board.)

The New York-based Gilder-Lehrman Institute for American History, which funds history programs at many colleges and universities, currently gives \$75,000 per year to support the George Washington Book Prize program. In 2003 and 2004, the U.S. Department of State