Feasibility Study for English Doctoral Degree in the Public Humanities

Assembled by

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**Executive Summary**

The English Doctoral Degree in the Public Humanities will be an interdisciplinary program with close ties to the successful master’s programs the department already has in place. For over a decade, English has been planning a PhD, and we are excited that the administration has committed itself to bringing this plan to fruition. Our vision is to develop a distinctive humanities doctorate focused on the public sphere: as the National Humanities Alliance notes, public humanities work seeks to extend the humanities beyond the ivory tower by engaging the public in conversations that inform contemporary debates, magnify community perspectives, preserve local cultures, and expand educational access.[[1]](#footnote-1) Such programs are the cutting edge of humanities education, because in addition to focusing on community engagement and thereby strengthening humanities programming statewide, they have the added benefit of preparing graduates for jobs beyond the academy.

The National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Public Programs defines public humanities projects as those that “bring the ideas of the humanities to life for general audiences through public programming.”[[2]](#footnote-2) This focus on public engagement signals a crucial and often unconsidered challenge of work within the academy. While housed at universities, the primary work of public humanities programs must be to engage those outside of campus—locally, state-wide, nationally, and globally. As this Feasibility Study establishes, there is a strong need for a humanities PhD at UW, with Gray Associates data, national endorsements, and the English Department’s already established graduate programs suggesting that interest in the distinctive program we have to offer will be high. What’s more, there is no other PhD program in the humanities on campus, which confirms there will be no duplication of existing programs. As we argue below, this public-facing PhD will disrupt traditions associated with outdated doctoral education elsewhere, be an engine for progress across campus and the state and serve as a national exemplar from its inception. The English Department is looking ethically and inventively to the future of doctoral education with the proposed English PhD in the Public Humanities, and we respectfully request the endorsement of the larger UW community.

**Degree or Certificate Title:** English Doctoral Degree in the Public Humanities

**Level of Degree or Certificate:** PhD/Doctoral Degree

**Delivery Mode(s):** On-campus program with traditional residential delivery, though students may pursue appropriate UW English Department graduate-level coursework offered online.

**Estimated Startup Cost of Degree:** Beyond the four faculty hires already approved by the Academic Affairs, the ongoing annual cost after the initial four years of building the program will be **$202,122.50**. Note that the total budget includes $144,529.588 of already existing college level funds that will be saved after the elimination of two full-time temporary faculty.

**Anticipated Launch Date:** Fall 2024.

**Description:** We propose a doctoral degree that bridges the skills in research, rhetorical analysis, critical reading, and document design traditional to English studies with a deep investment in public advocacy and community engagement. As markets change, humanities PhDs with interdisciplinary skills and real-world experience in engaging the community will stand out for employers. Through applied courses and internship placements as well as public-facing research deliverables, students will master communicating complex ideas to non-specialists, building partnerships with community and heritage and tourism organizations, and developing programs to serve social and economic needs. Whether students are interested in advocacy, arts programming, and non-profit work; in editing, grant writing, and digital humanities; or in making complex research accessible to broad audiences, the English PhD will provide the skills and professional networks necessary for our graduates to realize their professional goals.

While housed administratively in the English Department, the PhD program welcomes participation by all interested and qualified faculty on campus, including those in Anthropology, History, Modern and Classical Languages, Philosophy and Religious Studies, and the School of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice, among others. The program will encourage interdisciplinary projects involving the Haub School, the MPA program, the American Heritage Center, and the School of Computing, as well those involving local non-profits, government agencies, and business leaders who will serve as mentors and informal co-teachers. Students will gain the traditional skills in teaching and research that an English PhD provides while also working in the community organizing projects, raising funds, and helping people to tell their stories and advocate for their needs. In sum, our goal is to produce public intellectuals who engage the wider community and can take leadership roles around the state and region.

*Rationale & Need – UW and Wyoming*

The development of UW’s first doctoral program in the humanities is crucial to achieving UW’s commitment to offering well-rounded educational options in an encompassing array of research disciplines and professional fields. Adding a PhD in the humanities will elevate UW’s research reputation, bolster recruitment, support grant funding, and position Wyoming to address pressing social and economic challenges—and, significantly, to do so with our land-grant mission and Wyoming values in mind. Because the program will graduate experts in areas such as digital humanities and curation, public programs that promote Wyoming history and culture, and non-profit leadership, among others, the degree will support UW and Wyoming in innumerable ways. Moreover, the degree will strengthen undergraduate education by providing doctoral graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) for our undergraduate USP COM sequence, helping to eliminate bottlenecked courses that master’s-level GTAs are unqualified to teach, while simultaneously reducing the costs related to hiring temporary instructors.

*Rationale & Need – National Market Trends*

Meeting the social and economic challenges of the future will demand the curiosity, creative intelligence, and communications expertise that form the bedrock of humanistic training. As the Association of American Colleges and Universities and a range of professional organizations note,[[3]](#footnote-3) employers across sectors increasingly recognize humanities PhDs as experts in not just teaching, but in team-leading, project design, data collection, and, above all, communication across genres and media to various stakeholders.[[4]](#footnote-4) In the mid-2010s, Lou Simpson, then Geico CEO, called for the hiring of PhDs, including those with humanities backgrounds:

I can hire an MBA but it would take me years I don’t have to teach them . . . how to write, how to present ideas, or in fact how to have ideas, how to bring a major research project to term, and how to teach fellow employees. On the other hand, I can hire a PhD who knows how to do all those things and teach this individual a particular task in an hour. Why would I not hire your PhD graduate?[[5]](#footnote-5)

Employers in every field need employees who can teach, be taught, develop persuasive research-based arguments, and communicate at a high level both verbally and in writing.

Indeed, a growing body of recent scholarship on graduate education argues strongly for the re-envisioning of doctoral education in the humanities, arguing that rather than seeing the PhD as a mechanism solely to train future professors, doctoral education should instead be reimagined as an apparatus for multiple career paths outside of the academy. As one recent study notes, “embracing career diversity is essential: diverse career outcomes are a must if we are to have thriving graduate programs and graduate students.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Gray’s Associates’ market analysis data also supports this perspective, indicating that while traditional doctoral degrees in English literature are in decline, degrees that emphasize the professional and technical communication skills that our program will offer are in high in demand—in fact, doctoral completions in this expansive area of study are up by 25% in our region—not to mention offer the highest earning potential of all concentrations in the discipline.[[7]](#footnote-7) For the same reason, we believe there is high student demand for an innovative PhD combining training in professional and technical writing, digital humanities, and public engagement. The proposed English PhD in Public Humanities seeks to answer these demands from both employers and students in direct ways. Through interdisciplinary coursework, fieldwork, and required public humanities research projects, this degree will prepare students as editors, writers, researchers, administrators, educators, non-profit leaders, digital curators, content designers, data analysts, project managers, and more. As others attest, PhDs in the humanities and related fields not only “acquire skills that equip them for a wide range of careers”,[[8]](#footnote-8) but are particularly well suited to take on the challenges facing the larger public sphere. We envision our graduates putting their advanced expertise in writing and communication to work to support not just UW and the academy, but the greater Wyoming community and beyond.

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**Feasibility Study: English PhD in the Public Humanities**

**Overview and Description of Degree, Purpose, and Strategic Play Overlay**

The English Doctoral Degree in the Public Humanities will be an interdisciplinary program with close ties to the three successful master’s programs the department already has in place. Mirroring the objectives of these programs, the doctoral program will emphasize interdisciplinary research stemming from student interest in literature, rhetoric, writing, culture, and creative expression, with all students being involved in the community-focused scholarship of the public humanities. Our pedagogical objectives are to produce both excellent teacher-scholars and public-sector professionals who can engage the wider Wyoming community—that is, graduates who can take on leadership roles in the public humanities around the state and region, as well as feed our university, community college, and K-12 ecosystems in innovative ways. All told, we will offer hands-on student learning, community-based internships, and a flexible program of study that supports a wide range of job placements.

The English PhD in the Public Humanities builds on current department successes. Over the last several years, English has reshaped our master’s programs to include a new capstone option, the public-facing thesis portfolio, which allows students to tailor their theses to career tracks in government, the non-profit sector, K-12 and community college education, cultural tourism, marketing and business, and so on. Buoyed by this innovative thesis option, the state-funded residential MA program recently received twice our highest past total of applications, indicating the high demand for this kind of study. Further, both MA and MFA students in our on-campus programs receive state-of-the art preparation to teach first-year writing and other USP COM courses, and thus they serve the entire university community—as will our PhD students while not involved in their community-based internship placements. We also offer a three-year, tuition-driven low-residency MA degree popular among secondary teachers and other working professionals in Wyoming and nationwide. This program has grown from a dozen students in 2012, to multiple overlapping cohorts of over 30 students today. Beyond our two MA programs, the on-campus MFA in creative writing has a two-decade history as a nationally ranked program known for interdisciplinary excellence. In short, a PhD in English would expand our department’s already significant contributions to the university’s graduate programming and research mission and, by extension, further grow UW’s presence around the state, nation, and world.

We also want to emphasize that English is a financially prudent department that has a long history of responsibly managing our resources while expanding into new markets. Because of the success of our low-residency online MA, for example, English has the capacity to independently fund many master’s assistantships, and we also contribute over $140,000 each year of department budget and Foundation funds to support our graduate programs. Further, because of their advanced standing, doctoral students will be able to teach one-third more courses annually than master’s-level students, including the often-bottlenecked 4000-level USP COM3 courses that master’s-level students are not qualified to teach. Put simply, the addition of PhD students to our department will allow us to virtually eliminate the temporary faculty positions that support our COM3 courses, yielding an upwards of $145,000 annually to sync back into the doctoral program.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Taken as a whole, this doctoral program will fill an important gap in the state-wide community by directly connecting the research, teaching, and service of doctoral students to the people of Wyoming. To kick off our program’s public humanities emphasis, we are excited to announce a Mellon Foundation sponsored state-wide research project, “Re-Storying the West for a Transformative Future: We Are Wyoming,” a sustainable, high-impact signature initiative that will distinguish our doctoral program from the outset and strengthen UW’s community relations across Wyoming. With this $850,000 grant, primary investigator and Associate Professor of English Nancy Small is forming a motivated team that will commit to traveling around the state conducting story-gathering events designed to amplify the voices of everyday Wyoming citizens across a range of identities, professions, and roles. From the people who cook our food, educate our children, serve our country in the military, build our homes, and keep our communities running through good times and challenges, their stories will be the spotlight of this research. Primary outcomes include a sharable repository of materials for pursuing community story work, a living public archive of Wyoming stories generated through innovative methods, and an effort to promote university-community relations through high quality interactions and dialogue. Along with faculty investigators, our doctoral students will play a key role in developing this database of Wyoming stories and sharing them broadly with the public, which will not only appeal to students who wish to study in our program, but will prepare them for public humanities positions across the state and nation and distinguish our doctoral program as cutting edge from the outset.

Furthermore, this kind of community-engaged research will make the English PhD in the Public Humanities a complementary component to UW’s Carnegie Community Engagement initiatives, distinguishing UW as a national hub for innovation in humanities education and research as it supports all four pillars of President Seidel’s strategic plan. The program will be **1) digital** in its emphasis on the public and digital humanities; on professional, technical, and digital rhetoric and communication; and on film, media, and digital culture. The PhD will be **2)** **diverse, inclusive, and global** in an array of contexts, including through its participation not just in Mellon-sponsored statewide programming, but also in its involvement in programs such as Saturday University; Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research; the School of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice; the School of Computing; and UW in Scotland and other initiatives spearheaded by the Center for Global Studies; among others. Finally, the program will continue the English Department’s long history of **3)** **interdisciplinarity** and **4)** **entrepreneurialism** by developing programming that engages faculty and students across the disciplines as it generates online and traditional tuition revenue that will help the doctoral program and UW grow simultaneously. Given the funding models and innovations that English has already demonstrated it can create, supporting the PhD in English will raise already established standards of excellence in our evolving college of arts, humanities, and social sciences and across other colleges.

**Learning Outcomes**

Generally, our doctoral program’s curriculum will expose students to multiple career paths and require their collaboration with the public sector, with PhD students entering public life as part of their academic research. Innovative features include internships with state agencies, schools, nonprofits, arts organizations, historical preservation societies, and businesses; community-focused coursework and dissertations; and interdisciplinary partnerships with professionals within and outside UW. We imagine the program equipping graduates for career paths including museum curation, non-profit administration, public and environmental advocacy, public health activism, and Wyoming tourism, cultural heritage, and more, as well as traditional academic positions focused on teaching, research, and creative activity. Although traditional academic positions are few and far between and thus not the central focus of preparation in our program (see Appendix 3, pp. 16), the professional dexterity we will offer graduates will surely attract a range of employers, as scholarship footnoted above emphasizes.

Our specific degree learning outcomes include:

* Developing a strong understanding of the role the humanities play in society and public life;
* Gaining expertise in various areas of public humanities, such as community engagement, cultural heritage preservation, education, and public programming;
* Developing critical thinking and communication skills, which are essential for effective public engagement;
* Gaining practical experience through internships and hands-on projects, which help students apply their learning to real-world situations;
* Gaining knowledge of the ethical and social issues involved in public humanities, such as representation, accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and power dynamics;
* Contributing to the advancement of the public humanities field through original research, publications, and presentations;
* Gaining experience teaching in academic classrooms as well as in non-academic venues;
* Developing the ability to collaborate with diverse stakeholders, including community members, policymakers, cultural institutions, and nonprofit organizations, as well as with scholars from across the academic disciplines.

Indeed, while the program will be housed in the English Department, we encourage participation by all graduate faculty on campus. Although we imagine particular synergies with Anthropology, History, Modern and Classical Languages, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Visual Arts, and the schools of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice and Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies, we also imagine the program engaging a broad mixture of non-A&S units, including the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, the College of Health Sciences, the Honors College, and the School of Computing, plus cross-disciplinary hubs such as the American Heritage Center, Coe Library, and the UW Art Museum.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Curriculum Map[[11]](#footnote-11) and Program Structure**

The expected course sequence for the English PhD in the Public Humanities will include a mix of required and elective courses, most of which are already approved and that typically will be taken during the first two years of study for full-time doctoral students. Because we will require that our doctoral candidates will enter the program with master’s-level degrees, they will essentially be extending that coursework to tailor to their research interests and future professional employment. Further, most of the classes they take will be co-enrolled with other humanities-focused master’s students on campus, helping to both ensure maximum enrollments and offset the cost of standing up an entirely exclusive doctoral curriculum. To make clear, this is common practice in English studies. From high-powered private institutions such as Stanford and Notre Dame, to less-moneyed but nonetheless prestigious public schools in the State University of New York and the University of California systems, to similarly sized land-grant institutions like Nevada-Reno and North Dakota State, master’s and doctoral students routinely enroll in concurrent coursework, with only a small number of courses limited to doctoral students exclusively.

All the program’s required courses will be offered on the Laramie campus, though doctoral students may choose to enroll in UW-based online course electives that complement their research interests. For full-time funded students, the English PhD in the Public Humanities will be a four-year degree requiring 36 hours coursework beyond their master’s coursework, plus 8 additional hours of dissertation research. In years one and two, full-time students on state-funded GTA lines will serve as instructors of record for undergraduate COM courses and take on-campus graduate courses (9 credits per semester, i.e., two 4-credit courses per semester, plus 1-credit 5900, the graduate student teaching practicum). In year three, students move off state-funded GTA lines and engage in funded internships with community engagement fieldwork, collecting data for their dissertations and ultimately completing a portfolio-based qualifying exam. In year four, doctoral candidates move back into the classroom on GTA lines and research, write, and defend their dissertation projects—again, projects that directly engage in public humanities research and programming around the state and in our local communities.[[12]](#footnote-12) While not all academic disciplines embrace state-funded teaching assistantships to the degree that our program will, this is common practice in English departments across the nation—particularly at state-funded institutions—given that the discipline engages in the lion’s share of general education writing instruction and that doctoral candidates in English are particularly well-prepared to teach writing across the disciplines on both the introductory and advanced undergraduate levels.

*Required Courses (20 coursework credits, 8 dissertation research credits)*

Students take courses in three areas: 1) working in the classroom and beyond, 2) writing and storytelling, and 3) literature, rhetoric, and culture. 20 coursework credits and 8 thesis research credits are required.

1. *Working in the Classroom and Beyond (12 credits)*

* ENGL 5011 - Professional and Technical Communication: Histories, Theories, and Public Engagement Pedagogies. (\*New course, see description below. *4 credits*)
* ENGL 5020 – Introduction to Public Humanities. (Recently retitled from former ENGL 5020: Public-Facing English Studies. *4 credits*)
* ENGL 5071 - Inquiry and Methods for Public Humanities Engagement. (Recently retitled from former English 5071: Qualitative Analysis. *4 credits*)

1. *Writing and Storytelling (4 credits; choose one)*

* ENGL 5050a - Writing in Public Genres
* ENGL 5050b - Narrative Storytelling
* ENGL 5075 - Non-Profit Writing and Grants

1. *Literature, Rhetoric, and Culture (4 credits; choose one)*

* ENGL 5062 - Ancient Rhetorics
* ENGL 5063 - Feminist Rhetorics
* ENGL 5065 - Black American Rhetorics
* ENGL 5074 - Studies in Civic Discourse
* ENGL 5220 - Studies in Medieval Literature
* ENGL 5230 - Studies in English Renaissance Literature
* ENGL 5250 - Studies in Shakespeare
* ENGL 5270 - Studies in 18c English Literature
* ENGL 5280 - Studies in 19c English Literature
* ENGL 5290 - Studies in 20c English Literature
* ENGL 5310 - Early American Literature
* ENGL 5320 - Studies in 19c American Literature
* ENGL 5330 - Studies in 20c American Literature
* ENGL 5350 - Global Literatures in English
* ENGL 5360 - Literatures of Diversity
* ENGL 5455 - Slavery and Freedom
* ENGL 5885 - Studies in Popular Culture
* ENGL 5890 - Consumption, Markets, Cultures

*Other Required Credits* (*12 credits*)

* ENGL 5900 - Mentored Teaching Practicum (1 credit per semester, 4 semesters)
* ENGL 5960 - Thesis/Dissertation Research I (4 credits)
* ENGL 5965 - Thesis/Dissertation Research II (4 credits)

*Elective Courses (12 coursework credits; up to 8 credits outside English):*

12 credits are available for electives, selected in consultation with the student’s advisor and committee. At least 4 and up to 8 credits will be from units outside English. Electives aim to introduce methods and concepts from multiple disciplines and public-facing fields of study with both community and/or global relevance. When resources permit, students will be advised to enroll in courses such as the following, pending home-department approval and faculty interest:

* ENGL 5000 – Studies in Special Topics[[13]](#footnote-13)
* AMST 5020 - American Folklife
* AMST 5200 - Material Culture
* AMST 5300 - American Culture and the Public Sector
* AMST 5800 - Historic Preservation
* ENR 5870 - Environmental Justice
* ENR 5870 - Communicating Across Environments
* HIST 5630 - Seminar on Western American History
* HIST 5645 - Seminar on American Indian History
* LTST 5650 - Women, Gender & Migration
* NAIS 5110 - Foundations of American Indian Education
* NAIS 5141 - Instructional Methods of American Indian Education
* PBAD 5000 - Survey of Public Administration
* PBAD 5440 - Public Budgeting and Finance
* PBAD 5465 - Survey of Non-Profit Sector
* PBAD 5510 - Public Policy and Program Management
* POLS 5420 - Seminar in Public Administration
* POLS 5710 - Topics: Local Government Management
  + - Topics: Non-Profit Management
    - Topics: Wyoming Futures
* STAT 5220 - Statistical Methods

Additional courses from other departments interested in participating will also be offered. We note those above as representative examples of public humanities inflected courses already on the books, but recognize that not all departments listed may be interested in participating.

In year three, as noted above, full-time students will move off state-funded GTA lines and will be supported through grant, department, and Foundation funding as they participate in an approved internship with local business, non-profit, arts, governmental, or educational organizations approved and monitored by the PhD program director, the staff coordinator, and the dissertation advisor.[[14]](#footnote-14) Dissertation committees must be formed by the end of fourth semester and portfolio-based qualifying exams must be completed by the end of the fifth semester.

Year four will be devoted to dissertation completion, with full-time doctoral candidates moving back onto state-funded GTA lines and typically teaching COM courses. This capstone will be customized to each student’s career goals in consultation with the graduate director and the student’s dissertation committee. The PhD dissertation capstone may take multiple forms: a traditional, multi-chapter, argument-driven dissertation; a series of integrated publishable articles (each 20-30 pages in length) aimed at public-facing venues; a large-scale portfolio of writing and research on critical, pedagogical, creative, digital, and/or professional genres (grants, curricula, websites, short films, podcasts, etc.); a mixed- or multi-media archive combining objects, digital recordings, or other artifacts of public programs designed, organized, and led, including events, exhibits, tours, lectures, visual mapping, film series, fundraisers; a professional project, following research-based best practices, undertaken to further the aims of an organization or other entity accompanied by appropriate written deliverables outlining design, implementation, and results; etc. Such research is in keeping with the Modern Language Association (MLA)’s recommendations in its 2014 *Report of the MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature*, which recommends the traditional dissertation be reimagined in flexible, relevant ways.[[15]](#footnote-15) This recommendation informs the design of a dissertation as a kind of extended professional portfolio customized to student needs and aimed at audiences both within but increasingly also beyond the academy.

**New Course Description**

Our only new course needed to start the program, English 5011: Professional and Technical Communication: Histories, Theories, and Public Engagement Pedagogies, focuses on theoretical and practical issues in technical communication, giving doctoral students a strong basis to develop USP COM technical communication courses that explore real-world, public engagement contexts. Students will read and write about theories, trends, and issues in the profession; explore the historical growth of technical communication to include community engagement work; and learn about research issues they might encounter in more depth later in their studies. Because the course is intended to give students an understanding of the discipline of technical communication’s role in public engagement, it will focus on questions surrounding what the profession is. Is technical writing and communication a product or a practice? A discipline or a profession? Where and how has it been and will it be formed? Where did it come from and where is it going? Featured assignments will include:

* A program profile, through which students research technical communication courses at other institutions that engage in public humanities and community work;
* A textbook review, through which students examine a potential textbook they may adopt for a COM technical communication course on community engagement;
* A prototype syllabus, through which students use best practices discussed in our course readings and inspiration from colleagues, favorite teachers, and their own pedagogical imagination to develop a sample syllabus for English 4010 or another COM course that focuses on technical and professional communication and community engagement;
* Through informal classroom activities such as classroom discussion, journaling/posting, and peer review, students will also become acquainted with issues that complicate public humanities research, teaching, and work across sites in Wyoming and beyond, and thus become better prepared to take on a range of community-engaged research tasks and work beyond the doctoral program.

**Assessment Plan**

Although English as a discipline has no national accrediting body, UW English consistently wins top scores for the assessment of our USP programs, undergraduate major, and master’s programs. This is in no small part because many English faculty are specialists in assessment, and we will continue to meet the highest standards for university accreditation should the PhD program come to fruition.

*Phase 1. Implement Outcomes/Evaluate Objectives*

Working with PhD faculty, the English Department chair and PhD program director will evaluate 2-3 learning outcomes in core courses per assessment cycle or as determined by the institution.

*Phase 2. Direct Assessment of Student Learning*

Entrance Justification (pre)

Every matriculating student will submit by the end of their first semester a statement of rationale/justification for pursing the English PhD, including identifying a career goal and preferred coursework.

Surveys (during)

Students will be given a direct assessment quiz at both the start and the end of the required coursework assessing one or two of the degree outcomes.

Exit Reflection (post)

In addition to an exit interview, graduating students reflect in writing on what skills they gained in the program. This reflection focuses on outcomes determined in Phase 1.

Direct Assessment of Dissertation (post)

English PhD faculty appointed by PhD director will develop rubrics for assessing capstone quality according to ENGL PhD learning outcomes. This assessment will be conducted annually via two methods:

* Dissertation Post-Defense Evaluation, Students
* Dissertation Post-Defense Evaluation, Committee Members

Using a four-point rating system (excellent/good/fair/poor, with poor = 1 point and excellent = 4 points), faculty chairing dissertations will assess student learning outcomes. Using a similar four-point system already established for our master’s program, students will assess their learning experience during the dissertation process, albeit with attention to the specific learning outcomes to the doctoral program.

**Degree Program Evaluation (ongoing)**

The English Graduate Committee will review assessment data for the program every five years. Materials to be reviewed include exit interviews, surveys, and post-defense evaluations, from both students and committee members. The committee will produce a report with recommendations for changes in the PhD structure based on the data collected.

**Substantive Change Determination**

According to the Higher Learning Commission’s determination, the new English PhD in the Public Humanities has been authorized given the program’s lack of substantive changes to UW’s offerings: as the response email dated 12/22/23 reads “HLC has determined that it has sufficient information to constitute notification of the proposed degree program per policy and no further action is required.”

**New Resources Required**

Fortunately, the faculty hires necessary to stand up the program have been approved by the Provost’s Office and fast-tracked given the generous support of the Mellon Foundation. They include three faculty searches to commence in AY 2024-2025, and an additional hire following. The hires will include:

* Assistant Professor in Creative Writing-Nonfiction with an emphasis in Public Humanities Programming
* Assistant Professor in Indigenous Humanities with an emphasis in Environmental Stewardship
* Assistant Professor in Ethnic Humanities (open specialty) with an emphasis on Digital Humanities
* Assistant Professor in Professional and Technical Communication with an emphasis on Public Advocacy

To attract the broadest range of qualified applicants, the job advertisements for these positions will be inclusive, broad, and leave the secondary emphases flexible.

Regarding program administration and graduate student instructional staffing, we can keep our on-campus graduate programs roughly the same size but reallocate 9 of our current master’s-level GTA lines into 12 of the PhD GTA lines necessary to stand up a competitive program with appropriate minimum graduation rates: that is, our goal after the initial four-to-five years is to graduate up to 3 full-time doctoral students plus at least 2 additional part-time students annually, thus achieving the 5 degree conferrals needed each year to keep the program sustainable. This will mean only a modest infusion of new money to support 3 state-funded doctoral-level GTA positions, totaling in **$65,114.56 new ongoing dollars annually** (see Appendix 1: Four-Year Graduated Budget). Again, other ongoing costs will be covered by the elimination of two of our full-time temporary faculty—money that is already allocated within the English Department’s current budget. As our department’s FTEs and credit hour generation demonstrate, we are among the most financially efficient departments on campus, but we will require a modest infusion of new dollars to help pay for the 3 additional GTAs lines.

To recap, the department is prepared to convert a large sum of existing budget dollars to support the doctoral program by eliminating two full-time temporary instructors. Further, UW English already devotes over $140k annually in department budget and Foundation money to fund graduate teaching assistants: many of these funds were previously allocated to the department because of the revenue generation power of our successful low-residency online MA program. Perhaps most promisingly, the Mellon Foundation has recently awarded the department an $850k seed grant for developing our public humanities doctoral initiatives, dollars that will allow us to expedite the hiring of additional faculty required to stand up the doctoral program, but that will only be available to us in the first three years. In short, English has a long and successful history of entrepreneurial programming and successful fundraising, and we will continue to put those dollars back into our graduate programs. Mellon Funds and our already existing technological, library, marketing, and digital funding sources will cover costs we have in these areas.

**Executive Summary of Demand Statistics**

The English PhD in the Public Humanities will recruit and attract many non-traditional doctoral students with professional backgrounds beyond a recent BA or MA in English: inquiries about the program have already come, for instance, from people working in the non-profit sector with backgrounds in Communications; from working professionals in museum management and curation with MA degrees in Public History; from Wyoming community college instructors across a variety of disciplines; from Wyoming Humanities Council employees, and so forth. However, it is also worth noting that Grays Market data indicates a significant recent increase in graduates (30% in English Language & Literature; 72% in Rhetoric, Composition & Writing Studies, which includes Professional and Technical Communication, over the past three years) from English MA programs in the region (WY, UT, SD, NE, ND, MT, ID, and CO), and that very few PhD programs—none in the Public Humanities—exist in the Mountain West. Indeed, while English PhD programs nationally graduated 1,197 students per year between 2020 and 2022, English PhD programs in our region graduated only 20 of those students on average annually. Five states in the nation currently offer no English PhD programs: one of them, of course, is Wyoming, and another is nearby Montana. This indicates that there is a regional gap in the market for our PhD program to fill, especially considering most of the English PhD programs that exist in the region (including those at the University of South Dakota; University of Utah; University of Denver; and the University of Colorado, Boulder) follow extremely traditional curricula and culminate in standard book-length dissertation projects that aim to prepare students for academic careers—careers that, as the Grays Market data confirms, are few and far between. UW’s English PhD in the Public Humanities is therefore substantially and innovatively distinct from the programs of our regional comparators, and indeed from virtually all the programs being polled by the Grays Market data national analysis. There are a handful of new Public Humanities certificates that students can add on to more traditional humanities PhD work recently been launched nationally, including at NYU, Yale, and Northwestern, along with several Public Humanities tracks in English MA programs across the country (including our own), but there are no available full-length PhD program comparators that exist. Not one.

In other words, while Grays Market data indicates that the academic job market in the humanities is significantly saturated, the UW English PhD in the Public Humanities will not seek primarily to prepare students for careers in academia. Rather, the program will equip its graduates with the high-level training necessary to become thought leaders in a range of professions, including non-profit, corporate, tourism, heritage, and community engagement sectors. What’s more, Grays Market data indicates that English PhD graduates with preparation in Professional, Technical, Business, and Scientific Writing—the closest existing comparator category to a degree in the Public Humanities—make on average an annual salary of $100,130, and that “transferable skills abound” across employment sectors from such degrees: this in large part explains why these degree conferrals are significantly on the rise in our region.[[16]](#footnote-16) Ultimately, then, although there are very few true comparators available for a PhD program focusing on public-facing work and community engagement, our market analysis indicates both broad recruitment opportunities and ample pathways to post-graduation success for our doctoral students.

In keeping, beyond the university administration’s and the Mellon Foundation’s generous support of faculty hires—and given the relatively low amount of new dollars necessary to stand up a program of this caliber—the Department of English will work with the College of Arts and Sciences to allocate the necessary **$202,122.50** annually to begin this signature and groundbreaking program, only some of which will be necessary to allocate during the first four years of its inception. As time moves forward, as additional campus units and community partners become invested in the program, and as the English Department pursues future funding opportunities, we are optimistic that more funding sources will become available to help offset these costs.

1. https://nhalliance.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/public-humanities-projects [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.aacu.org/research/fulfilling-the-american-dream-liberal-education-and-the-future-of-work> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Employers Actively Seek Humanities Majors' Skills,” Study the Humanities Toolkit, National Humanities Alliance, 2021, https://www.studythehumanities.org/point\_1\_valued\_skills. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quoted from Leonard Cassuto and Robert Weisbuch, *The New PhD: How to Build a Better Graduate Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2021), pp. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Leanne M. Horinko, Jordan M. Reed, and James M. Van Wyck’s *The Reimagined PhD: Navigating 21st Century Humanities Education* (Rutgers UP, 2021), pp. xvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Gray’s Data assembled in Appendix 3, specifically pp. 15-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Again, see Horinko, Reed, and Van Wyck, pp. xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. As our 4-Year Graduated Budget Request for Ongoing Salary and GTA Costs notes (See Appendix 1), in addition to cost savings from eliminating two full-time temporary instructor lines traditionally used to staff COM 3 courses, English will continue to contribute substantial dollars annually to support department-funded GTA lines, though now at the doctoral level. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. English is currently assembling a list of department endorsements for the program, including potential qualified faculty who would like to design new public humanities courses or cross-list current ones. Thus far, we’ve received notices of interest and endorsement from the Haub School, the School of Computing, the Honors College, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Visual Arts, Communication and Journalism, and Music. We anticipate additional units will also express interest after we launch the program. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Appendix 2 for our detailed curriculum map, including a matrix outlining which courses fulfill specific learning outcomes. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Part-time students will engage in similar community-focused research, although they will be self-funded: each will work with a faculty advisor to design a degree timeline that meets their personal and professional goals, rather than serving as GTAs in the department. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. We imagine that all English faculty but particularly our new faculty hires will take advantage of this special topics designation to design new courses in the public humanities, with emphases such as “Ethnicity and Community in Wyoming,” “Digital Humanities for the Public Sphere,” and “Professional and Technical Communication and Community Engagement.” This course number will also be convenient for cross-listing courses in English with departments that already have public humanities coursework on the books. As our new hires are made and their future courses take shape, we will put relevant recurring offerings through the course approval process. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Existing Internal and External Partnerships for Internships

    1. Internal English Department Partnerships:

    ACES: Advising, Career, Exploratory Studies Center Advisor Handbook internship (Richard Miller)

    Art Museum (Nicole Crawford)

    Coe Library Research and Instruction Internship (Kaijsa Calkins/Sammie Peter)

    [Eighteenth-Century Life](https://read.dukeupress.edu/eighteenth-century-life) Internship (Ric Reverand & Michael Edson, editors)

    English Language Center (Petra Heinz)

    Green Dot

    Haub School (John Koprowski)

    Honors College SOAR Internship (Peter Parolin and Breezy Taggert)

    Neltje Center for Excellence in Creativity and the Arts

    [Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments](https://thepromptjournal.com/index.php/prompt) (Kelly Kinney & Rick Fisher, editors)

    UW Foundation Prospect Development & Corporate Engagement Internships (Cayden Ferrin/Angela Ploeg)

    Writing Center (Francesca King)

    Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (Scott Henkel)

    Wyoming Pathways from Prison (Robert Coulter)

    Wyoming Youth Latino Conference Instructional Design & School Coordinator Internships (Cecilia Aragon)

    1. Past and Present External (local, statewide) Partnerships:

    Thomas Baker, Superintendent, Fort Laramie NPS

    Brenda Birkle, My Front Door, Cheyenne

    Mark Brammer, Wyoming State Museum, Cheyenne

    Rosie Berger, Executive Council Member, ENDOW Committee, Cheyenne

    Pete Gosar, Downtown Clinic, Laramie

    John Keck, State Coordinator, Wyoming-Montana NPS, Bighorn

    Damien Kortum, Dean, Academic Affairs, LCCC, Cheyenne

    Delissa Minnick, Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Cody

    Bailey Quick, Grants Manager, Albany County

    Bob Sell, CEO, Ark Regional Services, Laramie

    Trey Sherwood, Main Street Alliance, Laramie

    Kelly Strampe, Eastern Wyoming College, Torrington

    Buck Tilton, Central Wyoming College, Riverton

    Gayle Woodsum, Founder, Feeding Laramie Valley, Laramie

    Robin Zimmer, Executive Director, COMEA Shelter, Cheyenne

    We are, of course, seeking out new partnerships all the time, so this list will continue to grow. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. https://www.mla.org/content/download/25437/file/taskforcedocstudy2014.pdf, page 14 specifically. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See, again, Appendix 3, pp. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)