3. <u>**NARRATIVE**</u>

- **Intellectual Rationale**

Santa Monica College (SMC), a community college serving west Los Angeles County, will strengthen its existing Art History program through a two-pronged approach that will develop a more contemporary strategy for engaging today's students with the humanities while creating greater connection with the local community for traditionally underrepresented students, thereby reducing gaps in student equity. In the past decade, SMC's Art History program has become one of the most popular instructional programs on campus for both art and non-art majors, serving more than 2,000 students each semester. Art History classes serve as transfer electives to the University of California and California State University systems and can fulfill SMC's Global Citizenship Requirement, which degree-seeking students must complete prior to graduation. Classes that explore the history of art in Latin America, Asia, and Africa and its diaspora provide students with an appreciation of art from around the world and strengthen student understanding of global cultures and influences. As these courses have grown in popularity, faculty have identified a need to strengthen the curriculum and update the pedagogy to ensure that all students are connecting with the material. As such, SMC's proposed Humanities Initiative will:

1) explore the diverse stories of west Los Angeles, moving beyond the dominant narrative and incorporating the lesser known stories of color that have helped to shape this region; and

2) generate non-linear knowledge to create narratives that can move through time, using a digital database to increase student engagement with the subject matter and establish a ground upon which students may build a deeper context with the material.

Today's millennial students thrive in non-hierarchical, collaborative, and self-driven environments where they are treated like peers by faculty. In these environments, students

exhibit greater motivation when they have some agency over the direction of the course and choices as to what they wish to explore within the confines of the course outline. Likewise, students in community colleges are increasingly from marginalized and historically under-represented populations within higher education. In response, faculty, programs, and institutions need to upend their traditional narratives that privilege white Western European perspectives and develop a means for incorporating the non-dominant perspective to engage community college students. In doing this, the pedagogy must address relevancy both in the knowledge learned and the specific skill sets offered. Instructional programming must demonstrate the tangible connections of the humanities to the 21st century college student and citizen, so that students can see themselves in the narratives they are studying. At present, much of the existing curricula excludes students of color and others who are underrepresented in higher education.

Art History has an important role in assuring that students of color and other marginalized populations see themselves in the humanities due to its primarily visual nature. Long before words are spoken, our eyes recognize privilege and bias that can lead to misunderstanding and exclusion. The inclusion of diverse narratives as told through art history will engage students while the use of database technology will offer students an opportunity to share their perspective and place emphasis based on their experiences and understanding.

- **Program Content and Activities**

Through this project, Santa Monica College's Art History program will create a digital database of art history narratives that explore the non-dominant voice of west Los Angeles County. The dominant voice targets white culture, but also the Hollywood capitalist narrative of a region that includes Santa Monica, Venice, and Malibu. Both the dominant white voice and the Hollywood perspective present a colorful narrative of west Los Angeles of wealth, privilege,

sun, and surf that highlights the beaches of Santa Monica/Malibu, Pacific Coast Highway, and the infamous Santa Monica Pier ferris wheel. However, these visual stories largely overlook many locations that present different histories and narratives, including the Inkwell, a Santa Monica beach designated for African American citizens in the early decades of the 20th century. Also noteworthy are the region's famous murals, including one in Santa Monica City Hall, entitled *History of Santa Monica and the Bay District*, which depicts stereotypical racial profiles and white power. The stories behind these locations present an alternative perspective of west Los Angeles history. This project will examine these sites and other culturally significant art, architecture, and locations in the community and integrate these narratives into the existing curriculum.   This digital content will align with the following Art History courses:

- AHIS 1: Western Art History I
- AHIS 3: Western Art History III
- AHIS 6: Latin American Art History II
- AHIS 11: Art Appreciation: Introduction to Global Visual Culture

- AHIS 2: Western Art History II
- AHIS 5: Latin American Art History I
- AHIS 17: Art of Asia – Prehistory to 1900
- AHIS 18: Introduction to African Art History

The faculty team will work with community organizations to identify the best local locations to strengthen the narrative in each of these classes. These organizations will include the City of Santa Monica, the Santa Monica History Museum, the Santa Monica Conservancy and the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), which was founded by Judith Baca, a painter and scholar, who is also best known for founding the City of Los Angeles Mural Program in 1974. Ms. Baca's public arts initiatives reflect the lives and concerns of populations that have been historically disenfranchised, including women, the working poor, youth, the elderly, LGBT and immigrant communities. In addition to identifying the best local locations to include in each

course, they will provide content expertise and in depth knowledge of the history of a piece and its role in the development of west Los Angeles.

Key to the success of this project is the inclusion of Art History students who will work directly with faculty and visiting scholars to develop the database, research each location, write summary and description statements, and provide their perspective on each piece. Each year, faculty will identify a minimum of four courses in which they will work with their students to create digital content. Students will receive a grade for their efforts. Faculty will also hire advanced Art History students who are pursuing degrees in Art History to mentor students in the targeted course(s). These student employees will also assist with database design, website development, site preparation, student logistics, and long-term curation so that the database has a professional look and feel that can be disseminated outside the Art History program.

As the digital documentation for a particular class is complete, the faculty will integrate this material into the Omeka database and make reference to this content in future course sections, thereby engaging and benefiting students beyond the grant award. Students may add to and revise these narratives as they continue to explore local art history with their faculty. This geographically specific digital content will also be available for other humanities courses at SMC and elsewhere as it will exist in a public, web-based forum. As such, this project will have an immediate impact on the students who help develop the digital database and a long-term impact on students who enroll in Art History and other courses that integrate this content.

- **Project Personnel**

The proposed project will be administered by Dr. Briana Simmons (CV attached), a tenure track member of the Art History faculty at Santa Monica College. Dr. Simmons has a PhD in Latin American Art History from the University of California, Santa Barbara and has previously

created digital humanities. Dr. Simmons will oversee grant management, fiscal monitoring, evaluation, and report preparation/submission. In this role, she will receive ongoing support from the Grants Office and a Grant Accountant assigned to this project to ensure that grant objectives are achieved on time, within budget, and in compliance with federal policies.

Dr. Simmons will work closely with Professor Walter Meyer (CV attached), who has been the sole full-time faculty member in the Art History program until recently when the college hired two new full-time faculty members, including Dr. Simmons. Professor Meyer has a Maser's degree in Art History from the University of Southern California, with an emphasis in 20th Century America and Europe, specializing in East Europe and Russia. He has served as faculty lead for the Art History program since 2002. Given his tenure at SMC, Professor Meyer is well known across campus and respected by his peers. In addition, he is well connected to the local and regional art community. Given these relationships and his history with the college, Professor Meyer will help coordinate the college's relationships with its external partners, monitor student payroll, and collaborate with other humanities departments on campus to expand the reach of this project and the digital humanities database.

Dr. Simmons and Professor Meyer will consult with visiting scholars from other organizations in the community as they develop a digital database for each strand of the project (African art history, Latinx art history, and Asian art history). SMC's partners, including Judith Baca and SPARC, Santa Monica Conservancy, Santa Monica History Museum, and Santa Monica's Cultural Affairs Office, will identify staff and/or board members to provide technical assistance. These organizations will help identify artwork, architecture and locations of cultural significant and share their historical context and stories. The faculty team will meet with each of these organizations in Spring 2019 to identify locations and confirm the work plan.

- **Institutional Context**

Founded in 1929, Santa Monica College is a primary provider of academic transfer and career technical education in the greater Los Angeles area, providing open and affordable access to more than 30,000 students each year. While SMC has a rich history of serving a large and diverse student population, ensuring equity among a student population that is increasingly diverse in both life experiences and academic readiness and preparing them for the global challenges that they will face presents a unique opportunity to go beyond the traditional learning environment and explore innovative solutions to complex problems. Key to SMC's success is its commitment to diversity and a long and sustained commitment to global citizenship as demonstrated through the programs and services that the college offers, including an interdisciplinary Global Studies program and a Global Citizenship requirements that requires students to complete a global citizenship-approved course prior to graduation. These courses strengthen awareness of the diversity of cultures within the United States and/or develop an appreciation for the interconnectedness of cultural, ecological, economic, political, social, and technological systems of the contemporary world. SMC's Art History courses are very popular among students who seek to fulfill this requirement. However, there are more than 80 other courses that also satisfy the Global Citizenship requirements, including non-humanities courses.

One of the greatest challenges to teaching humanities at the community college level, including at SMC, is that traditional humanities courses are dispersed across campus and taught by departments that often never speak to each other. As such, Latin American Art History, which is taught by the Art Department, is not offered in collaboration with Latin American Civilization taught by the Modern Languages and Cultures Department or the History of Latin America taught by the History Department. While this siloed structure is historically common in

academe, it limits the opportunities for engaging millennial students in interdisciplinary projects that apply what they learn in class to the real world. It also leaves individual instructional programs often working in isolation to address pressing student concerns, such as student equity, and replicating effort as they work to incorporate best practices for improving student success. The proposed digital humanities project will develop the foundation upon which SMC can bring together the humanities and create a database that can be used by multiple academic disciplines.

This project builds upon a Chair of Excellence grant awarded to Professor Meyer in Fall 2017 by the Santa Monica College Foundation. The goal of this project was to assess the efficacy of developing a digital database of culturally significant art, architecture, and locations on campus. In Spring 2018, Professor Meyer worked with his students to use Omeka, a web publishing platform for sharing digital collections and creating media-rich online exhibits, to develop a test database that included several pieces of artwork on campus. The initial success of this project is the impetus for this NEH Humanities Initiative project. Using NEH funds, SMC will expand this project, aligning the development of the digital catalogue with existing coursework and expanding the project to include artwork both on and off campus. This first phase will directly impact the Art History program, but as the project progresses, the faculty team will share the database with other disciplines and explore opportunities for collaboration.

- **Follow-up and Dissemination**

The overall goal of this project is to strengthen the teaching of humanities at Santa Monica College, and as such this project will have a direct impact on students, faculty, and the instructional programs both in the short-term and long-term. Specifically, this project will:

1) At the program level, enhance the existing curriculum and create resources that engage students of all socio-economic backgrounds with the content with the goal to reduce the

equity gap among student groups traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, particularly African American students who are successfully completing these courses at a significantly lower rate than the class average (44.9% to 64%).   Other outcomes include greater student satisfaction and perceived relevance of the course to real world concerns;

2) At the faculty level, expand the use of database technology as a pedagogy among humanities faculty by providing professional development to the Art History faculty leadership team who will then conduct workshops and offer mentorship for their peers in other disciplines.

At the student level, strengthen student acquisition of the Art History program's student learning outcomes, which include 1) proficiency in the written and verbal critical analysis of diverse visual cultures and artworks; 2) applied knowledge of the basics of aesthetic formal analysis and the vocabulary necessary to conduct a coherent critical investigation of artworks in both written and verbal form; 3) ability to situate those artworks within a social context and an historical chronology; and 4) understanding of the function of aesthetic objects, the materials and techniques of artistic production, systems of patronage, the conventions of representation, and the relationship between art, politics, race, gender, sexuality, and power.

This project will also positively impact students in several other ways. First, students who work with faculty to build the database will apply the skills they are learning in class to build the digital database. They will acquire real-world hands-on experience that will strengthen their learning while providing invaluable work-based learning experiences. Their efforts will in turn have a long-term positive impact on students who enroll in Art History classes in the future through content and activities that expand course relevance for underrepresented students groups and increase student engagement with the course material. Increased student engagement with course content will improve student success outcomes and course/program completion rates.

Dr. Simmons and Professor Meyer will assess the impact of this project at the student, faculty, and program level, including any impact that the project has on other academic disciplines that add to and/or utilize the digital database. Dr. Simmons will produce an annual report for each year of the project based on these assessment results that will be shared with Professor Meyer, community partners, and other humanities faculty at SMC. Dr. Simmons will also share program results with the National Endowment for the Humanities and present findings at other venues, such as the Art Historians of Southern California, the Community College Professors of Art and Art History, The College Art Association, The Online Teaching Conference, & The Digital Humanities Project. Using video, blogs, and other social media tools, participating students and faculty will document their personal experiences and disseminate information about the digital humanities projects and the Omeka website so that they can be incorporated into other classes. Professor Meyer will be responsible for the long-term upkeep of the Omeka site, working with student employees each year, to ensure site functionality both during the grant award and beyond the end of the period of performance.

- **Evaluation**

Dr. Simmons will oversee the development and implementation of the project's evaluation plan, working in conjunction with SMC's Office of Institutional Resources. The evaluation plan will include both a formative and summative evaluation. The formative evaluation will assess the degree to which SMC implements the project as outlined. This component will monitor the number of students and faculty engaged in content development and the number of courses that integrate database technology and content with the expectation that a minimum of eight courses will benefit. It will also assess the degree to which faculty develop the skills and resources to develop digital content, using a faculty self-assessment tool to identify and address ongoing

professional development needs. In years one and two, Dr. Simmons and Professor Meyer will

attend professional development activities to expand their own skills. In year three, they will

conduct workshops for other faculty during fall and spring professional development days and/or

department flex days. The formative evaluation will monitor the number of faculty who attend

and who indicate interest in incorporating digital content.

The summative evaluation will assess 1) the initial impact of project activities, focusing on

student retention and completion rates, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other factors to

assess student equity; and 2) the initial impact of project activities on student perception of

course relevancy and satisfaction disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other factors to assess

student equity. In spring 2019, Dr. Simmons will work with the Institutional Research office to

establish baseline data for each outcome. Dr. Simmons will also develop a student survey that

addresses student perception of course relevancy and satisfaction. She will distribute this survey

at the end of spring semester, so that it may serve as the baseline/comparison point for post-

project assessment. Faculty will also assess student learning outcomes, comparing student

performance prior to the use of digital humanities with their performance after the integration of

digital content. If initial assessment results indicate limited impact, faculty will consult with

students, visiting scholars, and others to identify and address possible causes.

Dr. Simmons and Professor Meyer will continue to evaluate the impact of the digital content

on student and course success, disaggregated by ethnicity, beyond the grant award period. The

expectation is that this project will demonstrate success in promoting student engagement and

reducing the student equity gap in the targeted courses. If the evaluation supports this

hypothesis, the faculty team will work with other humanities programs on campus to integrate

digital content as a means for engaging students and supporting student success.