

Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, University of Iowa
Humanities for the Public Good Internship Program
P.I.—Teresa Mangum I. Internship Director—Jennifer New

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Final Report | Summer 2020

In June and July, 2020, nine University of Iowa (UI) graduate students from the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Education worked with six public-facing organizations as interns. It was the second summer of the Humanities for the Public Good (HPG) internship program, which is one part of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded grant program administered by the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies. HPG is focused on creating a new humanities PhD for students interested in public-facing work with institutions outside the academy.

This summer's interns applied for the program in early February with the assumption that, if selected, they would be working on-site with an organization in eastern Iowa. However, the UI moved to online teaching after spring break as a result of Covid-19, and decided to continue with virtual learning through the summer. As a result, all of the interns worked remotely, regardless of whether their sites were open for in-person events. In addition to navigating ever-changing UI, local, and state policies regarding the virus, the nation and the Iowa City area were deeply affected by protests in reaction to the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Protestors marched on the UI's central campus every night for weeks. Although their demands were aimed largely at the City of Iowa City, there were repercussions throughout the interns' academic circles, as well as at their work sites.

This document—prepared by Jennifer New, associate director of the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies and coordinator of the HPG internship program—provides a summary of the interns' experiences and the work they accomplished. The report is a window not only into the content of their projects, but also into the ways the internships affected how they see their academic work and career options.

THE INTERNS

Kassie Baron (English) worked with the **University of Iowa Labor Center** to plan and coordinate the kick-off event for the Iowa Women in Trades Network. She also developed a pilot web site for the Network and produced a series of videos about the history of women in labor.

Dellyssa Edinboro (Schools, Culture, & Society) worked with local arts nonprofit **Public Space One** to create programming for its **Center for Afrofuturist Studies (CAS)**. She was able to organize and participate in several programs during her internship, particularly related to this summer's racially charged protests. She also assisted with the creation and launch of a new web platform.

Michael Goldberg (Teaching & Learning) worked with the **University of Iowa Labor Center** to develop a digital teaching companion to Shelton Stromquist's labor history book *Solidarity and Survival*. Michael was part of a collaborative team that considered and experimented with various forms for the project. He was then responsible for building a test site.

Laura Hayes (English) worked with the **National Czech and Slovak Museum** to create and lead virtual workshops, develop partnerships with community members and other organizations, and write a literature review about museum project-based learning.

Matthew Helm (English) interned with **Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development** to write and design a booklet that highlights the culinary history of the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway. He interviewed community leaders from the Amana Colonies, the Meskwaki Settlement, and other communities along the 77-mile roadway to discover stories about food traditions.

Jonathan Lack (Cinematic Studies) worked with **Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development** to produce a series of three audio documentaries about Grow Johnson County and its complex operations at the site of the Johnson County Historic Poor Farm. He interviewed various participants in the project and edited and produced the documentary.

Jennifer Miller (Language, Literacy, & Culture) worked with the **African American Museum of Iowa** to support an upcoming exhibit about Black-led activism in Iowa. She created an activist artmaking event in response to the murder of George Floyd, partnering with local artists and PS1, and launched a virtual writing tool that will collect stories from Iowans.

Emily Wieder (French & Italian) and **Cody Norling** (Music) worked in tandem with **Hancher**, the University of Iowa's premier performing arts center, to write program notes; create and co-host a podcast, "Hancher Presents,"; research and write curricular "links" for UI faculty featuring upcoming Hancher artists; and contribute to the organization's online COVID planning.

The internship is designed to be a process of ongoing, experiential learning. Throughout the summer, the interns meet regularly with internship director Jennifer New, learning skills and discussing a series of prompts that ask them to connect their internship experiences with their academic studies. This reflective process culminates in exit interviews, in which the interns share responses to the following questions:

- Tell us about your experience with your site and your mentor. How involved were you in regular meetings and events? Did you feel included, respected, and also allowed to ask questions?
- What were one or two successes you experienced during the internship, both in terms of work you accomplished and a new habit or way of being that you developed?
- What was a challenge you encountered in the work, either with a project or within your own attitude and/or approach to the work?
- What was your experience with the three informational interviews you did? How were these helpful, or not, and what did you learn from them?
- What will you take forward from your internship experience? This could include contacts, new skills, and new habits of mind.

SITE INVOLVEMENT

Each student was paired with a site mentor. The mentor was expected to meet at least once a week with the intern (more often was encouraged because of the virtual nature of the summer), as well as to include the intern in regularly scheduled team meetings. Site mentors and interns worked together to devise a clear work plan during the first week of the program. This document laid out what work would occur, expectations for communication and evaluation, and milestones.

All of these sites are small and operate on lean budgets, but they were under even greater pressure this summer as a result of COVID-19 and the protests. One site had to cut several staff positions this summer, while another received news that will impact staff members in the future. Jennifer and the HPG team were especially thankful for the work of the mentors in light of the stress under which they were all working. As the comments here express, most interns felt very supported by their sites.

I really enjoyed working with the Labor Center. [She] was incredibly supportive and always available. She was always championing my ideas even when offering critique: 'Great idea ... but don't do it that way, why don't you try this.' ... I was invited to participate in several of their trainings over the summer, such as Unions 101, which was really helpful for understanding their work.

We were included in all of the communications right away, which surprised me— but it was really nice! [My mentor] emailed us regularly and was always very positive, even if he was giving feedback about a different way to do something. I appreciate the team environment and community feel.

The interns had to navigate unfamiliar communication styles and also maintain contact with their sites at a moment when many things were vying for people's attention. Their comments also emphasize how much the interns appreciated opportunities for professional development

and how much they appreciated being treated as different but equally valuable for their expertise by their community partners.

At first, I was maybe too timid, but once I communicated with them what I needed, they were great. They put a lot of trust in me, which made me feel professional and competent. Without hesitation, they always shared my work on their blog or with others in the organization. Being treated like a professional really helped me when I interviewed for a job in July.

From the very first day when we outlined my responsibilities everything was very clear. From Day 1 I felt that I was part of the team. I'd gone in thinking that I'd be given tasks, but they made me feel that my opinion really mattered and I was an equal. Even though I've still never been inside of PS1, they trusted me right away to represent them on social media and on calls with public partners. That foundation of trust helped me to flourish.

Some interns were offered glimpses into their organization's work methods that provided useful comparisons with academic life:

It was really cool to be cc'ed on emails when they were developing language for something and to see the emails going back and forth. Over the course of a few hours, an entire script would unfold and get solidified. It's a totally different kind of time than how things occur in academia.

The interns also witnessed different kinds of leadership:

I feel very lucky that I got to work with my mentor. Besides having her as a contact going forward, I developed a huge respect for how she operates in the world. She does a lot. She has this whole Rolodex in her brain of everyone in that 77-mile strip of road. If I am ever in a leadership position, I'd want to emulate her.

Because people were working virtually, and in many cases had not even met their site partners in person or visited the site before being sequestered, interns did encounter obstacles. One intern said that she often felt unclear about what she was supposed to be doing but made the best of it, realizing that her mentor was taking care of young children at home while working full time and managing three interns (the other two were not HPG interns). Another intern was given good guidance early on but then had a hard time connecting with the mentor, who was busy managing a farm site in the middle of summer.

What We Learned

Like the graduate students, the HPG team approaches the internships as a learning experience. In the summers to come, we plan to make the following changes in response to the feedback from the students and our community partners:

- Ask site mentors to provide precise information about when and how often they will meet with their interns. Although this is already baked into the protocols, an email or phone call during the first week that underlines this need could ensure that no one falls through the cracks.
- Consider whether a site mentor might have time / seasonal sensitive commitments that will prevent them from focusing on an intern as much as would be ideal.
- Be ready for the focus of an internship that was set up months in advance to change as an organization responds to unforeseen larger issues.

SUCCESSSES

Some of the interns worked on a single project during their eight weeks, while others balanced multiple smaller projects. Most of them had the opportunity to bring at least one project to fruition.

What was unique for me was that I was able to be part of the beginning, middle, and end of several projects. I was there from the initial email being sent, to actually doing the thing. ... I got to see myself function in a new space and in new ways. For example, I was emailing people I'd never met before, and doing digital work that was unfamiliar to me. I liked knowing that I was able to step into a new terrain and do it well.

Some students were able to directly apply their academic interests, while others had the pleasure of learning something entirely new. In either case, students frequently noted how much it meant to them to gain a sense of ownership over these projects. The interns took great pride in knowing that their partner organizations clearly perceived the interns' work to be useful, valued contributions.

A participant in a workshop I did about Langston Hughes turned out to be a board member, though I didn't know that's who she was at the time. Afterwards, she wrote to the president of the museum and told him how amazing the experience was. She was excited because I had told her something about Czech history that she didn't know. The president wrote to my supervisor about it and later I was also told that what I produced was some of the best work the museum had put out in 2020.

It was interesting to work on something I know nothing about [farming], but I think this was effective since we were trying to create something for a general audience. I think the three 20-minute episodes are well done—they're focused and tell a story that is interesting and, I hope, will get the project some extra and deserved attention..

Interns commented that they were able to better understand their own skills and career options by seeing aspects of themselves reflected in their mentors and other site colleagues.

*Through learning from other team members and watching them work as they connected their research and their boots-on-the-ground experience, I began to see that my academic work **can** have meaning to labor today. I comped the week before the internship started, and my committee had said they thought the focus of my dissertation should be on women and labor. This experience totally solidified that.*

For those who viewed themselves as shy, the public-facing nature of their work provided opportunities to move beyond their comfort zone:

Almost every person we wanted to talk to—and it was a huge list—got back to me for an interview. In the week after the internship, I'm still getting follow through from people about the project. I've talked to more strangers than I've ever talked to in my entire life!

The explosive and fluid nature of the Summer of 2020 ensured that most students experienced at least one chance to adapt. During cohort conversations, adaptation and flexibility were frequent topics:

We realized really quickly that our original plan wasn't going to work. I was supposed to create a panel and we couldn't reach the intended panelists. It was in the middle of the protests, and it wasn't the right time to be calling and pressuring people, so I regrouped and suggested an entirely new idea.

What We Learned

- Students always feel best about their experience when they can bring something to fruition. For an intern to see his food booklet designed and printed, for example, is hugely satisfying and provides a sense of both personal accomplishment as well as confidence that his work has mattered to the organization. We plan to emphasize this to organizations, as we encourage them to find ways that even one small project can be completed, recognizing that larger projects will necessarily remain more open-ended.
- Remind organizations that students are unfamiliar with certain kinds of internal communications and procedures, Organizations can offer interns great insights into their culture and processes even in small ways, such as copying the interns on "in house" emails as a project evolves.
- Non-profits and private industry are used to adapting on a regular basis, whereas many academics have a plan to which they may pursue for months or years. A well-designed internship can help students understand the regularity with which adaptation occurs in

workplaces. Students gain invaluable personal and professional resilience when they see how organizations respond to unexpected outside pressures. In particular, students come to see that even enforced change, handled thoughtfully, can sometimes lead to successes and benefits.

CHALLENGES

By far the biggest challenge for all of the interns was working remotely, without the support of day-to-day interactions with their site team. For some, this was more of a hindrance than for others. One intern wrote about regional food but was unable to travel and sample it; hence, he wrote about the Czech kolache without ever tasting one! Other interns reported more prosaic challenges that are common to many working in new situations.

I was doing a lot of work for them--social media copy for my programming, a lit review, two online workshops, seven movement videos, a survey, blog posts.. At one point, they asked me to write something for which they have an entire existing department to do and I pushed back. It was good for me to figure out how to speak up for myself. In the end, they said they'd come to think of me as a third team member.

It was hard to get people I contacted to reply. I always felt like I was walking a line between reminding people of things and being overbearing. There was a lot of, "Hey, remember me? Remember that email I sent you?"

While this experience of communicating with strangers and being responsible for the receipt and sharing of information was new for many interns, they encountered the added challenge of learning the communication culture of their organization, its partners, and its audience.

I had to learn to exercise a different level of patience. I'd send out emails and a week would pass and I'd get frustrated, but my team reminded me that artists have a much more relaxed approach and I needed to wait.

The internships also provided opportunities for collaboration, something that is often unfamiliar for graduate students in the humanities and related fields.

I experienced a different perspective on the planning and dissemination of material from working with two historians. It was interesting and challenging. For example, I was confident pretty early on that focusing on the narratives of the oral histories as the centering tool of our project was a good way to go, but there was a lot of conversation from them about whether it should be narrative, chronological, place focused, etc. Some of their ideas were different from the way I've been trained. ... We spent a lot of time figuring this out and eventually landed on a narrative approach, but the repeated conversations definitely slowed down the process.

Other challenges arose from balancing graduate school with the internship. A student who took his comprehensive exams in June admitted that he'd perhaps bitten off more than he could chew. And several students tasked with technical/digital work realized they didn't know quite as much about those technologies as they had thought when they applied:

I've had to admit to myself and to my supervisor what I don't know, which is always challenging. Perhaps the biggest struggle is with the feeling that I am leaving work unfinished. But I think that's a struggle worth having. It's worth consideration – what does it mean to be finished?

What We Learned

- The interns really want to please their sites. We need to remind them that they have a voice and to use it responsibly and politely but also to be advocates for themselves.
- We will invite the site mentors to give examples – perhaps during the orientation or a workshop – of things they didn't know and therefore that they had to learn on the job as well as mistakes they made and learned from as part of their own careers. Being able to learn from a supervisor's own humility and past mistakes is uncommon and makes a strong impression.
- We can better prepare interns by offering them readings and reflective writing about the complicating factors as well as the value of collaboration. Finding one's place within a team can be frustrating and somewhat mysterious interns. Giving more attention to the process of working with others should help to normalize the discomforts of building a team while also validating the worth of collaboration.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

The interns were asked to complete three informational interviews during the summer: one with someone related to their organization, one with someone in an academic area related to their interests, and one outside of academe. Some of the interns didn't complete the assignments or ended up interviewing people within the same category, but many of them found the process very useful. Several reached out to Jennifer for suggestions of people to interview. One intern, for example connected with a former Obermann Graduate Fellow, a former high school language teacher and scholar of the middle ages who used a CLIR Fellowship to translate her interest into library and archival work. They plan to remain in contact in the future.

The informational interviews were super helpful. I was terrified of doing them! One of them helped me with the job I interviewed for – and got! – and so she's now going to be one of my professional colleagues. I connected another person I talked to with the Czech Museum and they're now possibly doing some work together, so that felt great.

I'd like to follow up with all of the people I talked to. I made really great connections. It was especially helpful to have discussions about what a PhD in music can bring to other jobs.

Another student, who works with COGS (the UI's graduate student union), reached out to someone in a similar position at another university. That interview established camaraderie and skill sharing. Social media could also lead to connections. When one of the interns posted an article she had written on Facebook, her high school Spanish teacher surprised her with an important introduction to an anthropologist. Informational interviews can be brutally honest, as well as inspiring. In this case, the intern was disheartened to learn that anthropologist, who had a major find that was celebrated in the national news, doubts she will ever get tenure. This, too, is useful to students as they consider their own career choices.

What We Learned

- We need to offer some guidance to students as they decide whom they will interview and why. For example, a few students did not choose people who could provide them with a wealth of ideas and resources, but rather chose people closely connected to their work site – which was easy but not as satisfying.
- If time allows, having students share their informational interviews during a cohort session could be useful to illustrate how rich some of these conversations were. We might also ask “alums” of the program to reflect with the current cohort about what they did learn and wish they had learned based on the interviewees they selected.

COHORT SESSIONS

The group met two mornings a week for 75 minutes in order to share experiences, learn specific job-related skills, and reflect on issues related to work and academe. Sessions led by Jennifer and HPG staff covered topics including informational interviewing, networking, identifying and using strengths, and interpreting mission statements, and deciphering workplace values. Guests presented workshops on oral history production, grant writing, converting CVs to resumes, and using LinkedIn. The interns reported that they especially appreciated the meetings as a way to regularly connect with the group throughout the oddities of the pandemic.

It was good to be in touch with people doing similar work. It honestly felt more important because of COVID. Whenever I was having a frustration, I'd come to a meeting and hear from other people that they were having something similar going on, which made me feel better.

The meetings meant that I had to self-regulate and be in contact with my own work. I really appreciated that necessity.

Students appreciated engaging with people outside their fields of study, including learning how the role and format of comprehensive exams in different departments and colleges and also varied habits of mind encouraged by specific disciplines:

I was often in a breakout session with [another intern] who thinks so differently than me because of her art training, and it was really interesting and useful. Considering what is public facing and where is the academy now with regard to art was so different than how I'd think about those things from the perspective of my department.

The fact that the group never met as a whole was a keen loss for many of the interns. In fact, two of the interns were not even in Iowa City this summer, but rather were at their families' houses outside the state.

It was useful to be together online but also weird. Zoom is a very start and finish space; people don't hang out. If we'd been at Obermann, we would have kept talking as we walked out the door or gone to have a coffee together. That never happened, of course.

The meetings provided space for connecting the experiences people had at the internship sites with the larger conversation of work beyond the academy:

The cohort meetings really helped to ground what we were doing beyond just work with our site. Without the meetings it would have felt like any other job. But with the conversations in the cohort—and the required writings—it really got me thinking a lot about what my future could look like, and how I can learn from this particular experience beyond simply completing some tasks. I've definitely expanded the career options I'm considering.

Several times, we pivoted the focus of the cohort conversations out of respect for events in the world and on campus. The protests on the University of Iowa campus in June in response to the murder of George Floyd on May 25 in Minneapolis were very much on the interns' minds during a conversation that we had about diversity, equity, and inclusion with Ashley Cheyemi-McNeil, a postdoctoral fellow on the HPG team. The University's response to the COVID crisis was also at the forefront of several conversations. Students appreciated the chance to connect with one another and the flexibility to switch topics when this kind of emotional airing was important. Several went out of their way to thank Jennifer for her willingness to flexibly and quickly respond to the energy and mood of the group, a reminder that experiential learning is most meaningful when we open ourselves to the full complexity of students and the ways they are encountering the worlds where their learning takes place.

The interns wrote two blog posts apiece for the HPG web site. To read these posts, go to: <https://uihumanitiesforthepublicgood.com/category/interns/> In addition, the interns responded to weekly prompts on the cohort ICON site (the course management platform at the University of Iowa). Several students commented that they wished we had discussed their written reflections more directly during the cohort meetings. In the future, each meeting could begin with a short reflection time regarding that week's prompt and/or the most recent blog entries, or we might ask a few students to take responsibility for sharing highlights or pressing questions during our weekly meetings.

Some of the Icon were just people being really sad, which I understood. But others were helpful. I liked the prompt about how my courses could have a public facing component.

While the cohort felt as cohesive as possible given the limitations of Zoom, one student did report feeling on the defensive at times:

I often felt like I was the one person defending academia. That there's this us/them mentality between the 'woke' public engagement people and the stodgy old professors. I often felt like I was defending it and that others didn't appreciate that.

Addressing the tensions as well as the potential for connections between academic and public humanities would have been fascinating and instructive—demonstrating the importance of weaving students' reflections into our ongoing conversations.

GOING FORWARD

During their exit interviews, the students were asked to reflect on what skills, contacts, and habits of being they would take forward from their summer experience. Many commented that the internships introduced them to new skills that they want to develop during the remainder of their graduate careers:

I'm now looking at getting the digital humanities certificate, which I got excited about from my experience with the podcasts.

One student, who participated in the Liberating Structure workshops to which all of the interns were invited, said that the combination of those workshops along with getting to know the cohort convinced that she had yet to "find my people at Iowa." Realizing that her confidence has lagged since she began graduate school, she hopes that by connecting with people she met this summer she might be able to turn that around.

Interns also reported that the experience helped them to clarify their career paths. In July, one intern interviewed for and got a job as the accessibility coordinator at Coe College. She said that the internship helped her to see how much she enjoys research in the service of action and

teaching, and rather than developing knowledge for its own sake. She was also able to leverage the confidence she gained from her internship to the job interview process:

*What this has shown me is that the complete respect that they [her site colleagues] showed me was a baseline, and it gave me more respect for myself. It was so different from one I'd experienced in my department. In my job interview, I was the person I am at the museum ... and I **really** like that person!*

Several interns made deep connections with their sites that they hope to continue in various ways – through ongoing mentorship, volunteer work, and professional partnering. The student who got a job at Coe College has been invited by the Czech Museum to offer a staff training as part of her new position. Several interns asked if funding could be made available to continue the work they began this summer. In their own final comments, every site partner said not only that they would like to work with an intern again next year, but also that they would welcome a semester-long intern. And one student was invited to become an active member of the group she helped to launch, Iowa Women in Trades.

Another intern who had previously taught high school said:

For a while I've been struggling with whether I want to be in an R1 university. I find the most joy in teaching—much more than from research. The Labor Center focuses on a certain kind of education that is simultaneously narrow and broad. It helped me to see that there are other organizations where I can use my knowledge to do good with teachers. ... This experience has been a really strong part of a conversation I've been having with myself about what I want to do with my degree. New tools emerged from this, such as informational interviewing and LinkedIn, that will help me keep having that conversation in a productive way.

Others felt confirmed in earlier decisions to carve unique paths and byways through graduate school and to the future:

I've taken hits for how non-academic my writing is, which is by choice; and this internship has solidified for me why I do that.

I still want to work in academe, but I really want this public aspect to the work. I realized that I can take the work I do academically and apply them to public facing work; they don't need to be separate.

Several interns were reminded that they possess skills that are marketable, should they be unable to find the academic jobs they desire:

Every time I talk with my advisor he reminds me how bad the job market is. If I could do something that was as impactful as what I did this summer, I now know I'd enjoy it.

The experience also provided a boost of confidence and clarity for many, which we hope will help them to return to their graduate programs with a greater sense of purpose:

The funding from the Mellon Foundation grant was really valuable to me. It's probably the best experience I've had since beginning my doctoral program. My research interests move b/t understanding the relationship b/t language, text, artistic practices and activism and so the work I did this summer was tangentially related to things I've already been pursuing. Add to that my interest in archives and I had the perfect summer.

What We Learned

- In the future, we will schedule one-two follow up sessions with the interns during the following academic year, so that they can share how their experiences are landing after they return to an academic space.
- We will also provide multiple opportunities for interns to share their work with various campus audiences in order to help faculty understand the value of the experience.

SITE MENTORS' COMMENTS

At the end of the internships, we asked site mentors to respond to questions about the work our interns completed this summer. The questions focused on the quality of the work and the skills brought by PhD students (as opposed to the undergraduate interns with which many organizations are accustomed to working), the level and quality of communication with Jennifer, and the stipend they received. Here are some of their responses:

- “[Our intern] was incredibly flexible and adaptive to my suggestions and willing to change things as needed. She seemed comfortable in taking the reins to develop the projects but was always checking in with me to talk through her ideas.”
- “The interns’ work exceeded our expectations. Their contributions were strong across the board. From their written pieces to their willingness to jump into co-hosting duties with the podcast, they helped contribute to our mission of presenting and advocating for artists in a very trying time. It was especially helpful for me, in that working with them was a reminder of the hopefulness that we need to maintain through uncertainty. At a time when many University of Iowa officials consider Hancher to be ‘completely dark’ during this time, the work that the HPG interns did helped to focus and augment projects that prove that there are significant contributions that Hancher can make during this pandemic.”

- “The experience and confidence they brought as PhD students were integral to the work we had them do in their internship. ... [I asked] the interns to creatively write up marketing copy, create episode descriptions, and lead interviews for the podcast. These are all things I would not typically rely on undergraduate interns for, as it takes confidence and an already established well of information to make public facing decisions like these.”
- “I do feel that the academic side of the intern caused her to analyze and contemplate too much. It was easy for her to go off on tangents as though she was developing various research angles.”
- “We all needed to adapt and be flexible and both of them were more than willing to accommodate, not only new projects, but new ways of tackling projects (i.e., video conferencing, editing audio and video on new programs).”
- “Her work benefited our mission by making it possible for us to accomplish our ambitious summer programming as well as being able to take on a significant number of small opportunities that came up to actively support, promote, and amplify the work of artists doing work around Black futurity.”
- “We are really grateful for your recognition of the labor involved in mentoring an intern [by providing a stipend]!”
- “We needed more virtual programming and we recently lost staff so her work was invaluable this summer in helping us serve public education. She was an incredibly hard worker and very creative.”

SHORT ARTICLES

All of the interns were asked to write short articles for their departments. These pieces are meant to provide an overview of their work and how it relates to their scholarly evolution. We conclude our report, most appropriately, with the voices of the interns. We deeply appreciate the expertise and generosity of our site partners; the invaluable support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the UI Graduate College; and, most of all, the open-minded and open-hearted students who gamely made the most of internships in a summer so challenging in so many ways.

Laura Hayes: This summer, as a Humanities for the Public Good Obermann Fellow working at the National Czech and Slovak Museum, I directed my teaching, research, and writing skills beyond the college classroom. While I had many tasks on the education team—including creating virtual workshops, reaching out to community partners, and writing a literature review

on museum project-based learning—I most enjoyed the ones that were unfamiliar to me and required me to apply my teaching and research skills in new and broader ways.

What this looked like practically was adapting how I have come to rely on communicating information. For my workshops, for example, I took things that could classically be considered “academic,” like discussing poetry or etymology or embodiment (three topics that are central to my own research), and found ways to connect them not only to Czech histories for the museum and its members but to all types and levels of learners. Some of this was rhetorical and some of this was conceptual. And what it often came down to was streamlining the ideas I was trying to communicate when only given 10-30 minutes to communicate it in.

As someone with years of experience in academia, I found this to lighten how I communicate both in writing and speaking, and it adapted well to many learners. I also found that, returning to an academic setting this fall, this gave me confidence for approaching teaching, mentoring, and other types of formal and informal communication with a renewed sense of meaning making and with a focus on achieving personal connection.

Cody Norling: Over the course of the summer, I applied both my research skills and broad humanities training to the public-engagement efforts of Hancher Auditorium. My primary duties included locating possible university and community partners for scheduled events, researching best practices for operating during an extended COVID-19 era, recording and editing a weekly podcast, and creating a series of connected program essays for the coming season’s scheduled dance acts. These tasks required the use of practical communication competencies such as research and writing, but also larger theoretical knowledge of historical and cultural continuities when assessing the annals of Hancher’s dance offerings. All of this was greatly bolstered by the academic work of my doctoral studies.

The internship experience added to my academic training a greater sense of working flexibility and an emphasis on continued group efforts. It is perhaps well-known that the effects of COVID-19 continue to create new working challenges. For me, this was amplified by the way I was required to continually adapt ever-changing plans and processors, and work within often shifting timeframes. Without access to a shared, in-person workspace, I also had to contend with the added task of managing a needed divide between work and life. Moreover, whereas the routine expectations of a doctoral program (and professional career) necessitate an emphasis on individual contributions to the field in the form of single-author publications, my work with Hancher was built on teamwork toward shared goals. This was achieved through weekly meetings and the divvying of key tasks among the entire public-engagement team. In general, I have been most impressed by my ability to apply musicological practices to public-facing work within a groupwork setting while also maintaining a careful balance between worktime and personal time. This internship offered both new contexts for and differing modes of the work essential to a liberally educated humanist.

Emily Wieder: As a graduate student in the French department, I had the opportunity to work with Hancher Auditorium this summer thanks to the Obermann Center's Humanities for the Public Good program. Though Obermann coordinated the internship and offered professional development tips, I reported to Hancher's public engagement team. My tasks ranged from editing podcasts to brainstorming a digital platform that would allow Hancher to meet the online demands of the COVID-19 era. In the same way that we prioritized our audience's needs, I will cater lessons to my students. There are abundant resources for online language-learning, as the LMC has so thoughtfully presented throughout the summer, but ultimately, I alone can decide which ones best serve my students. Working remotely with Hancher has also made me more comfortable navigating cyberspace, and that ease will facilitate hybrid course delivery. While the digital projects prepared me for teaching, I enjoyed written assignments as well that reinvigorated my scholarly interests.

Most often, I write to convince an academic audience of an *idea*. In my internship, I wrote to convince the general public to engage in *experiences*. The shift in addressing readers to addressing spectators also expanded my notion of "textual evidence." Previously, I have extracted meaning from archivable materials, such as literature, paintings, and photographs. After researching choreographed and musical performances whose ephemeral nature defies storage, I now consider the human body as "a cultural text," to borrow a term from another Obermann intern. The performative body projects expression and has meaning read into it, yet unlike a literary text, the body communicates in sensorial, affective languages. For my research, this reframing of the body encapsulates feminist and surrealist principles. Both movements seek to liberate the body from its appearance and elevate it to its essence. I look forward to revisiting female surrealists under this lens and even developing my dissertation around performative as well as literary corporality. With the body as a starting point, I will keep the entire human in focus. This human-first approach, as my internship has taught me, makes academia accessible for the public good.

Matthew Helm: This summer, I was selected for an internship with the Humanities for the Public Good Initiative through the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies. I partnered with Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development to participate in their Communities Culture & Culinary Traditions Internship. Over the course of the summer, I interviewed community leaders across the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway, a 77-mile route anchored to the east by the Amana Colonies and to the west by the Meskwaki Settlement, to discover stories about food traditions. I shaped these interviews into a series of brief articles culminating in a booklet that relates the culinary history of the region. Ideally, travelers along the Byway will be able to use the booklet to go on their own food-centric road trips.

In Fall of 2017, I had the pleasure of taking Professor Doris Witt's graduate seminar 'Writers on Food.' The course challenged me to consider how food functions as a literary and cultural symbol, as well as what our relationship to taste can tell us about our humanity. I view this internship as the public-facing extension of what I learned in that class. I was able to apply food

studies methodologies to my research on the Iowa Valley region, and more importantly, to translate the lessons I learned from food studies into a document that will benefit those outside of the academy. Broadly, the internship encouraged me to make connections between literature and people living just a few miles away from me who have equally important stories to tell. Food traditions are important to me – as a student, teacher, scholar (and eater!) – and I am grateful for the opportunity to showcase Iowa food culture’s unique place at the table.

Michael Goldberg: This past summer, I held an internship through the Obermann Center’s Humanities for Public Good grant. This grant, through the Mellon Foundation, is designed to give PhD students an opportunity to explore diverse careers where they can use the skills and knowledges gained in their programs for public-facing, non-academic organizations. In partnership with several local organizations, my fellow Humanities for Public Good interns and I worked on a variety of projects and worked with each other learning about how we can use this experience in our careers, in or out of the academe.

I partnered with the Labor Center’s John McKerley, working to develop a digital teaching companion to Shelton Stromquist’s labor history book *Solidarity and Survival*. Stromquist’s book connects with the Labor Center’s long-standing Iowa Labor Oral History Project (ILHOP), an extensive collection of interviews over several decades chronicling the efforts of workers in Iowa to organize and fight for their rights. McKerley, Stromquist and I spent several weeks discussing and experimenting with various forms for this project before settling on a narrative-centered, thematically and semi-chronologically organized webpage.

From there, I began to build a test site, a proof of concept to see if our ideas could come into a useful, replicable, and scalable shape. Using WordPress, Stromquist’s book, and regular discussions with Stromquist and McKerley who are experts in the subject area, we ended the summer with a tool that is ready to polish and scale. This website will be further expanded over time to be more fully useful for teachers in secondary schools as well as labor educators around the state.

Kassie Baron: Over the course of the summer, I was fortunate enough to work with the team at the University of Iowa Labor Center. I was tasked with helping to plan and coordinate the kick-off event for the Iowa Women in Trades Network. This group showcases opportunities available to women, develops women’s leadership, and brings women together across generations to support and retain women in the construction trades. Women across the state of Iowa came together to form a community, which is invaluable to overcoming the unique obstacles women face in the trades.

Because Covid-19 altered plans and limited possibilities, the event was moved online. About 18 women attended the meeting, some just beginning their career and others who have been active union members for over forty years! We were joined by Tarn Goelling, the Director of Civic and Community Engagement for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Goelling spoke on the number of women in the trades – about 3% of workers – and the advantages of a diversified workforce for both employees and employers. Groups like the Iowa Women in Trades Network can be critical to women’s success in skilled trades.

I successfully completed my comprehensive exams just before beginning this internship. The area of research that emerged from my preparation focused on literary representations of 19th-century women’s labor and what they tell us about visions of the United States. For instance, the Lowell Mill Girls wrote about their financial independence and pride in their work very differently than Herman Melville. This internship has helped me recognize the ways my research connects to and affects the present, particularly when this information is accessible to the public.

Dellyssa Edinboro: Over the summer, I completed an internship with the University of Iowa's Obermann Center's Humanities for the Public Good (HPG) Initiative. This initiative aims to prepare humanities students for diverse careers, specifically in the non-profit sector, public policy, government, libraries, cultural administration, technology, publishing, and institutional education and research. For eight weeks, I worked with the Center for Afrofuturist Studies (CAS), an artist residency program that reimagines the futures of marginalized people by creating dynamic workspaces for artists of color.

My internship supported my awareness and cultivation of my skills, such as being a thinker, inquisitive, collector of information, resourceful, and innovative. During my internship, I drafted a statement in support of Black Lives Matter, presented at public celebrations, took part in two social media takeovers, and planned reading group sessions. From these experiences and others, I interacted with several community organizations, locally and nationally. These organizations included the Stanley Museum of Art, UNESCO's City of Literature, The Dream Center, Residency Unlimited, and HECKLER. My understanding of these organizations' community-driven missions will inform how I engage with community work in my personal and professional lives. Overall, I am grateful to the CAS for my wide-ranging responsibilities and communications this summer.

Jennifer Miller: This summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to work as an Obermann Fellow with the African American Museum of Iowa. In collaboration with the curator at the AAMI, I designed and facilitated two community engagement projects. “In Defense of Black Lives” occurred in June and included the creation of a large mural by local artists Donté Hayes and Savannah Simmons. Community participants worked on the mural and also created hundreds of protest signs—all of which will be included in the upcoming exhibit, “Unwavering: 21st Century Activism.” I also facilitated a virtual writing project that invites people to share their stories and reflections in response to five different themes related to activism. One goal is to build an archive for the AAMI’s collection, gathering stories that could be useful to future researchers and amateur historians who want to look back and study artifacts that capture a range of lived experiences from this period in time.

As a researcher in the Language, Literacy, and Culture program in the College of Education, the work I did this summer provided me with clarity on the importance of examining relationships between people's artistic practices (visual arts, writing, designing museum displays) and activism. I was unable to fully situate the work I did in a specific place due to the ongoing pandemic, which leads me to consider the growing importance of mediated reality and digital outreach and engagement. For me, the impact of our artistic practices and most of our 21st Century social movements (activism) are defined by the aesthetic qualities inherent in the materials used to express ourselves and to communicate our ideas. I hope to pursue this line of inquiry further when I return to research work this fall. I would like to express how incredibly grateful I am for the Obermann Center's Humanities for the Public Good initiative and the funding from the Mellon Foundation Grant. This summer's work with the AAMI was hands down the best experience I have had since starting my doctoral program at the University of Iowa.

Jonathan Lack: This summer, as part of the Obermann Center's Humanities for the Public Good Internship, I had the pleasure of working with Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development, a local nonprofit operating out of the Amana colonies that focuses on community food systems, planning, and placemaking. This specific internship was called "Storytelling and the Food System," and we wanted to tell a compelling, informative story about the work this organization does. I created a three-part, podcast-style audio documentary called "Growing for Good: The Story of Grow Johnson County." In it, I interviewed staff members, growers, volunteers, historians, a food bank director, and a member of the county board of supervisors to learn about one of Iowa Valley's – and, indeed, our entire community's – most exciting initiatives: The Grow Johnson County Project.

Housed on the Historic Poor Farm, Grow Johnson County cultivates a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables across five acres of land, entirely for the purpose of donating that food to local food banks, pantries, and other hunger relief agencies. Johnson County has a significant hunger problem, with over 19,000 residents, more than 1 in 10 people, experiencing food insecurity. And for those people, getting fresh, first-hand produce straight from the farm is an unfortunately rare experience. That's why the work Grow Johnson County does is so important, and why the space on which they grow resonates so powerfully. The Poor Farm was founded in the 1800s as a then-progressive reform to the poor house or debtors' prison model, where both the poor and those deemed 'insane' by the state could live, grow their own food, and hopefully learn skills that might lead to a better life if they ever left the farm. This model was obviously imperfect, but by dedicating this site to modern hunger relief and community education efforts, Johnson County is making a meaningful effort to preserve, understand, and build upon our history – and that, of course, is where Grow Johnson County comes in, and why it was such a privilege to research this project, interview those involved, and share this story with the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant working remotely and interviewing subjects over Zoom, so I didn't get to connect with the land and the community in the hands-on fashion I was hoping for earlier this year. But I hope the finished series – which consists of three 20-minute episodes, each a mix of narration by me and clips from recorded interviews – will serve as an inspiration for others to get out and experience all this when the crisis has passed. To visit the farm, attend the various community education functions Grow Johnson County hosts, and maybe even volunteer, contributing to a very real need and learning lifelong skills right here in our own backyard. It's a series about a complicated history and an inspiring present, and I hope it helps us think about the future and what we can all do to make it better.