



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously-funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at <https://www.neh.gov/program/spotlight-humanities-higher-education>.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Humanities in the Sustainability Curriculum*

Institution: Plymouth State University

Project Director: Brian Eisenhauer

Grant Program: Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education Development Grants

Humanities Content and Activities

Sustainability is dominated by thinking about the natural sciences and engineering, but this focus has not resulted in achieving sustainability goals. Expanding the field of sustainability science to include humanistic thinking is essential for creating a more sustainable and socially just world that is informed by the appreciation of diverse cultures, values, and the ability of the human spirit to express itself and inspire change (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). Engaging students and the public in exploring the value of the humanities in sustainability science can increase recognition of their importance and help students discover job opportunities where humanities perspectives and skills are needed to facilitate change. The need for this work at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire, a rural school of 3,800 students in the rural White Mountains of New Hampshire, is strong as the institution is in transition to new cluster based educational models in response to pressures facing higher education. A focus on interdisciplinarity is an essential part of that vision, and a newly created Bachelor of Arts (BA) Sustainability Studies major that includes the humanities began in the fall of 2022. New innovative courses are needed to better demonstrate the value of humanistic inquiry in the program. In addition, the humanities at the institution are at risk of being undervalued and not included in the creation of other new cluster programs. Exploring the value of the humanities in the Plymouth State University community through the activities proposed will demonstrate this value to our students, faculty, and to our community, which will promote the integration of the humanities across programs and grow appreciation and support for humanistic inquiry.

To demonstrate the essential value of the humanities and facilitate their continued inclusion in the curriculum a “Spotlight on the Humanities in Sustainability” project at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire is proposed. A speaker series with The Museum of the White Mountains, the development, teaching, and evaluation of two new permanent courses, and creating resources for educators on our campus and beyond will provide students, faculty, and the public with a series of engaging opportunities to learn about the necessity of including humanistic thought in sustainability science (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2020). The design of the “Spotlight on the Humanities in Sustainability” project is well supported by research on the outcomes of the activities proposed. The results include demonstrating the importance of the humanities to students and the public, the creation of new permanent courses that integrate the humanities, open-source resources for creating classes that integrate humanities in sustainability science and a workshop for PSU faculty designed to facilitate the inclusion of the humanities in cluster majors developing on campus.

In recent years perceptions of the humanities and the importance of its contributions have been changing. Scholars are concerned about perceptions-of the humanities in the public, and the low levels of support for them in higher education has been described as a crisis (Reitter and Wellmon 2021). However in contrast to these concerns, other recent analyses find the humanities remain a relatively popular topic in public discourse (Liu et. al. 2022), and assert current public perceptions can provide an opportunity to better communicate the essential value of the humanities for addressing important issues,

Addressing the impacts of climate change and promoting sustainability in socially equitable ways that value the rights of nature are some of the most important challenges facing humanity. The work proposed in this project is designed to clarify and demonstrate the important contributions of the humanities and humanistic social sciences to the emerging field of sustainability science (Sze, J 2018). Through a focused speaker series, new course development, and the creation of a nature and humanities immersion course experience we will help participants reconceptualize the role of the humanities and social sciences in sustainability (Doidge, Doyle, and Hogan 2020). The activities engage students to better understand the value of the humanities for creating a more sustainable world and to facilitate students' ability to integrate humanities perspectives in their careers. Crises cannot be addressed successfully

without inspiration for change and the understanding of who is affected and how, and technological solutions are only as effective when people engage with them. Promoting a transdisciplinary model of sustainability science is essential for successfully addressing the climate crises, as...

Despite the decades-long efforts of sustainability science and related policy and action programs, humanity has not gotten closer to global sustainability. With its focus on the natural sciences, sustainability science is not able to contribute sufficiently to the global transition to sustainability. This Perspective argues for transforming sustainability science into a transdisciplinary enterprise that can generate positive social and environmental change globally (Shrivastava et. al. 2020).

For example, climate change, together with other natural and human-made health stressors, influences human health and disease in numerous ways. As the climate changes, some existing health threats will intensify, and new health threats will emerge. Not everyone is equally at risk. Important considerations include age, economic resources, and location. In the U.S., public health can be affected by disruptions of physical, biological, and ecological systems, including disturbances originating here and elsewhere. The health effects of these disruptions include increased threats to health & wellness. To address this challenge the work proposed creates partnerships and projects that integrate the humanities in public events and educational activities that demonstrate their value.

A new Sustainability Studies major that emphasizes the contributions of the humanities, social sciences, business, and public health to sustainability was created last year and is in its first semester of classes at Plymouth State University (<https://www.plymouth.edu/academics/undergraduate-academic-programs/sustainability-studies/>). The program is attracting students, and the work proposed will enhance perceptions of the value of the humanities on our campus, improve the teaching about the humanities in the Sustainability Studies major and other sustainability programs, provide resources for educators, and engage the public to promote the value of humanistic inquiry in sustainability science.

ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

To achieve the project's goals, we propose an integrated set of activities designed to enhance perceptions of the value of the humanities in sustainability science:

- Beginning in September of 2023 and continuing through November of 2024 a collaboration with the Museum of the White Mountains (MWM) will produce a "Spotlight on the Humanities in Sustainability" series of 15 events that bring humanities scholars and artists whose work is connected to sustainability for showcases at the museum. The MWM at Plymouth State University preserves and promotes the unique history, culture, and environment legacy of the region, as well as provides unique collections-based, archival, and learning resources serving researchers, students, and the public. The museum hosts 2500-3000 visitors per year, and all programs are simulcast on Zoom to ensure access for rural residents. The speaker series will focus on the work and perspectives of the artist and the value of their humanistic works for achieving sustainability goals. Speakers will be chosen that reflect a diverse set of perspectives and backgrounds, and if in an appropriate format their work will be displayed in the museum. The events will be open to the public and the campus community and will be advertised using the existing Museum of the White Mountains (MWM) and University resources as well as broadcast on Zoom to reach MWM audiences in remote rural locations. The series will be integrated in the Environmental Humanities, Introduction to Sustainability Studies, and Conversations in Sustainability classes required in the new Sustainability Studies major, and will be used to shape these course curriculums moving forward. It is likely the events will also be incorporated in other classes, and 40-50 attendees per session or more are expected.

- The following are examples of speakers we hope to have in the “Spotlight on the Humanities in Sustainability” series.
 - Ecology Extended project of [Rita Leduc](#) and [Rich Blundell](#). “[Ecology Extended](#)” is an ongoing, experimental collaboration between an ecologist-turned-writer and social innovator, a visual artist and selected natural habitats. Their intention is to explore pathways by which the healing, ecological dynamics of nature can extend into culture through art.
 - [Mariah Reading](#), Maine-based eco-artist who travels to native lands to create impressionist paintings on trash in order to depict the harms of pollution and climate change.
 - [Carolyn Finney](#), New York- and Vermont-based geographer, storyteller, and author of *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. Her work focuses on developing greater cultural competency for environmental organizations.
 - [Michelle Neely](#), Connecticut-based environmental humanities scholar focused on American literary histories of sustainability, veganism, and local consumption. She is the author of *Against Sustainability: Reading Nineteenth-century America in the Age of Climate Crisis*.
 - [Semra Aytur](#) is a professor at the University of New Hampshire focused on health disparities and the relationships between land use, transportation, and environmental policies which affect access to health-promoting resources.
 - Any of the members, including founding director Anna Gibble, of [the Gulf of Maine Eco-Arts group](#).
 - Any of the authors featured in the “Writing the Natural World” event for the Maine Lit Festival, especially Gregory Brown and Jennifer Lunden: <https://www.mainewriters.org/calendar/natural-world>
- The Sustainability Studies major includes classes that directly link the humanities with sustainability, including a new Environmental Humanities class specifically created for and required in the new major. To improve opportunities for students to integrate the humanities in interdisciplinary work and address a need to bridge disciplines a new course called, “Sustainability, Wellness and the Humanities” that integrates the humanities, humanistic social science inquiry, and public health perspectives will be designed and created. Combining these disciplines in the course will promote the use of the humanities to address interconnected issues of wellness and sustainability including social justice. The curriculum created will explore the interconnectedness between human health and planetary health with a commitment to holding up the principles of community engagement, social justice, and building health equity. The coursework will convey the need to integrate humanistic perspectives and research in public health and sustainability science, emphasize the contributions integrating these fields makes to achieving sustainability goals, and clarify related professional opportunities. The curriculum will be developed by an interdisciplinary team of faculty representing these disciplines from the project team in the summer of 2024. The course materials, syllabi, outline, and resources will be published on an open-source platform so it can be used by other educators. The class will be integrated into the Sustainability Studies major and will also be available to all students at Plymouth State University. To promote the availability of the course it will also be included in the general education at PSU to enhance enrollment, and other qualified instructors can teach using the resources developed in this project.
- To facilitate the adoption of the class and the further integration of the humanities a workshop for faculty will be offered through our Center for Teaching entitled, “Integrating the Humanities in Interdisciplinary Courses”. The workshop will guide participants through the planning involved in creating an interdisciplinary course that incorporates the humanities

using the “Using the Humanities to Promote Sustainability and Wellness” class as a model that qualified participants may teach at PSU. The team members designing the course proposed in this project will design and lead the workshop, which will be offered in October of 2024.

- Research has demonstrated that field immersion has positive impacts on student learning and on pro-environmental behavior, as it “significantly affect[s] students’ sustainability through participatory ecological learning (Zalenski et. Al. 2015), and the benefits of immersion experiences for the environmental humanities has also been documented (Alagona and Simon 2010). Support is requested to develop and pilot test a place-based, bioregional science, arts, and humanities class experience to enhance student learning in the Sustainability Studies program. A three-day, two-night field-based program bringing together scientific inquiry and humanistic inquiry will be offered to twenty (20) students in the Fall of 2024 that incorporates the collection and analysis of environmental data, examining the intersection of environment and wellness, exploring ways to present and tell their “stories”, and the creation and display of works reflecting on the integration of these perspectives by the participants. Students will hear from experts about their work in ecology, art, writing, water quality, and other areas while in the field. Plymouth State University has existing memorandums of understanding to cooperate on educational endeavors with the White Mountain National Forest and the Appalachian Mountain Club, so the resources to make this activity a success are already in place. After the development, pilot test, and formative evaluation of the course proposed the intent is to make the course a permanent offering in the curriculum open to students of all majors with class fees providing funding.
- To promote the integration of the humanities and sustainability science on the Plymouth State University campus and beyond, the project team will make frameworks of all the activities and courses designed as part of this project available to others through open-source access. In addition, conference presentations describing the importance of integrating the humanities and the results of our work are anticipated.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

- PD – Dr. Brian Eisenhauer: Dr. Eisenhauer is an environmental sociologist who is a Professor at Plymouth State University, where he also serves as Director of the Office of Environmental Sustainability. Dr. Eisenhauer coordinated the team that created the Sustainability Studies major and has been involved in many grant funded projects. His work focuses on integrating social science and other fields in sustainability efforts to promote environmentally responsible behaviors. Dr. Eisenhauer’s role on the project is to serve as Project Director, to engage in coordinating and teaching the projects proposed, and to be part of the team developing the new “Sustainability, Wellness and the Humanities” course.
- Dr. Abby Goode: Dr. Goode is an environmental humanist and Associate Professor at Plymouth State, where she teaches in the English and Sustainability Studies programs. Her research focuses on literary histories of sustainability and environmental racism. She has designed and taught courses in food studies, environmental justice, and wilderness literature, including an interdisciplinary, team-taught first-year experience that links writing and environmental science. Dr. Goode will serve as the humanist on the team developing the new “Sustainability, Wellness and the Humanities” course. She will also help coordinate the Museum of the White Mountains speaker series.
- Dr. Suzanne Gaulocher: Dr. Gaulocher’s scholarship includes working within the intersection of health and environmental sustainability bringing an asset-based approach to teaching and learning in which each person has something of value to contribute. Her role on the project is to engage in the projects proposed by homing in on the interconnectedness between human health and planetary health with a commitment to holding up the principles

of community engagement, social justice, and building health equity, and to be part of the team developing the new “Sustainability, Wellness and the Humanities” course.

- Dr. Amy Villamagna: Dr. Villamagna is a conservation ecologist and Associate Professor in the Environmental Science & Policy and the Sustainability Studies programs at Plymouth State University. Dr. Villamagna’s research contributes to the statewide assessment, conservation, and restoration of habitat connectivity among terrestrial and freshwater species and to the accessibility of roadways for bikeability to support community-level sustainability. Her role in the project will be to contribute ecological systems knowledge to the student experiences and to be part of the team developing the new “Sustainability, Wellness and the Humanities” course.
- Meghan Doherty (MWM): Dr. Doherty is the Director of the Museum of the White Mountains (MWM) at Plymouth State. Her research focuses on the connections between art and science in the visual culture of the early Royal Society of London, and her recent book features studies of primary visual and written materials related to Francis Willughby’s *Ornithology* and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Her curatorial work explores the art, history, and environment of the White Mountains region. Her role in this project will be to coordinate the exhibitions and programming at the MWM.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The humanities “crisis” is a concern to some in higher education, and its standing at Plymouth State University is a microcosm of the larger issues facing the disciplines. Plymouth State University (PSU) is located in a rural community at the southern edge of the White Mountains in New Hampshire, USA, and more than half of the 3,800 students at Plymouth State students are either first generation, low income, or have a disability (Plymouth Magazine 2018). The state of New Hampshire is last in the nation in funding higher education, and its residents have the highest average student loan debt of any state. Several humanities programs are no longer offered as majors at the school, and humanities disciplines are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their value to students and others. Faculty have responded at Plymouth State University by creating new programs that integrate the humanities in cluster learning majors (<https://coursecatalog.plymouth.edu/integrated-clusters/>) that bring together disparate but complimentary fields to address complex challenges such as sustainability. To date these efforts have been moderately successful, but a higher profile for the humanities and the clarification of their essential contributions to solving crises is needed to affect perceptions of the humanities and their value. Doing so can facilitate their integration across the curriculum and help students, faculty, and others recognize their importance. Sustainability Studies is among the first cluster majors developed at Plymouth State University, and as more are developed demonstrating the importance and utility of humanistic perspectives can encourage their inclusion in newly developed programs.

The Sustainability Studies major at Plymouth State University began in Fall of 2022 by integrating the humanities, social science, business, public health, and environmental science as core components of the program. The continued design, refinement, and improvement of the Sustainability Studies major supported by the proposed activities will ensure the humanities remain important parts of our educational efforts. Doing so will attract students to the program and expand the number of professionals in sustainability fields that value and engage in humanistic inquiry. In addition, the improved visibility this work provides for the humanities will enhance appreciation of their value in our community, encourage other developing interdisciplinary majors to include them in their programs of study, and provide them with tools for the work. The funding requested to create the “Spotlight on the Humanities in Sustainability” is appropriate for PSU because this time represents a unique opportunity to dramatically affect perceptions of the value of the humanities and their role in developing cluster-based curricula.

Objective(s) / Solution(s)	Actions/Activities	Results	Year 1												Project Team Members Engaged		
									JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV		DEC	
SPOTLIGHT ON THE HUMANITIES IN SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT WORKPLAN	Course Creation	Course developed, workshops offered and course submitted to general education committee															Eisenhauer, Villamagna, Gauloche, Goode
	Coordination, planning, scheduling speakers	Speakers series scheduled, immersion experience logistics complete, Project scheduled							X								Eisenhauer, Doherty
	Museum of White Mountains Series	6 events each semester open to the community, campus, and classes										X	X	X			Eisenhauer, Doherty, Goode
	Open source publications	Resources made available to integrate humanities in Sustainability Science Education															Goode, Eisenhauer, Gauloche, Villamagna
	Immersion experience	Immersion experience complete, Works produced shown															Eisenhauer, Villamagna, Gauloche, Goode

Objective(s) / Solution(s)	Actions/Activities	Results	Year 2												Project Team Members Engaged		
			JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC			
SPOTLIGHT ON THE HUMANITIES IN SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT WORKPLAN	Course Creation	Course developed, workshops offered and course submitted to general education committee								X	X	X	X				Eisenhauer, Villamagna, Gauloche, Goode
	Coordination, planning, scheduling speakers	Speakers series scheduled, immersion experience logistics complete, Project scheduled							X								Eisenhauer, Doherty
	Museum of White Mountains Series	6 events each semester open to the community, campus, and classes		X	X	X						X	X	X			Eisenhauer, Doherty, Goode
	Open source publications	Resources made available to integrate humanities in Sustainability Science Education									X				X		Goode, Eisenhauer, Gauloche, Villamagna
	Immersion experience	Immersion experience complete, Works produced shown											X				Villamagna, Gauloche, Goode