



ACS Final Report Form
Grant Cycle IX June 2021 – June 2022

Due September 12, 2022 by 5 pm EST via email (PDF/Word) to grants@acsouth.edu

- Complete this form in no more than five pages.
- Attach your final financial report in a separate document and submit it along with your report to grants@acsouth.edu.
- Note that portions or the entirety of your final report may be reprinted on the ACS grants webpage.

Name of project lead: Woody Register
Campus: The University of the South
Project title: Colleges Participating with Communities (formerly, Participatory History and Archiving): An Initiative to Promote and Support Undergraduate Instruction and Project Outcomes in Community-Based Participatory Researching and Archiving (CBPRA)

Today's date: September 12, 2022

I. Project summary

- A. Purpose: The purpose of this grant for the (renamed) Colleges Participating with Communities Project (CPC) is to support diversity and inclusion initiatives on the respective campuses of the collaborating ACS member institutions: The University of the South, Rollins College, Centre College, Washington & Lee University, and the University of Richmond.
- B. Goals: To build or augment existing public history projects and/or community archives that reflect and preserve the histories of the related communities.
- 1) To develop and implement an inter-campus network of collaborative courses or course modules that lead students in the study and implementation of the theories and techniques of CBPRA;
 - 2) To produce student-led public history exhibits or virtual archives in partnership with representatives of local communities of color with historic ties to the respective campuses;
 - 3) To hold a "summit" of college and community partners in the late spring of 2022 to showcase and critically evaluate these projects; and
 - 4) To launch a web-based portal that organizes and makes accessible the diverse public history projects undertaken and serves as a resource "toolbox" that ACS institutions and other colleges may use to undertake kindred projects.
- C. Major Activities:

- 1) 9/15/21 we hosted a webinar featuring Dr. Michelle Caswell, Associate Professor of Archival Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her talk was titled "Urgent Archives: Memory and Justice," based on the theory that historical archives tend to be oppressive, and advocating for alternative methods and practices that members of minority communities can use to create independent archives that build ties within communities and disrupt the cycles of oppression.
- 2) 9/25/21 we hosted an all-day virtual workshop with three additional panelists to explore other aspects of archival practices, then Michelle Caswell joined for the wrap-up session. (Biographies attached.)
 - a. Chaitra Powell, African American Collections and Outreach Archivist for the Southern Historical Collection at UNC Libraries, Chapel Hill. (Discussed features, outcomes, and opportunities for community driven projects and approaches.)
 - b. NY Nathiri, Executive Director of The Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc. (P.E.C.) (Reflected on the perspective of her Eatonville work from the view of communities.)
 - c. Michelle Caswell discussed her talk the prior week.
 - d. Kwesi Daniels, Department Head and Assistant Professor of Architecture, Tuskegee University (Talked about teaching with community partnerships in historical preservation, his field of expertise.)
- 3) Course Development Workshops (two hours each)
 - a. 10/16/21: Establish common course goals; develop a bibliography for courses; discuss effective practices for inclusion in course development and execution and effective practices for enriching student communication and collaboration.
 - b. 10/23/21: Discuss takeaways from Workshop #1; plan platforms for collaboration among students, course leaders, and community partners; develop assessment strategies and instruments.
 - c. 10/30/21: Discuss takeaways from Workshop #2; develop values, goals, and terms of partnerships with community partners; develop assessment strategies and instruments for assessment of faculty, students, and community partners for end of term; discuss website and course collaboration models.
- 4) Capstone Teach-In at Fisk University April 7-9, 2022
 - a. Thursday dinner/keynote presentation by Dr. Learotha Williams, a scholar of African American, Civil War and Reconstruction, and Public History at Tennessee State University. Dr. Williams spoke about his work with African American Heritage societies under the auspices of the Middle Tennessee African American Heritage Collective, including the history of North Nashville, Antebellum Nashville as a center of the slave trade and site of liberation, and Davidson County sites of racial violence. He also provided a brief exploration of the public and private entities that determine which spaces and individuals are historically significant and how they are celebrated.
 - b. Friday session: Faculty/archivist/community representative presentations. Each participating college presented with a note-taker at the white board and a facilitated conversation afterward. Emphasis was on encouraging a diversity

of voices and perspectives, especially hearing from community representatives and students. Each presenter:

- i. Introduced their community partners and the basics of their courses
 - ii. Described the purpose of their project with goals and reflections
 - iii. Discussed the outcomes (what was learned from the course, from working with students, and from working with community partners)
 - iv. Discussed their takeaways from their projects.
- c. Saturday session: Student presentations included:
- i. Stakeholder perspectives
 - ii. What was learned from partnering with community members
- d. Saturday wrap-up: review reflection, closing

II. Attainment of goals

The CPC initiative had mixed but encouraging outcomes in meeting the larger goals of building an intercampus network and developing or augmenting projects at participating institutions. The mechanism for measuring outcomes was a survey distributed to participating faculty and the CPC external consultants at the end of the program.

In regard to Goal 1 (developing inter-campus network of courses), the participants were able to incorporate and make effective pedagogical uses of CBPRA principles, and all cited the positive value of centering the initiative on this methodology. Especially welcome was Dr. Michelle Caswell's opening keynote, the video recording of which became a key element in the syllabi of participants. However, the difficulties posed by COVID restrictions (for instance, reliance on Zoom communications) and by the diversity of college calendars hindered the development of the desired network and coordination of courses. To be frank, for a project to get the kind of buy-in necessary for a robust network, it needs to start with an in-person gathering. Zoom was no adequate substitute. In addition, we were overly ambitious in trying to create an alliance of six institutions spread out over four states, although we have to commend all of the participants for their good will and generosity in trying to make the network function as a network.

In regard to Goal 2 (producing student-led public history exhibits or archival projects), the diverse campuses proved unusually resourceful and creative in seeking to meet this goal in a way that met the circumstances of their local situations. We found that these projects were most successful in achieving the outcomes where colleges and/or faculty already had a robust relationship or structural foundation of relationships between the college and local communities. For instance, Richmond, Centre, and Rollins had a deep well of prior experience working with strong local groups or organizations, where Sewanee and Washington and Lee were more or less building from scratch. Washington and Lee reported mixed outcomes, and Sewanee's relationship with the Asia School Restoration Project has continued to flourish, although the hoped-for archive is still in the building stage.

In regard to Goal 3 (holding a summit), structural challenges were too tall to overcome, and yet the "teach-in" model showed impressive promise, such that we at Sewanee are planning to use it in two conferences we are having in spring 2023. Finding a date that worked for all participants proved impossible. For those who were able to come to the summit at Fisk on April 7-9, the experience was unusually rewarding. "I think that the

people who attended in person had a richer experience,” remarked one of our consultants. “I valued the personal connections and learning about the work that is happening.” But for those who were unable to be there (Rollins’s flight from Orlando was canceled, for instance), the summit was of negative value. It proved difficult to persuade students to participate even when schedules allowed, and where calendars were uncooperative (at Washington and Lee, where the transition to the May term interfered, and Richmond, where the term was ending), web-based workarounds were insufficient in making up for the difference. Two insights arose from this experience: We were trying to do too much with too many colleges, and in-person participation was essential. That said, faculty, attending community partners, and consultants all saw value in bringing our students together with their community partners. The teach-in model itself was not the issue.

In regard to Goal 4 (web-based portal), we have launched a website (<https://www.partneringwithcommunities.org/home>) that describes the overall program and profiles the projects undertaken at the respective colleges. The website works adequately in describing what the network did and tried to accomplish. However, as a resource for future class-based projects like the ones undertaken this past year, the site is under-developed at this time. Enhancing it as an instructive resource will be a focus for the Roberson Project the second half of fall term 2022.

III. Impact of project

The most important and meaningful impact of the project had less to do with the network of schools than it did with the work at individual colleges and in their communities. The network such as we had one suggested, more than it realized, its potential value. That said, the ways in which the CPC program trained attention on community-based archiving and contributed to some degree to the critical perspective of all the participating classes were of value to all the constituencies. In regard to students, a Centre colleague said, “It added a meaningful social justice component to what can come off as very abstract subject matter.” From Rollins: “But this was different and felt different because it’s one thing to visit an archive that looks completed and finished, and it’s another thing to see first-hand why people don’t have what they need ... my students gained an understanding for how anthropologists collaborate with others and work in communities from a perspective of humility and ethics to amplify others’ stories.” In regard to the value to faculty, a Richmond colleague commented, “It was really valuable to hear from colleagues at other schools as well as the invited speakers.” They noted that these discussions inspired them and a student to apply “to put up a historical plaque commemorating the work of the first Black bus drivers in Richmond.” At Centre, “The students gained all kinds of perspective in intercultural competency from having to talk to people about segregation and urban renewal ... It added a meaningful social justice component to what can come off as very abstract subject matter.”

IV. Consortial (ACS-wide) value of the project

There are several concrete ways in which the CPC project was of value to the ACS. First, it created a personal connection between faculty at diverse institutions, and this connection has the potential, we believe, to serve as a foundation for more effectively developing the model of inter-campus collaboration and community-college partnerships

that was envisioned in the original proposal. Second, we learned that what we hypothesized in our proposal was borne out by our common investigations: that different as our colleges are, we all have histories of inequitable or unjust relationships with neighboring communities of color, and that we can use our classes to address and try to repair the legacies of these histories. As a Rollins colleague said, “I gained a network of people who are committed to telling suppressed stories, and it’s even easier to see how white supremacy has created similar issues in all of our communities [that are] neighboring colleges and universities.” Finally, as much as we learned from the experience of the last year, we in Sewanee’s Roberson Project are persuaded that, however rocky the first year of attempting this program, the first try should not be our last try. We can build on the experience and wisdom gained and the personal relationships established over the past year to foster “an inclusive community of practice” on and between our respective campuses.

V. Lessons Learned

The most rewarding discovery was the common good will among all the participants, whether students, faculty, or consultants. All of us were motivated to learn, as a Rollins colleague put it, “what community partnership looks like if there is to be true equity and accountability.” We also were joined by a common desire to move beyond the text, to give ourselves and our students “boots on the ground” experience in putting the ideas from the classroom into real-world use in response to long-standing conflicts. Participating in the CPC program, a Centre colleague said, “added a meaningful social justice component to what can come off as very abstract subject matter ... The students gained all kinds of perspective in intercultural competency from having to talk to people about segregation and urban renewal.” With that said, all of us involved learned that there were just too many “moving parts,” especially in the context of the pandemic. For one, we should not have needed to learn it, but we did: the virtual cannot substitute adequately for the in-person on a project that is all about building cooperative and collaborative relationships. For another, we should not have taken on so many partners, well-meaning as we were in this regard. We put the cart before the horse and should have had a smaller and more focused cohort in the first year, tested the inter-campus model, and then reached out for other partners with that experience under our belts.

VI. Next Steps

If we at Sewanee and all the other participants learned anything, it is that planning for this kind of ambitious work needs to begin much earlier – not in the summer before the academic year of implementation, but nine or more months before it. Our Roberson Project goals for the second half of this fall semester 2022, are two-fold. First, we will build up the website as a resource for ACS and other colleges’ faculty who may want to undertake similar community work. We will focus on three of the most instructive campus projects from last year. Second, we will use the website early in the winter/spring term of 2023 to launch a follow-up year of collaboration with ACS schools and others we know from other projects we have underway. This time, though, we will think smaller and concentrated, to make the experience more rewarding for all involved and to construct a more robust and useful web resource. “This program was really worth doing,” observed a Rollins colleague, “and even though my own site was difficult, I would do it again.” We plan to make that future collaboration possible.