

# Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Fellowship Development: Including Community Engagement and the Arts and Humanities

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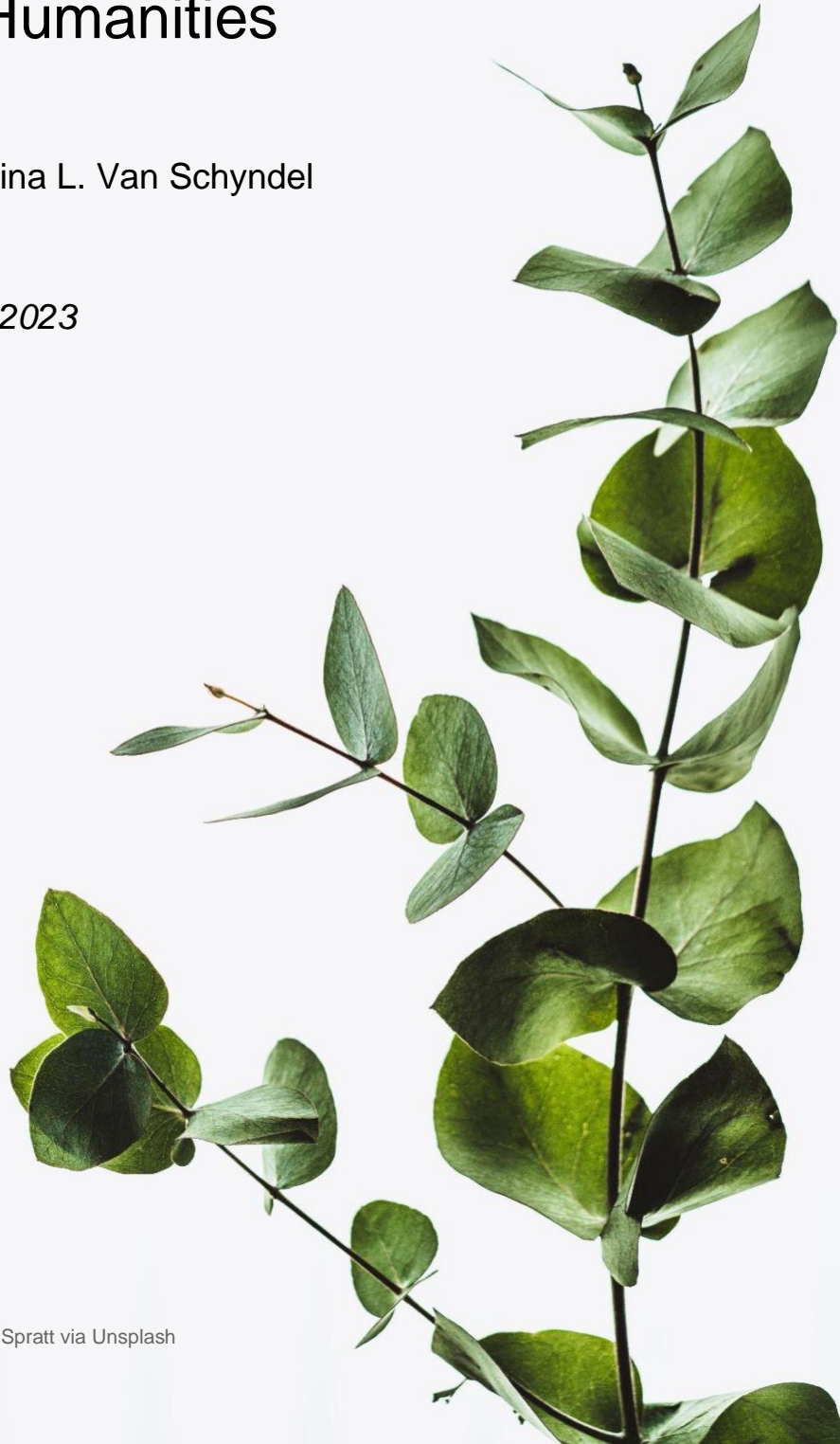


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# Research Brief

How are graduate students connecting to professional development opportunities and other professionals across the interdisciplinary field of community engagement? How are these opportunities and connections supporting their emerging identities and professional practice of community engagement? These questions inspired a recent research study focused on the development of a community-engaged practitioner-scholar identity through participation in community engagement professional associations as a graduate student (Van Schyndel, 2022). In particular, my study focused on one professional association's interdisciplinary fellowship program for graduate students interested in public scholarship and community-engaged methods across the arts and humanities. The findings and recommendations from this study provide insight into how others might create similar fellowship programs which focus on graduate education and professional development inclusive of methods of community engagement and of the arts, humanities, and humanistic social sciences.

## Introduction

To better understand and support graduate students' developing professional identities and how these identities inform future career choices, understanding socialization occurring both inside and outside academia is critical (Gardner, 2009; Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020). Inside academia, graduate students' departments and programs highly influence their socialization toward methods typical of their discipline (Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020). For community-engaged graduate students, on top of their degree program coursework, they may also partake in community-engaged dissertations (Jaeger, et al., 2011; Jaeger et al., 2014), certificate programs (Doberneck, et al., 2017; Matthews, et al., 2015), student learning communities (Mathis, et al., 2016), or other professional development opportunities that contribute to socialization toward community engagement. Outside of academia, disciplinary associations exist as an additional avenue for socialization into particular fields. For community-engaged graduate students, they may also take part in professional development programs for graduate students and emerging scholars offered by community engagement professional associations (Kniffin et al., 2021; Van Schyndel, 2022). Some examples of existing interdisciplinary programs offered by community engagement professional associations include the Imagining America Publicly Engaged Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows Program, the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement Graduate Student Network, and the Engagement Scholarship Consortium Emerging Engagement Scholars Workshop. While understudied spaces, professional associations (whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary) are important to understand as a component of graduate student socialization (Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020), especially as graduate students may continue their engagement with professional associations as they transition from student roles into new professional roles.

My research study contributes to understanding community-engaged graduate student experiences with professional associations during graduate school and outcomes resulting from those experiences, in particular for those students also interested in the methods of the arts and humanities. This underexplored area of inquiry is important for those interested in graduate

student socialization, socialization toward more diverse methods (i.e., arts- and humanities-based and community-engaged methods), the role of professional associations in socialization, and professional identity development for emerging professionals. A large group of stakeholders has a vested interest in the role of professional associations in developing emerging professionals, such as graduate students. Graduate students have unique professional development goals, and they need support and resources to achieve them. Faculty and staff who advise graduate students and early-career professionals must be able to direct them to appropriate support and resources to achieve professional development goals and support career transitions. Employers and their employees look to professional associations for ethics and guidelines, resources, and opportunities for professional development, especially for emerging professionals. Finally, professional associations, especially those reliant on membership dues or fees from training, resources, conferences, and other events, want to offer relevant content to their members.

## Summary

The purpose of my study was to explore how a professional identity as a community-engaged practitioner-scholar is fostered through participation in professional communities, such as professional associations, while in graduate school. The primary research question guiding the study was: How does participation in a graduate fellows program offered by a community engagement professional association contribute to the professional identity development of a community-engaged practitioner-scholar?

The study was a basic, exploratory qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) which examined professional identity development of community-engaged practitioner-scholars through participation in a community engagement professional associations' graduate student fellowship – the Imagining America (IA) Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows program (see Appendix A). While the PAGE program is open to students from any degree program with an interest in public scholarship and community engagement, it also specifically encourages applicants with an interest in the arts, humanities, and design. Data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews with 15 PAGE Fellows alumni who self-identified as community-engaged scholar-practitioners, who participated in the fellowship between 2008-2017, and who came from graduate degree programs across the arts, humanities, and humanistic social sciences.

Data analysis included thematic analysis of interview transcriptions, using an inductive rather than a deductive approach to make meaning from the data, as well as two rounds of data coding. The first round used an open coding process to see what initial categories might emerge from the interviews, and the second round used a holistic coding process of theming the data focused on combining categories and identifying big ideas across interviews (Saldaña, 2015). From this two-step process six major themes emerged across interviews, which were then divided into two sections. The first section, the people, focused on themes of participant backgrounds and ways of work. The second section, the setting, focused on themes of

experiencing tension within the academy, as well as new conceptualizations, new relationships, and new practices developed through the PAGE Fellows program.

## Findings and Recommendations

There are several critical findings (see lightly edited quotes from my research study in *italics* below) and related recommendations for both scholars and practitioners interested in building interdisciplinary graduate student fellowship programs inclusive of methods of community engagement and of the arts and humanities. The recommendations below can be applied to research or practice associated with professional development programs for graduate students and emerging professionals taking place as part of graduate education or professional associations, as well as other learning contexts where individuals are experiencing marginalization, such as for the types of methods they bring to their work.

### Backgrounds

*Participants' backgrounds, including unique personal and social identities, characteristics, and life experiences, were intricately intertwined from childhood to adulthood. Social identities and characteristics included: gender, nationality/culture, race/ethnicity, class, religion, first generation college student status, and parental or relationship status. Life experiences included: geographical locations, familial relationships, educational settings, world events, and experiences with privilege and marginalization. While each participant claimed distinct identities, characteristics, and life experiences, they nonetheless developed and shared similar values and motivations as community-engaged practitioner-scholars. Regardless of their degree type, graduate program, or discipline, these backgrounds, values, and motivations wove their way into participants' graduate school experiences and future professional roles and careers.*

**Recommendation 1:** Graduate students must be treated as whole people who carry a diversity of identities, characteristics, and life experiences with them into academic and professional spaces. Choosing to *not* try to separate the personal from the professional is particularly fundamental to creating supportive spaces, communities, programs, or policies for graduate students, in particular for those with an interest in community engagement.

### Ways of Work

*The complexity of participant identities and life experiences mirrored the complexity of how they described their identities and work as community-engaged practitioner-scholars. Participants utilized different language and narratives to describe their work, yet they also found common ground in how their work unapologetically spanned multiple boundaries (between the university and community and across disciplines and methods), as it imagined and drove forward a more equitable and just world.*

**Recommendation 2:** Those supporting the professional development of community-engaged graduate students must acknowledge and take into account that community-engaged work may seem more varied and complex when compared to traditional academic work. Further, choices

to pursue this kind of work are often connected to the complex values and motivations informed by graduate students' multilayered identities, characteristics, and life experiences. Learning and development experiences, both within higher education institutions and outside higher education institutions, must not only acknowledge these personal identities, characteristics, experiences, values, and motivations, but also encourage graduate students to lean into and draw upon them as they explore and grow into their professional roles and work.

## Tension within the Academy

*As participants described not only their current professional roles, but also their journeys into those roles from graduate school onward, stories of tension within the academy emerged. Many participants found their emerging identities out of alignment with the values and norms of their higher education institutions. During their graduate studies, these tensions were within academic programs, departments, and even the broader institution which did not support and sometimes directly challenged the participants' emerging community-engaged practitioner-scholar identities. Similar tensions emerged during job searches, both from within their graduate institution (i.e., advisors) and from institutions to which they were applying (i.e., search committees). For those who continued to work in academia, tensions remained evident once they were employed and on an academic career path.*

**Recommendation 3:** Graduate students coming from degree programs in or integrating methods from the arts and humanities may already be experiencing academic marginalization when compared to their exclusively STEM-focused colleagues. Additionally, a lack of needed support for community-engaged graduate students continues to be the case within many higher education institutions. In order to create supportive spaces, communities, programs, or policies within and outside of higher education institutions, it is important to interrogate and acknowledge how graduate students interested in methods of community engagement, as well as the arts and humanities, may be experiencing marginalization on multiple levels.

## Supportive Spaces for New Conceptualizations, Relationships, and Practices

*Participants pointed to the PAGE Fellows program and the broader Imagining America network as places where they examined these tensions and emerged with a variety of new professional conceptualizations. Participants realized that there were others inside and outside academia working to reimagine higher education and community engagement. In particular, they observed how arts- and humanities-based and/or justice-oriented approaches to community engagement could be incorporated into their community-engaged work. Participants then began shifting their own mindsets and moving toward more integrated professional identities and ways of work that embraced these new approaches. This included developing and utilizing new vocabulary and narratives around their work. As a result of these shifts and embraces, participants felt more confidence to consider new future professional possibilities.*

*At the same time as participants were examining these tensions and developing new individual conceptualizations of themselves, many were developing new relationships. They found people*

*within the PAGE Fellows program and the broader IA network they related to in ways that they could not relate to others in their existing professional networks. In finding these people, participants were able to start conversations about their work from a different place, less focused on explaining and justifying their efforts and more focused on understanding and affirming. As they developed new relationships with others part of the broader IA network, participants discovered that these relationships felt more compassionate, familial, and relational versus competitive, individualistic, and transactional. Through these types of affirming relationships, participants were able to collectively construct opportunities and find support for their emerging identities as community-engaged professionals interested in the creative methods of the arts and humanities.*

*Finally, because of their combined individual and collective development, participants both experienced and developed a set of new professional practices. The PAGE Fellows program and the broader IA network were spaces where participants were inspired to make and be the change they wanted to see in the world and in academia, including supporting future graduate students. This inspiration also sparked new ways of thinking, being, and doing, especially more interdisciplinary and arts- and humanities-based approaches to their work as community-engaged professionals. Additionally, participants also experienced greater alignment not just in their paid jobs, but also in their life purpose.*

**Recommendation 4:** If higher education institutions, departments, and programs do not create inclusive learning and development experiences, graduate students with interests in community-engaged and arts- and humanities-based methods may search for and find pockets of resistance to marginalization which are more inclusive. Outside of higher education institutions, these inclusive learning and development spaces may take the form of fellowship programs, like the PAGE Fellows program, which affirm and encourage graduate students to explore and develop emerging professional identities and practices using community-engaged and arts- and humanities-based methods. Those working inside higher education institutions should maintain awareness of and promote these types of outside opportunities, especially if they work with graduate students who feel they are not receiving the institutional support they need and deserve due to their diverse backgrounds and methodological interests.

**Recommendation 5:** Graduate students may also find that in addition to more inclusive spaces, counterspaces to the academy are necessary for them to persist through graduation and successfully transition into professional roles. Counterspaces like the PAGE Fellows program allow graduate students to reset and reframe, collectively organize, and push back against the normative socialization processes of the academy that do not serve their needs as emerging professionals interested in methods of community engagement and the arts and humanities. These graduate students may carry forth these lessons learned into their professional workplaces, as they seek to advocate for and create more inclusive spaces for themselves and for others. Learning and development experiences that effectively support graduate students should also consider how these types of supportive spaces, communities, or programs can also contribute to leadership development in service to broader campus and organizational change to better support graduate students with diverse backgrounds and methodological interests.

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## Appendix: Imagining America and Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows Program Description

All information in this appendix and more details about Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA) and its Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows program were accessible via the website [www.imaginingamerica.org](http://www.imaginingamerica.org) as of March 23, 2023.

### MISSION

The Imagining America consortium (IA) brings together scholars, artists, designers, humanists, and organizers to imagine, study, and enact a more just and liberatory 'America' and world. Working across institutional, disciplinary, and community divides, IA strengthens and promotes public scholarship, cultural organizing, and campus change that inspires collective imagination, knowledge-making, and civic action on pressing public issues. By dreaming and building together in public, IA creates the conditions to shift culture and transform inequitable institutional and societal structures.

### VISION

We envision a world of expansive social imagination, constructed by multiple ways of knowing, where people work together to nurture healthy, vibrant, and joyful communities.

### VALUES

IA is committed to bringing people together as our full selves in critical yet hopeful spaces to imagine better ways of living, learning and working together. To do this work, we believe:

- It is important to struggle with the idea of 'America'.
- Creative culture is an important site of liberation.
- Organized ideas matter in the project of personal, institutional, and societal transformation.
- Nothing is completely new.
- Our work must be radically inclusive.
- How we learn and work with one another matters.
- Living up to our values requires institutional and societal change.

### MEMBER BENEFITS

Current members include 70+ colleges and universities across the U.S., including public and private, two-year and four-year, rural and urban, and minority-serving institutions. These institutions share a commitment to IA's mission, vision, and values. Students and employees of our member institutions can take advantage of a variety of current member benefits, including:

- National Gathering
- Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows Program
- IA/Joy of Giving Something (JGS) Undergraduate Fellows Program

- Research Initiatives
- Webinars
- Mail Art Project
- Social Community
- Regional Campus-Community Organizing
- PUBLIC: A Journal of Imagining America
- Leadership Forum
- National Spotlight

## PUBLICLY ACTIVE GRADUATE EDUCATION (PAGE) FELLOWS PROGRAM

### **Purpose**

Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) is Imagining America’s (IA) network for publicly engaged graduate students interested in the humanities, arts, and design. PAGE enhances the praxis and pedagogy of public scholarship; fosters a national, interdisciplinary community of peers and veteran scholars; and creates opportunities for collaborative knowledge production. The PAGE consortium, made up of alumni and allies of the program, promotes opportunities for mentorship and peer support from IA’s network.

### **History**

When IA launched in 1999, the national conversation about the state of higher education included deep concern for the future of graduate education, especially in the humanities—in large part a result of the acute job crisis. However, there was very little room in these conversations for input from graduate students. As IA’s Founding Director Julie Ellison remembers, “I went to a lot of meetings about humanities graduate education. All of these meetings were about graduate students, and there were virtually no graduate students in the room. Those that were present were not welcomed as peer leaders.”

Meanwhile, several programs devoted to fostering broad opportunities for graduate students were emerging around the country. As IA developed, Julie Ellison; David Scobey, University of Michigan’s Arts of Citizenship founder; and IA’s first Associate Director Dr. Kristin Hass knew the involvement of graduate students was critical in shaping the conversation about the role of public cultural practice and the future of higher education.

In 2003, University of Michigan graduate student Dana Walker worked on implementing plans for IA’s graduate network, titled Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE). An early invitation letter explained PAGE’s intentions: “The purpose of this new graduate network, supported by Imagining America, is to both inspire and inform graduate students interested in pursuing public and community practice through the humanities, arts, and design. Because of the inevitable fiscal constraints, PAGE is a modest enterprise. But the goal—of building a national alliance dedicated to taking seriously the public capacity of graduate students in the cultural disciplines—is an ambitious one.”

The PAGE network got a jumpstart at the 2003 IA conference in Illinois when University of Texas at Austin graduate student Sylvia Gale used her time on a panel intended to highlight

graduate student leaders in public engagement to ask the obvious: Where was the graduate voice in this conversation? What were students actually doing in the field, and what might they have to say about their own professional preparation? How far would conversations about “transforming” higher education go without participation from the newest and soon-to-be faculty members? Ellison approached Gale immediately and asked if she would be willing to undertake leadership of the PAGE initiative, already imagined by IA as central to the organization’s mission but not yet mobilized.

Over the next year, with Ellison’s support, Gale laid the groundwork for the program, and due to the dynamic participation and critical feedback from each new cohort of Fellows, PAGE’s role has grown. Former Fellow Kevin Bott became the program’s second director in May 2008. In 2009, Adam Bush became director, pushing the network’s leadership structure towards greater collaboration.

At the start of its second decade, PAGE reframed itself as a peer network organized by a rotating cohort of PAGE alumni who share responsibility for designing support structures for the new cohort. The program has used its funding from IA to host monthly peer-designed webinars and virtual dinner parties, to support fellows as they visit one another’s campuses, to generate conference programming, and to fund the co-creation of scholarly artifacts.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Students must be enrolled in a graduate program at an IA membership institution in order to apply to be a PAGE Fellow. Applicants can be at any stage of their graduate programs. Applicants must be graduate students during the entire academic year, but they do not have to be planning a career within higher education. Historically underrepresented groups in higher education (e.g., people of color, international students, non-US citizens, persons with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQIA persons, first-generation students, non-traditional students, and/or individuals from working-class backgrounds) are especially encouraged to apply.

### **2022-2023 PAGE Fellowship Benefits and Expectations**

Through the requirements below, PAGE aims to foster a cohort of fellows interested in pursuing collective and innovative scholarly and community-engaged practices.

PAGE Fellows will receive:

- \$500 honorarium
- Lodging and waived registration fee to attend the 2022 PAGE Summit on October 13 and the Imagining America National Gathering from October 14 – 16 in New Orleans, LA (Applicants must be able to attend the PAGE Summit and IA National Gathering to be considered).
- Opportunity to apply for professional development funds.
- Access to year-long mentorship and community-building events, both within PAGE and the Imagining America networks. These can include but are not limited to research projects, publication opportunities, and skill-building workshops.

PAGE Fellows are expected to:

- Contribute to the PAGE Blog salon
- Present a Lightning Talk (5 minute presentation) during the Imagining America National Gathering.
- Attend the PAGE Summit and IA Gathering. *Exact schedule to be determined pending changing COVID circumstances.*
- Participate in bi-monthly conference calls/webinars & cluster meetings
- Work towards a publicly engaged project

## Recommended Readings List

The following reading list includes scholarship referenced in the research brief, as well as additional readings that may be helpful for and accompany reflection on building interdisciplinary graduate student fellowship programs inclusive of methods of community engagement and of the arts and humanities.

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## Reflection Questions

The following reflection questions are designed to accompany the research brief and recommended readings list. They may be helpful to guide reflection on building interdisciplinary graduate student fellowship programs inclusive of methods of community engagement and of the arts and humanities. Those involved in this work may find these questions to be useful both as part of individual reflection and to guide reflection within planning, design, and evaluation teams.

1. What do the following terms mean to you: fellowship, interdisciplinary, community engagement, the arts, the humanities?
2. Can you identify and describe a person who exemplifies the type of individual who may participate in a fellowship program that aims to be interdisciplinary and inclusive of methods of community engagement and of the arts and humanities?
3. How would you describe the potential backgrounds, characteristics, or life experiences of the individuals who may participate in that kind of fellowship program?
4. What kinds of existing identities and work might individuals bring into that kind of fellowship program? What kinds of future goals might they have for after the fellowship program?
5. What kinds of values and motivations might inform the identities and work of the individuals who may participate in that kind of fellowship program?
6. What kind of knowledge and skills development or experiential learning do you imagine as critical aspects of that kind of fellowship program?
7. What kind of networking and community building opportunities and structures do you imagine as critical aspects of that kind of fellowship program?
8. What barriers might someone face to participation in that kind of fellowship program?
9. What kinds of support might be necessary for someone to participate in that kind of fellowship program?
10. In what ways might experiences in that kind of fellowship program connect to someone's developing and interconnected personal, social, and professional identities?

11. In what ways might experiences in that kind of fellowship program connect to someone's future goals for their work and life purpose?
12. What kind of individual and collective creative and scholarly work and documentation might come out of that kind of fellowship program (e.g. CVs/resumes, syllabi, publications, presentations, websites, blogs, social media, performances, art, etc.) that would support someone's future work and identity development?
13. What kinds of individual and collective leadership opportunities might be incorporated into that kind of fellowship program for participants to be able to advocate for and create more inclusive spaces for themselves and for others?
14. How could that kind of fellowship program contribute to institutional and systemic culture change that supports more diverse and inclusive methodological spaces for graduate students?

## Additional Resources

The following additional resources provide examples of 1) existing interdisciplinary graduate student programs inclusive of methods of community engagement and of the arts and humanities and 2) recent past funding opportunity examples which may be supportive of developing or evaluating these types of programs. Depending on your disciplinary background(s), role(s), or prior experiences, you may find these different resources to be helpful examples as you consider your own program development and evaluation. Please note that program and funding opportunities can change, and these are a sampling of what was available at the time of publishing.

### Program Examples

#### [Oregon State University: Interdisciplinary Student Fellowships](#)

This one-year fellowship offers undergraduate and graduate students at Oregon State University the opportunity to explore the intersection of two disciplines or ways of looking at the world. Fellows will develop a creative, journalistic, or scholarly project informed by active engagement with research at OSU at the intersection of one of four fellowship tracks: Art+Science, Art+Engineering, Humanities+Science, or Film+Science. Each fellow will be awarded \$1,000, ongoing networking opportunities and mentorship, and will be eligible to apply for a residency at the Cabin at Shotpouch Creek to work on their project.

#### [Stanford University: Stanford Interdisciplinary Graduate Fellowship](#)

The Stanford Interdisciplinary Graduate Fellowship (SIGF) Program is a competitive, university-wide program that awards three-year fellowships to outstanding doctoral students engaged in interdisciplinary research. The SIGF supports Stanford doctoral students in undertaking novel, cutting-edge research and pursuing questions that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. Examples include: 1) Interdisciplinary initiatives in bio-x, biomedical research and biosciences; international studies; creativity and the arts; K-12 education; and environment, energy, and sustainability 2) Multidisciplinary inquiry within and between the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences 3) Other emerging areas of interdisciplinary study.

#### [University of California, Davis: Public Scholars for the Future](#)

UC Davis' Public Scholarship and Engagement and Graduate Studies have partnered to support doctoral students who are interested in developing their community engaged research

with non-university partners. The aim of the program is to integrate community-centered theories, methods and techniques into the practice of the next generation of public scholars. Key to this is community engagement, which can be defined as a collaborative process with a specific community (i.e., place, practice, identity and/or interest) that centers on a common goal or outcome and defined by reciprocal and mutually-beneficial relationships. Upon completion of the program, students will be prepared to incorporate community engagement into their disciplinary field of study, research design and methods. This is an interdisciplinary cohort-based program open to Ph.D. students in any UC Davis college or school who plan to register for in-person instruction in the 2023 spring quarter.

### **University of Iowa: Graduate Engagement Corps**

The Office of Community Engagement supports University of Iowa graduate students through the Graduate Engagement Corps (GEC). The GEC provides graduate students interested in community engagement with training, networking, and funding opportunities to elevate their research and increase their impact in local communities. Publishing, conferences, and professional development workshops further enhance the graduate student experience. Grant funding will be available for GEC participants to apply for in the late Spring of 2023 to encourage the implementation of the skills they have learned through the Orientation and subsequent workshops. To be eligible, participants must complete the Orientation and attend at least one Office of Community Engagement/GEC workshop during the 2022-2023 academic year.

### **University of Pittsburgh: The Graduate Programming Incubator**

GRAD-PI invites experimentation with innovative, interdisciplinary graduate programming. Faculty and graduate students might host exploratory reading groups, workshops on interdisciplinary research or pedagogy, prospectus or dissertation groups across programs, or discussions on cross-disciplinary experiential learning. They might design a cross-cutting course, summer school, or a year-long research project incorporating undergraduate researchers and/or engaging with external partners such as community organizations. They might plan an interdisciplinary certificate program or micro-credential, or explore joint ventures with other universities. GRAD-PI offers seed funding, gathers supportive colleagues, and provides policy guidance to encourage and nurture their endeavors.

## Funding Examples

### **National Science Foundation: Innovations in Graduate Education Program**

The Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE) program is designed to encourage the development and implementation of bold, new, and potentially transformative approaches to STEM graduate education training. The program seeks proposals that explore ways for graduate students in research-based master's and doctoral degree programs to develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to pursue a range of STEM careers.

### **National Science Foundation: Racial Equity in STEM Education (EHR Racial Equity)**

This solicitation aligns with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) long-standing investments in the development of a

diverse and well-prepared public and workforce. It supports projects focused on advancing racial equity in STEM education and workforce development that are led or co-developed by individuals and communities most impacted by the inequities caused by systemic racism.

### **Mellon Foundation: Higher Learning**

Working with colleges, universities, and organizations in higher education committed to the humanities and social justice, the Higher Learning program makes grants that broaden our understanding of American history and culture; develop the interpretive tools and methods researchers use to create meaning; support faculty and students whose work exemplifies a drive toward greater equity in their fields and institutions; and promote pathways for those seeking to exercise transformative academic leadership.

### **National Endowment for the Humanities: Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education**

The Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education program supports the exploration and development of small projects that would benefit underserved populations through the teaching and study of the humanities. The Spotlight program supports activities such as curricular or program development, expert consultations, speakers' series, student research, creation of teaching resources, and community engagement. Projects may benefit students, faculty, the institution or organization, and/or the community.

### **National Endowment for the Arts: Research Labs**

Through a series of awards, the Arts Endowment has established a national program that permits transdisciplinary research teams, grounded in the social and behavioral sciences, to engage with the Arts Endowment's five-year research agenda. The National Endowment for the Arts Research Labs (NEA Research Labs) program will yield empirical insights about the arts for the benefit of arts and non-arts sectors alike. Each of the NEA Research Labs will design a research agenda, conduct a program to implement its own agenda, and prepare reports and other products that contribute substantively to a wider understanding several areas of special interest to the Arts Endowment. Sustained methods of inquiry into these topic areas will have distinctive benefits for the arts community, but also for sectors such as healthcare, education, and business or management. Labs are currently covering the following topic areas, with more to come in future years that align with our current Research Agenda:

- The Arts, Health, and Social/Emotional Well-Being
- The Arts, Creativity, Cognition, and Learning
- The Arts, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation

### **National Institutes of Health: Research Education Program**

The purpose of this program is to support research education activities that: (a) Complement and/or enhance the training of a workforce to meet the nation's biomedical, behavioral and clinical research needs; (b) Enhance the diversity of the biomedical, behavioral and clinical research workforce; (c) Help recruit individuals with specific specialty or disciplinary backgrounds to research careers in biomedical, behavioral and clinical sciences; or (d) Foster a better understanding of biomedical, behavioral and clinical research and its implications.

## About the Author

Dr. Trina L. Van Schyndel



I am currently the Membership Director for Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA), where I engage and support scholars, artists, designers, humanists, and organizers both internal and external to the IA network who seek to imagine, study, and enact a more just and liberatory “America” and world. I also manage and serve as the Primary Investigator on the grant-funded IA Joy of Giving Something (JGS) Fellows program which aims to elevate photography and digital media as pathways for undergraduate students, in particular low income and first generation college students, to pursue their careers and to make a difference in their communities.

I have extensive professional experience in nonprofit and education settings, including experiential learning, community-engaged research, and community partnerships. I have also been responsible for supporting regional, national, and international networks of community-engaged practitioner-scholars. Previously, I worked in the community engagement offices at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and the Medical College of Wisconsin. I am also a prior director of Campus Compact for Wisconsin. I currently serve on the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) Graduate Student Network (GradSN) Steering Committee and previously served as the Chair of the IARSLCE GradSN and as the GradSN representative on the IARSLCE Board.

I recently completed my doctoral degree in higher, adult, and lifelong education from Michigan State University, where I am also completing a graduate certificate in community engagement. My dissertation focused on the professional identity development of community-engaged

practitioner-scholars through their participation in community engagement professional associations while in graduate school. My other recent scholarly publications and presentations focus on understanding and supporting community-engaged graduate students and community-engaged boundary-spanners in higher education.

I also previously completed bachelor's degrees in international relations and German from Michigan State University, and then I served for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine where I taught English at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Upon returning to the U.S., my passion for experiential education and the environment led me to earn a master's degree in natural resources from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, and I have worked as an environmental educator in state and national parks, nature centers, and an environmentally-focused residential high school. My journey then led me to transition from environmental education to higher education, where I found a home in community engagement, especially place-based approaches to supporting and sustaining communities and their connections to the world around them. I am inspired by approaches to this work that incorporate the arts and humanities, especially music, dance, storytelling, photography, and handicrafts.

My ongoing professional interests lie in exploring the possibilities for creating supportive and engaging learning and development opportunities, whether those are offered through higher education institutions or informal learning environments like community and nature centers or professional networks and associations. In particular, I enjoy working and conducting research with undergraduate and graduate students, as well as early career professionals, to better understand and support their complex identities, life experiences, motivations, and professional goals related to community-engaged practice and scholarship.

If this inspires you as well, please reach out: [trinaavphd@gmail.com](mailto:trinaavphd@gmail.com).

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# Space for Brainstorming

