

October 15, 2014  
Humanities Center Meeting  
Minutes

In attendance: Alan Barenberg, Monte Monroe, Christopher Smith, Jennifer Spurrier, Brian Steele, Dorothy Chansky, Rachel Vaughan (note taker), Don Lavigne, Miguel Levario, Yuan Shu, Jennifer Snead (on speakerphone), Rob Stewart (ex officio)

Chansky: Are we a center or are we an institute?  
Start with language from Chris's team.

Smith: Began with key words and phrases that went through a number of revisions.

Lavigne: Likes post-disciplinary focus, but seems we may be getting ahead of ourselves. What we want the HC to do is foster the humanities at TTU, so maybe if we start with that basic idea, that might be better. Maybe none of us want to suggest we ONLY do cross-disciplinary research. Maybe a simpler opening statement and get into more detail with cross-disciplinary being the vision of the character of the majority of the research.

Shu: Likes the draft, likes the third 49 word section. Does TTU HC need to follow examples of other centers? Or, do we develop our own model, emphasizing the difficulties humanities are facing today.

Steele: International aspect might come into play in a vision statement rather than a mission statement.

Different mission and vision statements (general consensus).

Barenberg: What is the difference? Echoes Lavigne: should open with a simple statement of what we do. Think about looking out and looking in. Simple, straightforward language. Our ultimate goal is to promote humanities at TTU, and that should be clearly expressed.

Stanford Humanities Lab example: "platform" "scenarios" "ethos" "triangulation" "merging" "interactive archives" "predictive models"

Chansky: Likes that they are muscular; rubric-like without being generic. Not too mushy, too undergraduate. These words are not mushy, they are capacious. Don't use these words, use words that are as good as these.

Shu: Need to use language that gets attention.

Chansky: We like versions two and three, but don't want to turn away people who's understanding of the humanities is more traditional, and more important, don't want to turn away people with power to fund us.

Barenberg: Needs to be accessible to the public.

Levario: Will there be public outreach? Can't be too academic, if so.

Snead: Wanted to make sure that there would be some language that would be accessible to the public, that would bring in the public component.

Time taken to tweak the language. Post-disciplinary accessible to public? to academics? Live editing the text.

Lavigne: play for a simple sentence, perhaps the 49 word statement.

Barenberg: first paragraph doesn't have to have everything in it.

Chansky: short first sentence that does include the word "humanities." First paragraph should be a maximum of 49 words. Two more paragraphs of 75 words each, first one focusing on scholarship, and second on pedagogy and community (serious embedding of humanities into the community). Lavigne charged with "first sentence duties."

Two lists: first year and second year. Shape years 2, 3, 4, and 5 to the best of our ability.

Year two: Barenberg's idea: one of the things center might offer is two or three buy-outs of two courses each for a new humanities faculty member in his or her second year. This is an annual thing. Third year more logical, but more expensive.

Lavigne: If we want to go for third year, maybe we get departments to agree to shift loads around so most load occurs in fall, then we buy courses out in spring.

Stewart: Another consideration: third year review, significant part is teaching. Consider how departments might respond with the third year review.

Chansky: One way for us to write this: offer two of them for third year people.

Lavigne: Collaborative with department, both offer a course buy-out.

Steele: Need to approach chairs and deans.

Included in year two and beyond.

Chansky: Conversation with Office of Research Services: a maximum of 5% of work done has been with people in the humanities. COS is one resource for funds for humanities. Strong argument for the suggestion that the center has to function as a resource and a clearing house for all of our humanities faculty.

Smith: Powerful inducement to buy-in.

Lavigne: Get the sense of any interest they would have in collaborating with us?

Chansky: They seemed too maxed out and the office has been re-configured. So while the answer is not no, there's no one in that office doing it now.

Lavigne: Would someone here be able to take some of the burden?

Chansky: Next thing to address: the big research project for next spring. Convening a task force to hammer out what the university-wide humanities course would look like. Committed to ten individual support grants for people whose proposal will include the agreement to present their findings at the University College. In the future, they should come with significant course release and money. So what we don't have is the component that is a project that the center would support with its own title that might lead to bringing in or inviting applications from outside to participate. Idea: don't think next semester works, but we could put out a CFP on our own campus for year two. One way would be to invite applications for teams that would develop over the course of next semester proposals for the following year. So, application would come from a team, they would each be given \$3500 to be spent at their discretion to support their project, and charged with coming up with something for the following year to be budgeted up to x. Another way would be that we as a committee would come up with what we thought was what we wanted to be our first public theme for 2015-16 and invite proposals from faculty that would do this for topic we had come up with.

Lavigne: We might be able to do both. In essence, we have a topic: our center and language. So, we could invite people from TTU and abroad and use this as a kind of springboard for next semester.

Barenberg: If we're serious about having a great project, we can't wait very far into second semester if we want good people to come in.

Chansky: So then how do we position ourselves to do next year with a theme or topic?

Lavigne: Two processes: intellectual project ongoing in the spring, but at the same time groups that are potentially coming up with themes.

Chansky: So, humanities discussion group that enriches our thinking about what we do and might do.

Lavigne: These two would be mutually informed. Large-scale discussion on what the humanities are with thematic groups associated to it and the class might be good way to introduce the center.

Monroe: Good way to get feedback from faculty.

Lavigne: Organization would be difficult if we don't start in the spring. We're operating on two tracks. So, we can get speakers who will agree to come and talk about the humanities and later ask groups to address specific concerns. Think we could get a couple people for the spring.

Smith: The fact of conversing about and who those outsiders will be will be useful, and puts event frame up and also serves to seed discussions, and puts HC on CFP map.

Chansky: So what can we do to get a specific but not overwhelming group of our faculty to do a focused discussion?

Lavigne: Competition? We fund minimally a group to come up with ideas that then get pitched and evaluated by the board, then agree upon a subtopic to focus on next year. Gets three groups of faculty involved.

Chansky: What do we want to do with the talks other than just have them?

Lavigne: Introducing the center and using that as momentum to create and foster the center.

Smith: This will be tied to fellowships.

Shu: So we can bring in a speaker that fits with the rubric.

Chansky: How are we going to keep this from getting lost in all the other talks that happen on campus?

Lavigne: The groups of faculty that are invested and if we have groups of five or six, that spreads.

Shu: Idea to invite professor from Rice.

Smith: We come up with what speakers to invite.

Chansky: Ideally speakers will excite the teams, but what if they don't?

Smith: Focus teams' minds if there's payoff.

Chansky: Can we afford them and get them on relatively short notice?

For next week: Friday at 9 am and take up exactly this question again. This is last piece of how to spend our initial money, and every piece needs to lay a cornerstone for at least the next year and probably the next five. Visit websites of other humanities centers and come back with suggestions of who to approach. Everyone come up with one favorite one and why. Stanford and A&M offering best models for what we seem to be talking about.