Confluencenter Grant-Funded Projects Have National, International Impact

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UA faculty members have launched nationally and globally relevant projects with funding from the University's Confluencenter for Creative Inquiry, resulting in new publications, international partnerships and grant support.

Since introducing the Faculty Collaboration Grants in 2012, the UA Confluencenter has awarded $775,000 through 35 grants. Faculty in the College of Fine Arts, College of Humanities and College of Social and Behavioral Sciences are encouraged to apply for the next round of grant funding by Jan. 29. More information is available on the Confluencenter website [1].

"The outcomes of these innovative and interdisciplinary projects demonstrate the impact of Confluencenter funding on local, national and international levels," said Javier Durán, director of the Confluencenter.

"The collaborative research conducted by my esteemed colleagues addresses some of today's grand challenges, such as housing instability, political polarity and transcultural communication," Durán said. "We are proud to have been the catalyst for expanding creative ideas into sustainable projects that continue to evolve and expand scholarly knowledge on a global scale."

Confluencenter-funded projects have explored a wide range of subjects, including religion, politics, sociology, humanities and more. The following are just a few of the successful endeavors launched with support from the center.

Exploring Home Ownership

Jane Zavisca, an associate professor in the School of Sociology, was awarded a Confluencenter grant of $24,963 for her project "The Culture of Homeownership in Crisis."

Working in collaboration with Marilyn Robinson, formerly of the UA's Drachman Institute, Zavisca launched a new research agenda challenging mainstream conceptions of American homeownership.

Based on archival research on the history of mortgage marketing and interviews with homeowners in Tucson, Zavisca and Robinson organized a two-day symposium at the UA with national and local experts on homeownership.

"The Confluencenter grant supported new research on how Americans understand the relationship between mortgages and ownership," Zavisca said. "This research enabled me to connect local, global and historical developments in mortgages and homeownership in new
ways. This work inspired a comparative project with significant external funding."

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Defense’s Minerva Research Initiative awarded Zavisca a collaborator with University of Wisconsin's principal investigator, Ted Gerber a $3.7 million grant for the five-year investigation of the links between homeownership and societal stability in Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan.

**Poetics and Politics of Hip-Hop Culture**

The Poetics and Politics of Hip-Hop Cultures symposium, led by Alain-Philippe Durand, director of the School of International Languages, Literatures and Cultures and also the Africana Studies program, was supported by a $24,994 Confluencenter grant in fall 2012.

The three-day symposium featured a series of public events and performances that convened scholars and students of global hip-hop cultures. Hundreds of campus and community members attended the 2013 event, which followed the 2012 establishment of a minor in the College of Humanities' Africana Studies program with a concentration in hip-hop cultures.

As the first of its kind in the U.S., the academic program has been widely publicized by media outlets around the world, including The Huffington Post, the Los Angeles Times, BBC, Arte and Paris Match.

Subsequently, Durand was selected as one of 50 French talents in the United States by France-Amérique Magazine for launching the hip-hop minor. As of this year, 24 students are enrolled in the minor, which has expanded with a new Introduction to Hip-Hop Dance class, created by associate professor of African studies Praise Zenenga.

**The Intersection of Religion and Politics**

Karen Seat, head of the UA's Religious Studies Program, was awarded a $7,500 Confluencenter grant for a project that investigates the intersections of Christian conservatism and American politics.

Her project, "The Christian Right in Contemporary American Culture and Politics," was funded in 2011 and consisted of field research and on-site interviews at events and venues across the nation.

Seat has since presented her research nationally, and in 2014 she received a $1,000 Director's Fund award to co-sponsor the on-campus Humanities, Medicine & Wellness conference.

"As the United States struggles to accommodate a wide range of ideologies regarding individual rights, diversity and the role of government itself, careful scholarly attention to politically active religious groups is more important than ever," said Seat, an expert in American evangelicalism who has two books in progress, both resulting from the Confluencenter grant.

**Social Implications of Multilingualism**

"Multilingual 2.0," a conference created by David Gramling, assistant professor in German studies, and Chantelle Warner, an associate professor in the same department, convened researchers from around the world to discuss multilingualism, translation and language
learning.

The conference, first held in April 2012, led to the creation of the Critical Multilingualism Studies Journal \[2\], a nexus of interdisciplinary work that examines the social, political and historical implications of multilingualism. The CMS Journal is now in its fifth year.

"Simply put, the Confluencenter grant helped found a new scholarly discipline," said Gramling. The $24,427 Confluencenter grant was awarded in fall 2011 to Gramling and Warner.

Gramling and Warner are hosting another conference in March, funded by a grant from the the Arts & Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom. Gramling said it "all started with Confluencenter."

The success of the earlier conference and the journal was recognized by international organizations, including the Arts & Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom. The council awarded a team of global research collaborators, which includes Gramling and Warner, a $3 million grant to initiate a new project, "Researching Multilingually: At the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State."

Begun in 2014, the project includes conferences and case studies that deploy creative research methods and theoretical approaches to explore interpretation and translation strategies that would benefit migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Gramling's and Warner's portion of the research, "Case Study 4: Multilingual Ecologies in the American Southwest Borderlands," is being conducted through the UA's Language Mediation, Interpreting and Translation Initiative.

For more information on the Confluencenter's Faculty Collaboration grants, past winners and how you can apply for funding for your project, visit the Confluencenter website \[1\].

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