

TTU Humanities Center Steering Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Friday, October 24, 2014  
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Present: Dorothy Chansky, Don Lavigne, Alan Barenberg, Monte Monroe, Jorgelina Orfila, Chris Smith, Jennifer Spurrier, Jennifer Snead (note taker)

NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2:30 PM

Chansky begins with overall summing up of recent emails, charges from last meeting; brings up recent Chronicle article on the (more robust than you'd think) health of the humanities, and its calls to "change the narrative" – articulate humanities as a "larger brand" with value in its own right

1. Most recent version of 3-paragraph vision statement handed around for comments and voting. Some discussion about language in the first (50-word) brief vision statement – do we include more specific language about pedagogy here? Or accept the broadness of this language and look to the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs for particular articulations of the broader mission? Chansky reminds group that the first paragraph—the brief broad statement—is what we'll be living with for the foreseeable future, while the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs can morph and change. Lavigne – raises question of overall generality of language as a good thing, as it will leave our options more open for future projects. Monroe and Chansky underscore the importance of vision statement interacting with/shaping and being shaped by the strategic plan. Group made some minor changes to wording in the overall statement. Monroe moves we accept the statement; Chansky and Spurrier second motion; unanimous vote in affirmative.

2. Specifics about the shape of the budget in relation to Center activities for Spring 2015

\$5K will go towards the steering committee (seven members) who will develop the university-wide Humanities course during Spring 2015 \*\*this amount was changed towards the end of the meeting; see discussion at end of notes\*\*

\$20K for 10 faculty fellowships involving individual research and presentation to the "Alumni College" – these will be the first cohort of Center Fellows

\$2500: Orfila/Chansky suggest a regular (monthly) lunch for Fellows and committee members; would be obligatory; create community and collegiality; foster conversations

\$1500: Chansky suggests another project: might the Center sponsor faculty book groups? The Center will call for TTU faculty to propose reading groups (3-5) centering on a specific book that is relevant to issues in humanities, ideally with appeal to a broad audience; Center decides on proposals; if funded, proposers will assemble members of the groups (Barenberg: graduate students also? Chansky: members would be determined by the organizer); Lavigne: Center should handle logistics for book groups as well as providing funds to purchase the books and provide refreshments at meetings—send out call for proposals, send out call for potential

participants in groups, organize the meeting times and space. Orfila: we should work with Barnes & Noble to get discounts on the books. Group decides on 3 groups for spring 2015 (better to start small and see how successful these are), to be funded at \$500 each.

### 3. How to allot the remainder of the budget?

Chansky: At what rate will we build infrastructure? Will need a director to oversee this. Will also need at least one other person (development? web design and support?) Chansky will be meeting with Stewart and Duncan to discuss possible VPR support of Center in the form of a development person, or some hours from a development person

Lavigne: suggests we set apart \$1K for Center support for existing (previously scheduled) departmental events/speakers/conferences/etc.; we could offer individual departments \$100 each of contributive funding – would build good will, also would departments be willing to list us as co-sponsors/collaborators? Would we be able to list the events as parts of a Humanities Center series then? Group agrees this would be a great idea.

4. Chansky raises a third major project for Spring 2015 (alongside Faculty Fellows and Curriculum/Course Development): support (money) for small groups to develop ideas for what might become our year-long theme? Potential drawbacks: what would happen to groups who we funded but then did not accept their proposal? Would we have to accept whatever the groups came up with?

Lavigne: Our theme for next year (2015–16) is already fairly set: the Humanities more generally/role of the Center/place of Humanities at TTU and in a larger context. Smith: what if these small groups were charged to come up with an action plan (events, speakers, activities, schedule) that would articulate the theoretical/philosophical ideas about the place of the Humanities that we want to explore next year? Lavigne: important that committee members work WITH these groups to help ensure that the proposals are usable. Chansky: call them “working groups”? How many? How much funding would we give them? Orfila urges consideration of the philosophical concepts/broader ideas/theory just as much as the action items. Lavigne suggests that rather than funding “working groups,” why not ask for fully-formed proposals for the Center’s activities for the full year (with specific speakers, events, dates, budget) and choose one from among those? Snead: practically speaking, we are talking about two different models: “working groups” to propose more broad or general ideas for activities for the year, vs. a competition for a single, fully-thought-through proposal. Lavigne: single-proposal competition might make more sense given timing issues (better to have a concrete plan in place in time to invite speakers far enough in advance, etc.). Chansky refers back to Steele’s email of last week, how plan is to have a “soft opening” for Center in Fall 2015, gearing up for big splashy opening Spring 2016 – plenty of time to organize invitations for a speaker of international stature.

Group discusses and decides on Center funding working groups for Spring 2015, made up of seven members (3 members of steering committee, 4 members of the proposal group); this number will match the 7 members of Curriculum Committee. Steering committee members will oversee/guide/meet with proposers regularly through semester. Group discusses appropriate

support (Lavigne: course releases as another form of support? Orfila: Very important that we start from the beginning with the assumption that our activities are worthy of actual, monetary remuneration; set a precedent for this from the start). Decides on equal funding for both committees: \$7500 each. \*\*\*This changes amount for Curriculum Committee as detailed above\*\*

5. Calls to go out for next semester: Applications for Faculty Fellows; Proposals for book groups; proposals for working groups

6. Chansky raises final question: with around \$2k left for spring 2015, how to spend the money?

Snead, Monroe, Smith, Spurrier advise that we need to invest time and money in our online presence (website, social media, etc). For the short term, Smith recommends basic website with information about the calls for Fellow applications, book group and working group proposals, and some kind of contact information/email interface.

Long term? Orfila suggests we contact Francisco Ortega for his ideas and suggestions; perhaps a contest among his graphic and web-design students to design our logo and website?

Agreed to use final \$2k for web work: \$1K for web maintenance, \$1k towards web design, for the basic site we need to set up for next semester.

7. Final topic of discussion: ISSUES FOR NEXT MEETING:

Chansky: need to discuss plan for strategic plan draft; work on language for calls for applications and proposals; continue discussion of web development for the basic site for next semester (Monroe: should we have Ortega attend the next committee meeting?)

Chansky: also, to consider: the position of Director of the Center—how will that take shape? how will it be remunerated? Suggests for spring 2015, one course release, \$10k stipend, travel support for Director and one other committee member to attend annual Humanities conference. Monroe: when Director position for SWC was proposed, salary was \$100k, plus two course releases. Again – importance of setting a precedent for monetary remuneration for work in the Humanities—proposed salary and course releases for Director should be presented to Provost for NEXT YEAR (2015-2016). Should be minimum one course release and \$100k salary. Lavigne: for next semester, perhaps a more general stipulation of the need for Director's course releases and an administrative stipend (\$20k?). Monroe and Chansky: plus travel not only to Humanities conference but also site visits to other Humanities centers. Ultimately salary for Director should be at level of senior administration (\$100-\$120k).