

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE HUMANITIES**

SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE



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Humanities Initiatives at Institutions with High Hispanic Enrollment  
Institution: California State University, Los Angeles



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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## **National Endowment for the Humanities**

### **Division of Education Programs**

#### **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

This sample of the narrative portion from a grant is provided as an example of a funded proposal. It will give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. It is not intended to serve as a model. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with staff members in the NEH Division of Education Programs well before a grant deadline. This sample proposal does not include a budget, letters of commitment, or resumes.

**Project Title:** *Religion, Identity, and Civil Society in the Era of Globalization*

**Institution:** California State University, Los Angeles

**Project Director:** Scott Wells

**Grant Program:** Humanities Initiatives for Faculty at Institutions with High Hispanic Enrollment

## II. Narrative

### A. Intellectual Rationale

"The world is now witnessing the largest migratory flow in human history," a contemporary observer recently noted. "Immigration today is generating epochal transformations in both immigrant-sending and immigrant-receiving countries." Especially affected are people and groups in the Americas, this critic continues: "Latin America finds itself in the middle of the largest wave of emigration in history. Virtually every one of the traditional regions of Latin America is 'on the move.'"<sup>1</sup> Cities in the U.S. and across the Americas confirm this diagnosis, echoing with the impact of human flow. The massive recent immigration rights protests have heightened public attention to the waves of immigration, diaspora, state reformation, refugee movement, and economic restructuring that set people in motion, bring groups into conversation and conflict, reconfigure cultural and social contexts, and remap individual and collective identities.

Perched just to the north of the U.S.-Mexico border, leaning eagerly over the edge of the Pacific Rim, and coaxing North Americans west with promises of gold, oranges, and destiny, Los Angeles offers its inhabitants a privileged view of the world in flux. Migrations of people, ideas, and cultural forms resound in L.A. as waves of the displaced wash across and blur national borders, neighborhood boundaries, ethnic lines, generational canyons, and the stark divisions of social class. From this vantage point, scholars of migration can fill in some of the blind spots restricting the field. Rather than following a single social group or feeding narratives of national integration or assimilation, observers in the cosmopolitan meeting-ground of Los Angeles, at the crossroads of migration throughout the Americas and the world, can wonder at the contours and effects of those migrations.

Many already do. At Cal State L.A. faculty across the humanities include migration in their work to an unusual degree, often with an innovative approach. That is, migration is not necessarily their direct focus, but they contextualize the subject(s) they study as the products of migratory exchange. It seems that something about the experience of living in Los Angeles and teaching at CSULA is causing scholars who work here to consider migration, and in wonderfully original ways. This became clear in two sites over the winter and spring of 2006: during conversations about programmatic development, and in the seminars of the closing year of a Rockefeller-

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<sup>1</sup> Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, "Some Thoughts on Migration Studies and the Latin American Exodo," *LASA Forum* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 13.

funded seminar. As this clarity emerged, opportunity and necessity converged. NEH support for “Cultures of Engagement in an Era of Displacement” would allow us to take this opportunity to open space for scholarly exchange, honor the intellectual imperative to advance innovative research, and bring CSULA and area faculty together to create timely, relevant coursework for undergraduate students. The colloquium’s lead-up seminars and follow-up curricular development meetings would address the acute needs of this moment of budgetary shortfall, when shared interests can appear to be competing subjects vying for student enrollment. Its four days of lectures, papers, and workshops would spark work in the field of migration studies in scholarship and in the classroom.

Scholarship on migration would be well served by this attention, for many in the field still think of their purview as fairly straightforward travelers. Their subjects are people who come from one place and end up somewhere else, where they meet other people who are already there. Even the outstanding scholars who have contributed enormously to understanding human movement in world history such as Dirk Hoerder or Patrick Manning, work within this paradigm. The study of migration must draw on their foundational research and now also transcend the “native vs. newcomer” model. For today migrants in most parts of the world (and certainly our corner) represent only the most recent of many generations of travelers. Histories of migration and displacement stand at the heart of many “native” identities. Migration brings these currents together, joining older to more recent migratory flows. Flows of different scales cast their subjects together, so that migrants who have crossed long distances or substantial barriers meet those who have made relatively modest journeys. Global currents stir the air within a single country, region, city, and neighborhood, whirling the eddies of cultural formation and production, folk and mass. Such reconfigurations alter opportunities for and modes of identification, coalition-formation, and community engagement, making them key to group identity and politics.

It is this that scholarship on migration must today engage: the deeply layered, even scarred experiences of migration informing multi-ethnic interactions in cosmopolitan cities across the United States, throughout the Americas, into Asia, and indeed, worldwide. Los Angeles is an excellent site from which to do so, for its complex terrain highlights the sorts of dynamics the field must now attend. That is, L.A. is a good place from which to look out at the world within; its insights are “good for thinking” about migratory phenomena broadly as they crystallize in

the brilliant formations of political engagement and variegated identity formation that define the region we traverse in micro, quotidian commute.

From this base and contextualized in a broader discussion of migration across the Americas and beyond, this project will offer an ample theoretical and comparative framework for the discussion of global migratory phenomena. Its ramifications will manifest in the classroom across the humanities curriculum. Its scholarly contributions will enhance not only the fields of migration studies and immigration history, but Ethnic and Area Studies disciplines including Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies, Latin American Studies, American Studies, Cultural Studies, Anthropology and most of the other fields of the participating scholars.

## **B. Content & Design**

This project is divided into three stages.

### **Stage I: Preparation and Seminar Series (January-May)**

Over the winter quarter of 2007 (January-March), the P.I. will reconfirm participants' commitments, identify and invite community college faculty, arrange the midday site visits, and finalize the lists of reading material suggested by the keynote speakers and panel presenters (see Appendix A, Bibliography). He or she will assemble the readings into a course packet and make it available at the campus bookstore. In the spring quarter (March-May), all participants except the noted scholars will meet for a trio of seminars to discuss the chosen materials. The seminars will introduce the participants to each other, focus them on the topic, and prepare them for the colloquium.

### **Stage II: Colloquium (June)**

Over a four-day colloquium, "Cultures of Engagement in an Era of Displacement" in June, 2007, scholars from CSULA, the community colleges that send CSULA the most transfer students, a small group of other local HSI faculty, and three noted scholars will gather. The colloquium will feature keynote addresses by the invited scholars, panels of scholarly work by participating faculty (see Appendix B: Participants), visits to sites that illustrate particular migratory phenomena in context (see Appendix C: Midday Site Visit Details), and curriculum workshops on interdisciplinary teaching and learning about culture and migration (see Appendix D: Colloquium Schedule).

The colloquium's first three days emphasize scholarship and are guided thematically, beginning with a relatively tight focus and then opening the field of vision a little wider each subsequent day. The first day features a

consideration of interactions within the heterogeneous category of U.S. Latinidad; the second broadens out to consider Latino/non-Latino encounters, and the third looks at the travels of L.A.-fed cultural streams beyond city borders. Participants may examine the political and cultural negotiations taking place when people encounter other people, when people meet traveling cultural forms, or at the more abstract crossings of forms or ideas.

Relations among Latinos, the subject of day one, often bring older migratory flows to meet those of more recent vintage. Sometimes travelers from very far away meet those who came from relative proximity, or who did not move at all, as in 1848. Such interactions cause the meanings of "Hispanic" or "Latino" to shift, reworking the terms in which race is lived wherever large Latino populations exist, and redefining notions of citizenship widely.

Launching the consideration of this topic will be a keynote address by Dr. Rafael Pérez-Torres, professor of English at UCLA, who specializes in contemporary U.S. culture's intersections with social configurations of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Pérez-Torres's most recent book, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (2006), focuses on the often unrecognized role race plays in expressions of Chicano culture; in doing so, it reveals how concepts of race, historical memory, the body, and community have both constrained and opened possibilities for forging new and potentially liberating multiracial Latino identities.

In the panel following Dr. Pérez-Torres's keynote, participant faculty will present aspects of their research (Appendix D: Colloquium Schedule, lists presentation titles). Dr. Ester Hernandez will present a paper on her work on the negotiation of Latinidades between Mexican Americans and Central Americans (e.g., Guatemalans and Salvadorans) in southern California. Dr. Ricardo Ortiz will discuss interactions among L.A.'s Cuban-American, Haitian-American, Guatemalan-American, and Mexican-American writers, cultures, and communities. Dr. Dionne Espinoza will discuss youth culture among second and third generation Chicana/o/Latina/o schoolchildren, exploring the ways members of Latina girl organizations at local high schools negotiate youth culture and gender in peer circles. Finally, Dr. John Ramirez will discuss the role of Chicano media advocacy in recent transformations in Latino collective identifications.

Day two of the colloquium will take the complex landscape within the category "Latino," which day one will have spotlighted for all, and place it in relation to individuals and groups not identified as Latino. Work presented on this day will consider the ways in which interethnic urban relations refract multiple migrations. When New Orleans

residents displaced by the hurricane Katrina met their new neighbors and hosts in L.A., for example, starkly different histories, scales, and temporalities of displacement and migration hove into view. The colloquium will place such interactions within the broader global currents in which they are enmeshed, avoiding static conceptualizations of "Black-Latino relations" and revealing collaboration and potential rallying points for coalition-formation.

This section will open with a lecture by Dr. David Gutierrez, professor of history at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Gutierrez's work has focused on Mexican Americans and Latinos, interested broadly in the implications of the tremendous changes the past quarter century's mass migrations and economic integration have wrought. His current research concerns the effects of the post-1970s "demographic revolution" in notions of citizenship, nationalism, and assimilation, changes that have affected many migrant and immigrant groups as well as racially-disfranchised non-migrant populations.

Presentations following Gutierrez's keynote will include a paper on syncretism in contemporary Chicanismo by professor Victor Viesca, whose research explores interethnic identification among Chicana/o youth in contact with other racialized and immigrant youth, signally, Central American, Filipino American and African American young people. Dr. Alejandra Marchevsky will discuss welfare rights organizing in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly alliances between Chicana and Mexican immigrant welfare activists in the East Los Angeles Welfare Rights Organization and ANC Mothers Anonymous, a body organized by African American welfare activists in South Central. Dr. Kimberly King will reflect on the friendships, conflicts, and coalitions formed among Latino and African-American students at Jefferson High, their families, and neighboring inhabitants of the surrounding South Central neighborhood. Dr. Stephen Mulherin will present his research on the interactions of new and old immigrant groups in urban Pasadena engaged in community engagement for public health and education. Dr. SanSan Kwan, who uses choreography as a method and metaphor for investigating urban movement and global flows, will reflect on the lived experience of Chinese-American public spaces in the U.S.'s premier Latino metropolis. Dr. Maria Elena Martinez will discuss the fluctuating uses and meanings of the categories of "race," "caste," and "nation" in New Spain, the Spanish application of these terms to different colonial populations, and their long-term implications for Mexican racial and national ideology. Dr. Michael Willard will speak on the musical collaborations of Latino and black jazz musicians in L.A. in the 1940s and '50s.

On the third day, the colloquium will widen its lens to a global view, interested in phenomena far from L.A.'s city centers. Participants will wonder at the effect in foreign cities, of the repercussions of global currents shaped by their passage through L.A. Communities who send large numbers of their members to L.A. forge profound links to this place; how are they affected by those links, culturally, politically, and economically? What happens when policies developed in L.A. are implemented elsewhere, thanks to the work of L.A.-based consultants, for example? How do extroverted export policies or phenomena then return, of course, to shape the City of Angels?

Dr. Yen Le Espiritu will guide the assembly on this third day. A professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego, Dr. Espiritu takes a transnational approach to Asian American Studies, Immigration and Refugee Studies, and Critical Gender Studies. Her interests include phenomena connected to Asian American culture and identity outside the U.S. as well as within it, such as the global dimensions of refugee identity, the social and political impact of remittances sent to Central America and Southeast Asia, and the concept she terms "Asian American panethnicity." Dr. Espiritu has also engaged extensively in collaborative research, showing skills that will advance the colloquium's goal of furthering collaboration across institutional divides.

Complementing Dr. Espiritu's keynote address, the research panel will begin with sculptor Richard Wearn, who will offer reflections on his participation in a group of artists engaging Mexico's post-NAFTA work environment. Wearn and other L.A.-based and L.A.-influenced artists in this Mexico-based collaboration are working to develop new modes of aesthetic sociability. Dr. Beth Baker-Cristales will present her research on Salvadoran hometown associations, female-run community organizations that proliferated in the L.A. Salvadoran immigrant community, echoing back in El Salvador to spark change in their parent organizations' structure and function. Dr. Melina Abdullah will present her work on multiethnic hip hop activism among young women of color, a far-reaching phenomenon with critical aspects shaped in L.A. Dr. Mark Wild will compare histories of Latino community mobilization in multiethnic L.A., Houston, and Kansas City. Dr. Micol Seigel will present on her work on the travels of "broken windows" policing, conveyed to Latin American police departments recently via the chief of the LAPD.

Each day colloquium members will visit an off-campus venue that illustrates a particular set of migratory phenomena (see Appendix C, Midday Site Visit Details). The *barrios* of East Los Angeles adjacent to CSULA provide opportunities to consider the volatile tectonics of gentrification as middle-class immigrant Latinos displace



more established working-class Latinos. In Monterrey Park, another of the neighborhoods CSULA abuts, Chinese immigrants arriving in the past twenty-five years have taken the lead in governance and business presence. The neighborhood now supports important transnational commercial linkages between diasporic and local Chinese populations. MacArthur Park, or "Little Central America," roils with the influx of poor Latino immigrants, making it also the home of some of the most important mutual aid associations and immigrants rights groups.

Day four of the colloquium has a different focus: it is designed to ensure that the scholarly discussions of the first three days and the preceding quarter will come to fruition in the classroom. It begins with a workshop on curriculum development moderated by Ricardo Ortiz, the Joseph A. Bailey II, M.D. Endowed Chair and director of the American Communities Program. Dr. Ortiz will help participants concretize the discussions they will have held in the curriculum workshops during days one-three, building on the research presented in those days. Interested faculty will cluster together to design new or enhance existing courses teachable by at least three different CSULA instructors from different departments, to be cross-listed in all those departments. Clusters will set schedules for meeting over the following quarter, designating a point person to convene them at least twice.

The new course proposals and enhancements to existing courses, brainstormed together and arising from the conversations of the previous week and quarter, will generate a web of interlocking, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental collaborations at the level of teaching and learning, grounded in the academy's most important resource, faculty scholarship. Such cooperation will disrupt the "silo" college and departmental structure, providing students with opportunities to experience the humanities as a multifaceted, provocative, collaborative enterprise.

The second workshop on day four is designed to further institutionalize the structures that make curricular collaboration possible. Co-facilitating alongside Dr. Ortiz will be the chair of the History department, Dr. Rennie Schoepflin. The two campus leaders will ask participants to think creatively about ways to ensure the flow of communication across institutional boundaries. One possibility is the creation of a multi-college Institutional Affairs Committee, a body that is usually housed within a single department. This unusual idea will surely provoke other equally imaginative suggestions. A small group of CSULA participants will elect to take on this work, designating a point person to organize them over the following months.

The midday activity extends day four's local, student focus. Participants will stay "home," gathering at CSULA's Cross-Cultural Centers to appreciate the engagement of student groups in issues of migration and culture.

Afternoon sessions on day four will focus on further grantwriting. Participants will discuss ways "Cultures of Engagement in an Era of Displacement" could expand into the backbone of a larger grant proposal. One session will discuss the writing of grant proposals in Women's Studies or that focus on gender and sexuality; it will be led by the Director of the Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities, Dr. Dionne Espinoza. The other will focus on extending the work begun in this colloquium, perhaps by soliciting NEH support for an expanded, multi-institutional proposal building on the colloquium and its lead-up seminars. Both groups will make commitments to meet over the following months, headed up by a point person they will designate.

All grantwriting teams that emerge from this session will consider, as long-term goal, the creation of a research center to institutionalize the kinds of study supported here. For some time now faculty at CSULA have envisaged the creation of an Institute for the Study of Culture, Migration, and the State to guide humanities teaching, scholarship, and program development on the topics of migration and its cultural, political and community engagements. This colloquium would add momentum to that already generated by the Rockefeller Residential Humanities Program, moving CSULA another step closer to realizing this long-term goal.

### **Stage III: Implementing Curricula and Institutionalizing Collaboration (July-December)**

For the rest of the summer and over the fall term, faculty clusters will meet to realize their commitments to curricular development, the institutionalization of collaborative work, and grantwriting. Point people convening each group will coordinate with the P.I. for the overall grant, who will help them stay on schedule and in synch.

### **C. Institutional context**

A number of institutional features make CSULA an appropriate site for the project proposed here. First are the school's student demographics, its neighborhood, and the greater Los Angeles context. Located in some of L.A.'s most densely Chicano and Asian-American neighborhoods, CSULA today hosts a student body of over 20,000, of whom 62% are female, 51% Chicano/Latino, 25% Asian/Pacific Islander, 15% white, 9% African-American, and less than 1% American Indian. The school is first in the nation in bachelor's degrees in education to all minority students, bachelor's degrees in education for Hispanic students, and master's degrees in ethnic/cultural

studies for Hispanic students. It boasts the nation's first Chicano Studies Department, established in 1968, and is the top ranking institution in California awarding bachelor's degrees in all disciplines combined to Hispanic students.

Although the faculty involved in this project are well aware of these student characteristics and of the importance of migration in Los Angeles, none of us could have predicted just how timely our topic has become. Recent events in our city of Los Angeles and nationwide have catapulted this issue to national attention, making our campus an even more appropriate spearhead for such a project.

In addition to demographics and urban location, CSULA boasts several remarkable programs on which the proposed project would build, and which it would strengthen in return. These include in particular the entities comprising the Integrated Humanities Center: the Rockefeller Humanities Fellowship Residency Program, the Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities, and the American Communities Program (see Appendix E, CSULA Colleges, Departments, and Programs). The close collaboration among these programs produced the June 2006 symposium, "Los Angeles as Trans-National Crossroads: New Directions in Community Activism and Cultural Studies," showcasing work by students, artists, community activists, and scholars from a range of institutions, including CSULA, USC, UCLA, UC Riverside, Duke University, Haverford College, and Georgetown University.

The project proposed here would extend the Rockefeller Program, which sunset this June, allowing interested faculty from CSULA and beyond to consider the possible future directions this kind of interdisciplinary, humanistic cultural study might take at this public university whose mission is to serve working-class, ethnic-minority and immigrant student populations. Because CSULA divides humanities teaching between two separate colleges, it calls out for the sorts of platforms provided by the Rockefeller Program and the proposed colloquium, from which scholars across institutional divisions can discuss the kind of knowledge—and develop the kind of pedagogy—that best serves our students and their communities. When budgetary stress shrinks enrollments to the point that administrators begin to question the existence of smaller programs, such platforms are all the more crucial.

### **Staff and participants**

Please see Appendix B.

### **Evaluation**

The project will be deemed a success if it accomplishes these goals:

- To convene a rigorous scholarly research colloquium in June, 2007.
- To produce ten to twelve courses proposed or modified to incorporate content on migration and culture, able to be taught by faculty in at least three different departments, ideally in different colleges (not team-taught but rotating among qualified faculty).
- To create a structure or structures incorporated into the university's institutional fabric that will facilitate humanities faculty collaboration in course and program design among departments and across the College of Natural and Social Sciences and the College of Arts and Letters.
- Emerging from these structures, support the beginnings of conversations about degree programs that stretch across and bridge departmental and college divisions, including Area Studies, Ethnic Studies, and disciplinary departments. Some possibilities for such programs include undergraduate majors and master's degrees in American Studies, Cultural Studies, or Women's and Gender Studies. This goal is not to establish one of these programs but to structure the kind of collegial collaboration that would allow them to emerge in the future.
- To submit a multi-institution grant to the NEH HSI Faculty Initiative Program in June of 2008, or to another NEH program for that same funding cycle, 2007-2008.
- To submit a grant proposal to a large philanthropic organization such as the Ford or Rockefeller Foundations to support a multi-year scholarly program on the campus of CSULA, keeping in view the longer-term goal of establishing a Center for the Study of Migration, Culture, and the State.

To supplement the NEH's own formal evaluation instrument, the P.I. will write a three-part report evaluating the project based on its progress towards these goals. The report's first part will evaluate the colloquium and will be written in the month following its conclusion. It will be based on the feedback provided by participants 1) during the evaluation session on day four; 2) via written evaluation questionnaires distributed during the final colloquium session; and 3) in exit interviews with the three noted scholars in the week following the conclusion of the event. The second part of the evaluation, to be written in December 2007 at the close of NEH sponsorship, will catalog the cross-departmental course proposals developed by the participants and set out recommendations for implementing interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, and cross-college curriculum and program design. The third will be written in August 2008 and will chart further progress in curricular advancement, program development, and grantwriting.

### **Follow-up and dissemination**

The most important follow-up tasks, the shepherding of the curricular and program proposals through the approval process and the submission of further grant proposals, are the responsibility of the collaborative clusters and will be coordinated by the P.I. All colloquium-generated syllabi will be submitted to the P.I. and made available electronically to all participants. In addition, the P.I. will share each phase of the evaluation with all participants as each is generated. A less detailed version of the final report will be submitted for publication in CalStateLA Today, the university's presidential newsletter, the student newspaper University Times, and the newsletters of the Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities and the American Communities Program.