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: *Incorporating DEI Concepts and Content into Humanities General Education Courses*

Institution: Thomas Edison State University

Project Directors: Burton Peretti, Tara Kent

Gr ant Program: Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education Development Grants

Incorporating DEI Concepts and Content into Humanities General Education Courses

Narrative

Thomas Edison State University (TESU; the University), New Jersey's public university for adult education, is seeking a two-year Spotlight on Humanities Development Grant to fund the cost of subject matter experts (SMEs) and an external consultant to revise and incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) concepts and content into selected humanities courses. Like most of TESU's offerings, these courses are taught entirely online, and our primary audience are those students who are considered nontraditional.

Based in TESU's Heavin School of Arts, Sciences and Technology, this project will revise seven (7) humanities courses that the TESU catalog recommends to students to fulfill the General Education requirement in the humanities. The courses are:

HIS-113 – American History I
HIS-114 – American History II
HIS-121 – Introduction to World History I
HUM-103 – Introduction to Humanities III: Music
HUM-104 – Introduction to Humanities IV: Fine Arts/Architecture
LIT-205 – American Literature I
PHI-130 – Introduction to Critical Reasoning

The course revision process will resemble the one which we regularly utilize. Grant funds will permit us to contract with subject matter experts for the seven revisions. TESU staff course designers and technologists at TESU's Center for Learning and Technology will assist the subject matter experts. Dr. Burton Peretti, project director, and Dr. Tara Kent, project advisor, will supervise all revisions and are responsible for the final products, and as part of this project, they will provide guidance in the form of rubrics and objectives relating to the addition of DEI content. In contracting with SMEs for this project, the Heavin School will consider the candidates' background in DEI theory and practice and their expertise in multicultural content in their disciplines. Spotlight on Humanities also will fund an external DEI expert consultant to advise us about the project plan and the completed course revisions, and provide funds to support a portion of the costs of promotion of these revised courses to current and future students.

Humanities content and activities

The core humanities topic addressed in this project is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). DEI is best known as a relatively new approach to training workforces and setting strategic plans, which orients institutions and businesses to become fully accepting of all stakeholders and open to their perspectives and potential contributions. DEI is reshaping how higher education is addressing inequality in our society, and it is providing strategies to institutions and educators on how to transform student learning to meet DEI goals. (Arellano et al 2021; Campbell 2020; BrckaLorenz et al 2021; Smucker 2022). Among the priorities of DEI are efforts to define and minimize the impact of implicit biases, microaggressions, and microinequities, and to ensure a culture of equity, emotional intelligence, and psychological safety for all. Dr. Amelie D. Smucker has stipulated that "an inclusive curriculum (a) addresses discrimination, (b) meets the needs of all students, and (c) encompasses content, pedagogy, and assessment methods. Additionally, an inclusive curriculum is welcoming, accessible, challenging, flexible, intentional, and authentic." (Smucker 2022, 2; also Stentiford and Koutsouris, 2022, 1-3)

The priorities and approaches of DEI developed in part as the result of research and advocacy within the humanities disciplines. Historians have revealed the extent, subtlety, and

insidiousness of various forms of discrimination in our society; pedagogues have uncovered implicit biases in the teaching and content of many humanities courses; literary and arts scholars have widely diversified the canon of creators and works taught in these courses; and academic departments, professional organizations, and scholarly journals have made dedicated efforts to diversify their memberships and elevate individuals from underrepresented groups into leadership roles. Today, despite the research and progress within the humanities, many academic programs and courses still do not feature diverse and inclusive content. A cursory examination of the History, Humanities, Literature, and Philosophy courses on our list indicated that they do not strive to meet our goals for course content.

TESU utilizes RLX, a learner-centered rubric for designing its courses. We developed RLX last year to serve our student body--our intended and current audience. TESU enrolls approximately 3700 new undergraduate students per year (FY2020-2023 averages), and the great majority of them enroll in our general education courses. In FY2020-2023, if multiracial self-identifications are excluded, Black students constitute an annual average of 20.5% of our student body; Hispanic students (of any race), 17.0%; and Asian students, 5.6%. More broadly, our service areas are majority-minority in terms of public school enrollment. Mercer County, in which we are located, is 33% white, 23% Black, 10% Asian, and 27% Hispanic, while the New Jersey public schools enroll 40% white, 15% Black, 10% Asian, and 32% Hispanic students.[i] As TESU's current and potential student bodies have diversified and DEI approaches have been refined, our courses have not been revised accordingly.

Humanities education for the general student population needs to be updated to complement DEI goals in higher education and the workforce. The humanities often are cited as being at the leading edge of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Scholarship in communications, languages, history, and other disciplines have driven the growing awareness of inequity and of multicultural subject matter that have fostered the growth of DEI policies. Surprisingly, though, popular and recommended humanities courses such as those at Thomas Edison do not include the needed orientation toward DEI goals or content directed toward fulfilling those goals. Survey courses in History, Humanities, Literature, and Philosophy teach curricula that reflect pre-DEI focal points from the 1980s and earlier decades.

The subject matter experts and consultant involved in this project will be well grounded in the foundations and best practices of DEI in their disciplines: American History, World History, American Literature, the interdisciplinary humanities, and Philosophy. In addition, at the outset of the project they and the Project Director and project advisor will read and discuss a series of short core texts on DEI theory, to confirm our familiarity with the parameters of DEI's aims and its relationship to lower level (freshman/sophomore) undergraduate general education.

Course revision at Thomas Edison is done in two phases. Phase One consists of the writing of the course design document, including an overview, module descriptions, assignment types, learning objectives (LOs), and the crosswalk between LOs and course activities. Normally the course designer, subject matter expert, and assistant and associate deans work on Phase One. In this project, Project Director Dr. Peretti and project advisor Dr. Kent and the SMEs and designers for all seven courses will meet at least once, and likely twice, during each revision's Phase One to confirm their common orientation toward incorporating DEI goals and content and to exchange concerns, questions, and ideas regarding successful course revision. Such meetings may also occur during each revision's Phase Two, involving the writing of quiz items and other details of assignments and other portions of the courses, but they are less crucial at this second stage.

DEI principles are built in to TESU's rubric for course design, known as RLX or Google Learner-Centered Design. These principles are given below.

Student construction of knowledge
- Consider how the course's design elements help students construct knowledge pathways that are reliable and useful. How does the overall course's design elements encourage students to build conceptual knowledge; transfer it to retrievable content and actionable contexts; and unlearn misconceptions?
- Specific design elements often cited:
  - connect content to job/workforce/interests
  - provide formative assessments to guide student learning and reduce misconceptions
  - problem-based learning
  - incorporate engaging activities

Inclusive teaching
- Consider how the course's design elements facilitate inclusive teaching by curating an engaging, professional, and welcoming space. How do the course's design elements invite, include, and honor students from diverse backgrounds?
- Specific design elements often cited:
  - incorporate DEI principles
  - sense of belonging for all students
  - highlight diversity in content, examples, and activities
  - accessibility

Intentional and Consistent Design
- Consider how the course may be received by a student as intentionally and consistently designed. Does the course value student time and energy? Does the course ask students to perform or show the "correct" way of learning in any way? Is the course easy to navigate for all learners?
- Specific design elements often cited:
  - engaging and innovative activities
  - usability/accessibility
  - formative activities to build foundational content mastery and then apply content in real-world or job-related activities

Each Phase will last approximately 8-10 weeks. For each phase for each course, one subject matter expert, one course designer, and one or two instructional technologists (for software, test creation, etc.) will be assigned.

The outside consultant will be a nationally recognized authority on DEI in the humanities curriculum. They will meet virtually with us at the beginning of the project to discuss assigned texts and present a webinar on best practices in incorporation of DEI. Throughout the project period, the consultant will provide occasional feedback regarding the redesign of the seven courses, and they will meet with us in a concluding session as well.

Project personnel

1. Burton Peretti, Ph.D., Project director. He is currently an Assistant Dean in the Heavin School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology at Thomas Edison State University and has extensive experience in managing academic budgets and programs. He received a Ph.D. in History from the University of California at Berkeley and has held teaching positions at the University of Kansas, Western Connecticut State University, and other institutions. He is the author of five books and numerous articles, chapters, and reviews. Dr. Peretti served as department chair and as acting Dean of Graduate Studies at Western Connecticut State. In the latter capacity he managed a satellite campus with a $1 million

annual budget and served as university liaison for two USDE Teaching American History grants ($1 million apiece) received by the Danbury, CT Public Schools. He served as Dean of Liberal Arts at Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale campus, managing a $5 million annual budget and a $600,000 bequest to the Music department. During a recent year as a dean at College of the Siskiyous in California, Dr. Peretti participated in the management of state workforce grants and the writing of new proposals. He has extensive experience in curriculum design in the liberal arts. Grant funds will support Dr. Peretti's effort on the project.

2. Tara Kent, Ph.D., Associate Dean in the Heavin School of Arts, Sciences, and Technology at Thomas Edison State University, will advise the project and support the efforts of the Project Director throughout the grant. Dr. Kent is a sociologist with a specialization in social inequalities at the intersection of race, class and gender. She is knowledgeable about effective resource development practices and budget management. As a grant administrator and P.I., she has worked with multiple granting agencies, corporations, foundations, and private donors. She has successfully authored state and federal grant applications and has procured more than $28,000,000 in restricted funds. Dr. Kent is co-chair of Thomas Edison's DEI Council, which guides the university's initiative infuse DEI into all of its main functions. She has extensive experience in curriculum design in the liberal arts.

Subject matter experts and the DEI consultant will be chosen at the outset of the grant period. Subject matter experts and the DEI consultant will hold terminal degrees in their disciplines and demonstrate an existing commitment to DEI in their curricula. Our outside consultant will be a nationally recognized authority on DEI in the higher education curriculum. TESU's staff course designers and technologists who will assist us in revising the humanities courses are experienced professionals who work with all disciplines to ensure the highest standards in content and format for our courses.

Institutional context and benefit

Accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, TESU is one of New Jersey's 11 senior public institutions of higher education and one of the first schools in the country designed specifically for adults. Founded in 1972, the University provides flexible, high-quality, collegiate learning opportunities for self-directed adults and offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificates in more than 100 areas of study.

Delivered in an online format to facilitate interactive distance learning, the seven courses in question are recommended for general education and are enrolled with hundreds of our students every term (which begin every month). They also are courses that have not been revised since at least 2015. (Some of our highest enrolled general education courses, such as English Composition, Information Literacy, and Public Speaking, are excluded from this project because they have recently been revised with attention to DEI requirements.) Their content has been determined to be especially deficient in DEI content. For example, Introduction to American Literature I concentrates entirely on a few major writers of the American Renaissance (1840-1860), all of whom were white and all but one of whom were male. Despite the clear importance of Poe, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Dickinson, they offer a very limited window into literary expression in America before the Civil War. The benefit of this project will be to update humanities courses that have not been revised in at least the past seven years, so that they will most effectively engage and serve our highly diverse student body. The project also has the potential to become a model for DEI-centered revisions of other courses and programs.

Spotlight on Humanities is highly appropriate to our medium-sized university. (The FY2022 total undergraduate enrollment count was 11,402.[ii]) The proposed project addresses significant needs in our humanities general education curriculum. As a largely online institution in the New Jersey state university system, Thomas Edison receives considerably less state funding per FTE, due to the structuring of various funding formulas. TESU has mastered an economical system of contracted subject matter experts working with TESU's Center for Learning Technology staff for each course (and program) revision, but this system allows for only a limited number of revisions per year. The NEH Spotlight on Humanities Development Grant will supplement our current budget for course revision. Also, it will enable us to coordinate seven course revisions along the major focus and theme of DEI goals and content, creating a multidisciplinary effort to provide inclusiveness simultaneously in seven of our highest-enrolled humanities courses. The project will create both momentum and a model for further colloquy and revision within the humanities, and in other academic sectors as well.

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[i] Thomas Edison State University, Office of the Vice President for Planning and Research, *Enrollment Data Cubes (2019-2022); Majority Public School Student Race and Ethnicity in New Jersey by County*, https://www.zipdatamaps.com/counties/state/demographics/map-of-public-school-majority-race-ethnicty-for-counties-in-new-jersey, accessed 9 October 2022; New Jersey Office of Education, *NJOE Data and Reports*, https://www.nj.gov/education/doedata/enr/, accessed 9 October 2022.

[ii] Thomas Edison State University, Office of VP for Planning and Research, *Enrollment Data Cube FY2022.*

Work Plan

Activities:

1. Selection and contracting of subject matter experts and DEI curriculum consultant and scheduling of course revisions
2. Initial meeting of Project Director, project advisor, and subject matter experts with DEI curriculum consultant to discuss the project, timeline, DEI rubrics, best practices, and goals (virtual meeting)

For numbers 3 through 9 below, course revisions phase 1 and 2 include kick-off meetings and remote revision collaboration on the Moodle platform.

3. Course 1 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
4. Course 2 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
5. Course 3 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
    c. Progress meeting for Project Director, project advisor, and DEI curriculum consultant (virtual meeting)
6. Course 4 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
7. Course 5 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
8. Course 6 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
    c. Progress meeting for Project Director and DEI curriculum consultant (virtual meeting)
9. Course 7 revision by subject matter experts and University course design staff:
    a. Phase I: Course design
    b. Phase II: Course content completion
    c. Promotion of revised courses to students
10. Concluding meeting of Project Director, project advisor, subject matter experts, and DEI curriculum consultant to discuss challenges and achievements, template for future DEI course revisions (virtual meeting)
11. Project Director writes report on grant activity with input from DEI curriculum consultant

Timeline

Dates:	Activities:	Participants:
July 2023	Selection and contracting of subject matter experts and DEI curriculum consultant and scheduling of course revisions	Project director (B. Peretti) and advisor (T. Kent)
August 2023	Initial meeting to discuss the project, timeline, DEI rubrics and goals (virtual meeting)	Project Director, advisor, subject matter experts 1-7, DEI curriculum consultant
September-November 2023	Course 1 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 1, University course design staff
November 2023-January 2024	Course 1 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 1, University course design staff
December 2023-February 2024	Course 2 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 2, University course design staff
February-April 2024	Course 2 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 2, University course design staff
March-May 2024	Course 3 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 3, University course design staff
May 2024	Progress meeting regarding integration of DEI goals and content in courses 1-3 (virtual meeting)	Project Director, advisor, DEI curriculum consultant
May-July 2024	Course 3 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 3, University course design staff
June-August 2024	Course 4 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 4, University course design staff
August-October 2024	Course 4 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 4, University course design staff
September-November 2024	Course 5 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 5, University course design staff
November 2024-January 2025	Course 5 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 5, University course design staff
December 2024-February 2025	Course 6 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 6, University course design staff
February 2025	Progress meeting regarding integration of DEI goals and content in courses 4-6 (virtual meeting)	Project Director, advisory, DEI curriculum consultant
February-April 2025	Course 6 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 6, University course design staff
March-May 2025	Course 7 revision: Phase I: Course design	Subject matter expert 7, University course design staff
April-June 2025	Course 7 revision: Phase II: Course content completion	Subject matter expert 7, University course design staff
June 2025	Promotion of revised courses to students	Project director, TESU enrollment/advising staff

June 2025	Concluding meeting to discuss challenges and achievements, template for future DEI course revisions (virtual meeting)	Project Director, advisor, subject matter experts, DEI curriculum consultant
June 2025	Writing of report on grant activity with input from DEI curriculum consultant	Project Director