

Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research  
Vision and Structure  
29 March 2019

From December 2018 through March 2019, an Advisory Committee met to create a shared governance structure and funding guidelines for the Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (WIHR). This group's work resulted in the constitution of these guidelines and a new Steering Committee.

This group was guided by the idea that the institute's structure should reflect its vision and its ends, namely, to be:

- An engine for producing research,
- A hub of community for faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and the public, and
- A model of democratic education, fit for our land-grant, public-facing institution.

The group was motivated by a set of first principles:

- The institute's power comes from the people who participate in it. Therefore, its policies and structures should be as universally inclusive as possible. Participants should be defined by their work, rather than by their home unit.
- Humanities work is everywhere, and it has always been a part of the land-grant mission
- A Steering Committee is necessary for diversity of thought and the democratic principle of shared governance

The Advisory Committee set the following as a policy for the institute's funding programs:

“The Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research welcomes applications for its funding programs from faculty and staff at UW and the state's community colleges, regardless of home unit, location, or rank, whose project has humanities content. While the requirements of particular funding competitions may vary, and selections will be made according to quality, we wish to invite for consideration a great diversity of projects anchored in the humanities, including interdisciplinary projects. In keeping with the land grant mission, events and programs will be open to the public.”

The rights and responsibilities of Steering Committee members are as follows:

- To share the institute's governance, especially including funding decisions and initiatives
- To cultivate participation; to evaluate proposals; to register as NEH reviewer, learn the review process, and pass on that knowledge
- To join a WIHR committee: Grants or Programs
- To be in residence on campus, not on sabbatical or leave

The Advisory Committee was guided by careful study of WIHR's past governance practices and those of other similar institutes. It included members who were among the institute's founders and it garnered advice from additional faculty. The test of an effective governance structure is whether it works through experience; if the current structure proves ineffective, a future Steering Committee should revise it as necessary. That future Steering Committee should note that these guidelines were approved unanimously after much discussion, and should strive for a similar level of democratic approval.

## Process for Electing the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will have four members, plus the director. Committee members will serve on the Grants Committee, the Programming Committee, or an Ad Hoc Committee, as needed. Ad Hoc committees may be constituted when necessary, and may include faculty and staff not on the Steering Committee. The director and the Steering Committee will also meet as committee of the whole for governance.

Given the need for, and advantages of, having a democratic, productive, and participatory institute, the method of constituting its Steering Committee will be as follows:

- Each academic year, the cohort of Humanities Research Group fellows will elect by ranked choice voting one of its members for a two year term
- Additionally, each academic year the current Steering Committee will make an open call for volunteers to stand for election to fill one spot, having a two year term. These volunteers can be recruited based on strategic needs, experience, expertise, or the like. If there is one total volunteer, the current Steering Committee may elect them as a slate. If more than two people volunteer for the spot, an electorate of faculty and staff who have opted into the institute's list will use ranked choice voting to select for the spot.

If no members of the Humanities Research Group wish to stand for election, additional volunteers may be added, to have a Steering Committee with four members.

(For the initial Steering Committee, two members of the Advisory Committee will be grandmothers forward to serve, until the next election.)

The advantages of this system are that it is democratic, participatory, and open. Given the rotation of terms, over time an ever-increasing number of people will have served as Steering Committee members, thus having the opportunity to have a substantive, decision-making role in the institute's governance. Given that any faculty or staff member, regardless of unit, location, or rank may apply for the Humanities Research Group or respond to the call to volunteer, the institute's structure hopes to mirror its first principles.

Members of the Advisory Committee:

Scott Henkel, Director, Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research

Jacquelyn Bridgeman, School of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice

Kent Drummond, Management and Marketing

Ivan Gaetz, Libraries

Ken Gerow, Statistics

Susanna Goodin, Philosophy and Religious Studies

Isadora Helfgott, History and American Studies

Joy Landeira, Modern and Classical Languages

Julia Obert, English

Peter Parolin, Honors