

Proposal Narrative

Intellectual Rationale

"Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts and the humanities, designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants."

(National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965)

Overall Project Importance and Intended Audience

Rationale for this *Rose State College and Mid-Del Schools, Partnering to Bridge the Humanities Gap Proposal* is embedded in the above quote from the "Declaration of Findings and Purposes" in the federal act that first established and continues to ground the National Endowment for the Humanities.¹ NEH support of the proposed project will provide underserved high school students who have little access to the arts and humanities, and whose socioeconomic realities encourage them to serve technology rather than question it, with the opportunity to change that dynamic for the better. In this way, the project will strengthen the entire community it serves, and in doing so become a model for similar communities across nation.

Rose State is an Oklahoma community college located in the K-12 Mid-Del Public School District, which encompasses the two cities of Midwest City and Del City. The important need for this grant from the NEH is embedded in the history and culture of these two cities. Both municipalities were originally founded in response to the 1941 establishment of Tinker Air Force Base to serve the nation during World War II.² The two cities have grown together geographically around the Air Force base and now have a population of approximately 75,000

¹ www.neh.gov/about/history/national-foundation-arts-and-humanities-act-1965-pl-89-209

² www.tinker.af.mil/Portals/106/Documents/history/AFD-100701-040.pdf?ver=2016-06-29-090610-960

residents³, while the Air Force base itself has grown to be one of the major military bases in the nation and dominates both cities' economies.⁴

Unfortunately, the origination and continued emphasis of the two cities' main mission as support for the Air Force base has led to a significant lack of development of the humanities within them. There are no museums, art centers, literary publications, or performance venues other than those at Rose State College. Oklahoma City is nearby and has significant humanities opportunities, but many Midwest City and Del City residents do not have the economic resources to go the short distance to participate in them. This is because, like many small communities in the U.S. that have generationally existed primarily to serve a specific industry, the middle and upper class members of the communities have resources to access the humanities and arts in ways that can help prepare them for life as engaged citizens; however, the poorer members of the communities do not. The intended audience for this grant is this specific underserved population in Midwest City and Del City.

Midwest and Del Cities have an average median household income of \$44,000 and a poverty rate of 15%.⁵ Although these numbers do not look bleak, in fact the poverty in the cities is narrowly concentrated in particular areas encompassing Midwest City High and Del City High (as opposed to the one other public high school and one private high school). In 2018, 75% of students at Del City High and 68% of students at Midwest City High were economically disadvantaged. These particular schools also serve minority populations at much higher rates: 68% and 65% respectively.⁶ These fiscal realities mean that while many residents of the cities may participate in the humanities in Oklahoma City, most of the families of students attending

³ www.midwestcityok.org/ & www.cityofdelcity.com/about-del-city

⁴ www.tinker.af.mil/Links/Economic-Impact-Statement/

⁵ www.census.gov/quickfacts/midwestcitycityoklahoma & www.census.gov/quickfacts/delcitycityoklahoma

⁶ www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/oklahoma/districts/midwest-city-del-city/del-city-high-school

these two high schools have few resources to travel beyond their immediate environments. Moreover, due to their underdeveloped access to the humanities and the industrial focus of their surroundings, few of the students and their families realize the value of even the limited humanities opportunities that are available to them. Their aspirations are largely focused on athletics, career technology, consumerism, and the possibility of a lifelong civil service job at the Air Force base. Consequently, many students who might choose humanities-based professions or simply develop the life enrichment and enhanced agency for self-determination that comes through participation in the humanities do not have that opportunity.

This grant project will change the lack of adequate access to the humanities for many in this underserved population by implementing a frugal program with three connected emphases to combine existing humanities services at the college with needs in the high schools. Then, after the two-and-a-half-year period for which the grant will run, inclusion of the high schools in these services will be self-sustaining within the college community without additional outside funding.

Emphasis 1—Visiting Professors: Humanities Themes and Estimated Audience Size

This emphasis in the project specifically addresses the NEH grant program's stated interest in supporting creation of partnerships between school systems to share resources and strengthen K-12 pathways to higher education. The audience for the first year of the project will be teachers and students at Del City High; then, based on ongoing examination of benchmarks and an assessment at the end of that academic year, those services will be divided to include teachers and students at Midwest City High.

Three program heads in the Humanities Division at Rose State College have committed to lead a team of 12 other Humanities professors to deliver 120 humanities class sessions per year at the high schools, with each session teaching approximately twenty students per class.

Thematically, these lessons will focus on scholarship in literature, philosophy, and art and music history beyond the high school teachers' expertise. The exact content of each lesson will be determined by linking the areas of specialization of the college faculty with the requested needs of the high school faculty, and always in accordance with state standards for each particular class's curriculum. This part of the project is modeled on a successful pilot the Rose State Humanities Division has done on a much smaller scale in two past years, informally and without any funding, in the nearby Harrah School District.

The Mid-Del district and Rose State's Humanities Division recently held an extensive preliminary workshop to examine how that earlier model can be adapted to meet this larger need. The workshop was voluntarily attended by 24 professors and teachers to begin planning for this grant, demonstrating a clear enthusiasm and need for the collaboration. Besides enriching the students' high school experience, the goal is to increase both college majors in the humanities fields and enrollment in humanities courses for personal enrichment.

Emphasis 2—Shared Labs: Humanities Themes and Estimated Audience Size

This emphasis in the project will provide a stronger bridge to college for students at the two underserved high schools by expanding services of the existing Rose State Humanities Division Writing, Reading, and English as a Second Language Labs to include the high school students in their services: again to Del City High in the first year and then moving half of those resources to Midwest City High in the second year. In this way, the students' ability to read, write, and think analytically will be strengthened as they also develop a connection to the college that will help make it a less intimidating and unfamiliar choice for their future.

For this task, two college faculty members will be present twice per week during the high school student lunch periods, with one of those days extended from one hour to two hours to also

encompass the high school period for academic enrichment. For this project, the administration of Mid-Del schools has offered to expand the enrichment time from its current once per month to once per week. They are also providing the needed space and equipment. The sessions during lunch hours will be held in a lab at the school and will first serve students that teachers at the high school have referred for the service. Whenever additional space is available, other students will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis. The high schools' expanded time period for enrichment will include workshops that are already used in the college labs to address specific writing, reading, second language, and critical thinking skills. Through these services, up to 24 students per week will be helped for a total of 30 weeks per year.

The goal during these bi-weekly lab times at the high schools is to begin work with students, provide access to the college online resources, and then augment support by allowing those students to submit writing electronically from school or home for feedback. In response to those electronic submissions, additional support will be offered by including comments inviting students to schedule consultations via phone or Zoom (a free and accessible videoconferencing platform) with the lab professors regarding submissions. When needed, the College will fund support in the Writing Lab to add additional staff in order to respond to electronic paper submissions, ensuring up to 40 high school papers per week can be accommodated.

Those high school students who have transportation will schedule appointments at the college Humanities labs in the afternoons and evenings after school to work with the professors who already staff those labs. The labs are not at capacity, and so combined can accommodate up to 40 high school students per week in addition to their current load of college students. The project will improve teaching and learning at the two high schools by sharing college resources to benefit students' ability read, write, and think analytically. Thus, no matter what role those

students later choose within the community, they will be better prepared as citizens.

Emphasis 3—Passport Program: Humanities Themes and Estimated Audience Size

This emphasis in the project creates opportunities for high school students, along with a limited number of their adult guardians and teachers, to attend culturally relevant and place-based humanities events on evenings and weekends alongside college students and faculty. The program requires students to follow up each event with written critical reflections to strengthen their analytic writing and thinking skills while also deepening their understanding of, and appreciation for, the humanities. As with the classes and labs in Emphases 1 and 2 above, this will be done economically, efficiently, and sustainably by expanding an already existing and very successful program in the Rose State Humanities Division to include Del City High the first year and then Midwest City High the next.

The grant will provide funding for 24 high school students and eight adult chaperones to participate in the already established Passport Program at Rose State for a total of 12 events per year. This program was originally created to support global and cultural awareness, one of the three major outcomes designated by Rose State that must be embedded in all of the college's general education courses.⁷ The other two outcomes are career-based communicative competence and quantitative literacy, thus indicating our college's clear understanding that the humanities are one of three major needs in the surrounding community and the college's commitment to help fill that need. The Passport Program has been successfully serving students at the college for five years as it "encourages students to increase their awareness of the arts and culture within their own community, throughout the state, and in neighboring states."⁸ Inclusion of underserved high school students with their teachers and guardians will extend that mission

⁷ www.rose.edu/content/about-us/our-college/assessment/outcome-statements/

⁸ www.rose.edu/content/academics/programs-certifications/global-cultural-learning/passport-program/

for larger community impact.

The professors leading the college Passport Program will work with the high schools to create Passport Clubs at both of them. Once established, these clubs will become operated by at least one dedicated teacher sponsor at the high school and one college student worker. In the first year, the clubs will establish fund-raising practices and events for the future to make them self-sustaining. The college Passport Program has successfully used such fund-raising events in the past, which will be shared as models. Thematically, these events emphasize visits to rich cultural resources including art museums, plays, musicals, poetry readings, non-Western cultural centers, and much more. In this way, Emphasis 3 of the grant works to support the other two emphases.

Content and Activities (Please see Appendices A & B for detailed information.)

The visiting professors' high school class lessons will each be structured around a particular point of scholarship in literature, philosophy, or art and music history. The lessons will all follow the pattern of 1) dissemination to students of brief open-source material already copied at the college's expense, 2) mini-lectures accompanied by visuals created before the session, 3) small group activities to engage the students with the material, and 4) a fifteen-minute written reflection at the end of the session requiring students to formally analyze why and how what they learned matters. These writings will be used for credit in the high school class and will also provide assessment data for the grant project's ongoing evaluation.

The visiting labs will have one writing and one reading specialist at the high school each session, one of whom each time will also be certified and experienced in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Structure of the activities will be based on separate models already used successfully for years in the college Writing Lab, Reading Lab, and ESL Lab. Additional resources for students who cannot travel easily to the college labs for extended support will be

provided by expanding existing online models and resources already in place in the Humanities Division labs. The Writing Lab already uses extensive open-source materials the college faculty have created for its Writing Program, but the web access to free practice sites will be expanded. The ESL Lab also has many open-source resources its faculty has created (with part of a \$14,000 start-up grant from Dollar General in 2014) and will not need additional materials.

Structure and activities for the Passport Program are already created in the existing college program. The professors and high school teachers will work to narrow the existing scope of activity choices and create parameters to ensure all participation is accessible, safe, and convenient for minors and their accompanying adults. The online submission platform will be updated, so it will keep record of high school students' reflective writings. If those students later enroll at the college, credit for that earlier work can be applied to graduation recognition.

Project Personnel (Please see Appendix C for all resumes and letters of support.)

1. Toni Castillo, Rose State College Dean of Humanities, will act as director and have primary responsibility for the successful coordination among all involved, including dissemination of findings and ensuring the project continues after the grant period. She will also participate in the Visiting Professor and Shared Labs components of the work.
2. Kathy Dunn, Associate Superintendent for Mid-Del Schools, will act as the district liaison to work with the project director in addressing institutional needs of the two high schools.
3. Michelle Lawrence Dunn, Instructional Coach for Del City High; and Stephanie Gragg, Instructional Coach for Midwest City High, will work with the project director and associate superintendent to support implementation at their particular schools.
4. Kristin Hahn, Head of the Literature Program at Rose State, will organize, implement and participate in the visiting professor component of the program.

5. Lacey Veazey-Daniel, Writing Program Administrator at Rose State, will organize, implement, and participate in the Shared Labs component of the program.
6. Lori Morrow and Sherri Mussatto, leaders of the Rose State Global and Cultural Studies Program, will organize and implement the Passport Program component of the project.
7. Jeff Conkin, Associate Dean of Humanities at Rose State, will coordinate adjunct faculty to teach classes as needed in place of the full-time faculty members' reassign time for the duration of the grant. He will also head the assessment team.
8. Deana Stevens, Coordinator of Grants at Rose State, will administer the grant.

Institutional Context (Please see Appendix E for additional information.)

The mission of the Rose State College Humanities Division is to create lifelong learners who, through written and oral inquiry and self-reflection, develop cross-disciplinary proficiencies, creative and critical thinking, and understanding of diverse viewpoints.⁹ It is one of five academic divisions at Rose State, an open-access community college established in Midwest City, Oklahoma, in 1970, which now serves 13,000 students per year.¹⁰ The Humanities Division offers many of the college's general education and developmental courses, as well as six independent degrees, featuring eleven emphases. The division employs 25 tenured full-time faculty members, and 60-85 part-time adjunct faculty members based on enrollment needs. It has separate labs for student support in mass communication, reading, writing, ESL, modern languages, digital photography, and a dark room, as well as two formal performing arts venues and eleven private practice rooms.

Follow-up and Dissemination

Almost all resources will be used in the development stage of the project: hence, the

⁹ www.rose.edu/content/academics/academic-divisions/humanities/

¹⁰ www.rose.edu/content/about-us/our-campus/

need for grant funding. This is especially imperative since in the last five years the college's appropriation for operations has declined by almost four million dollars (from \$20,236,950 to \$16,315,619) due to legislative reductions in college budgets statewide. Nevertheless, since Rose State receives funds from the taxpayers of Midwest and Del Cities, the college is committed specifically to serving their needs. All faculty are contractually obligated to dedicate service hours to the community. Once this NEH project is established, faculty will continue the activities without additional funding through those service hours. Moreover, members are dedicated to apply to present findings through our college publications and at conferences in 2022 including, at minimum, the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges, University of Central Oklahoma Transformative Learning, the National Humanities Alliance and the Federation of State Humanities Councils, and the Conference on College Composition & Communication.

Evaluation (Please see Appendix A for more detailed information.)

The project will be assessed with both quantitative and qualitative measures. For this, an evaluation committee—as a subdivision of our College's Assessment Committee representing each academic department—will assess benchmarks each month based on 1) student responses in each visiting professor's class, 2) the number of attendees from target schools at labs, including those participating electronically, and 3) the number of students and guardians who complete Passport Program trips and writings. Participating teachers and professors will also complete questionnaires at the end of each semester. Success at the end of the project's first year will be measured by the number of enrollees in humanities majors from Del City High versus previous years. The next year Midwest City High student numbers will be included. Since students in the project will be distributed among grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, even a small increase will indicate success. Further longitudinal studies will continue to track the success and refine the program.