

# Humanities Institute

» ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2016–17

**UC DAVIS**  
COLLEGE OF LETTERS  
AND SCIENCE



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**Amineh Helalian**, Program Manager  
**Becky Wilson**, Event Coordinator  
**Gina Nunes**, Event Coordinator  
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## ON THE COVER

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## Letter from our Director



The past year has been one of momentous change – changes to the country, to the university, and, much more modestly, to the UC Davis Humanities Institute. Germans have a word they use at moments of change, Bestandaufnahme, which means a “taking stock” or, more precisely, “gaining a sense of where things stand.” The changes in leadership in the country and in the university inspired us at the Humanities Institute to take stock of where we are, to reaffirm our commitment to the humanities and arts, and, we hope, to articulate even more pointedly the role of the institute at the university and in the broader community.

A key moment in this reassessment was formulating a new mission statement and strategic plan. Our new mission statement (see page 7) highlights the institute’s role in the promotion of arts and humanities around the campus and beyond – not only in faculty and graduate student research, as we have traditionally done, but also in teaching our undergraduates and in public programming for the wider community.

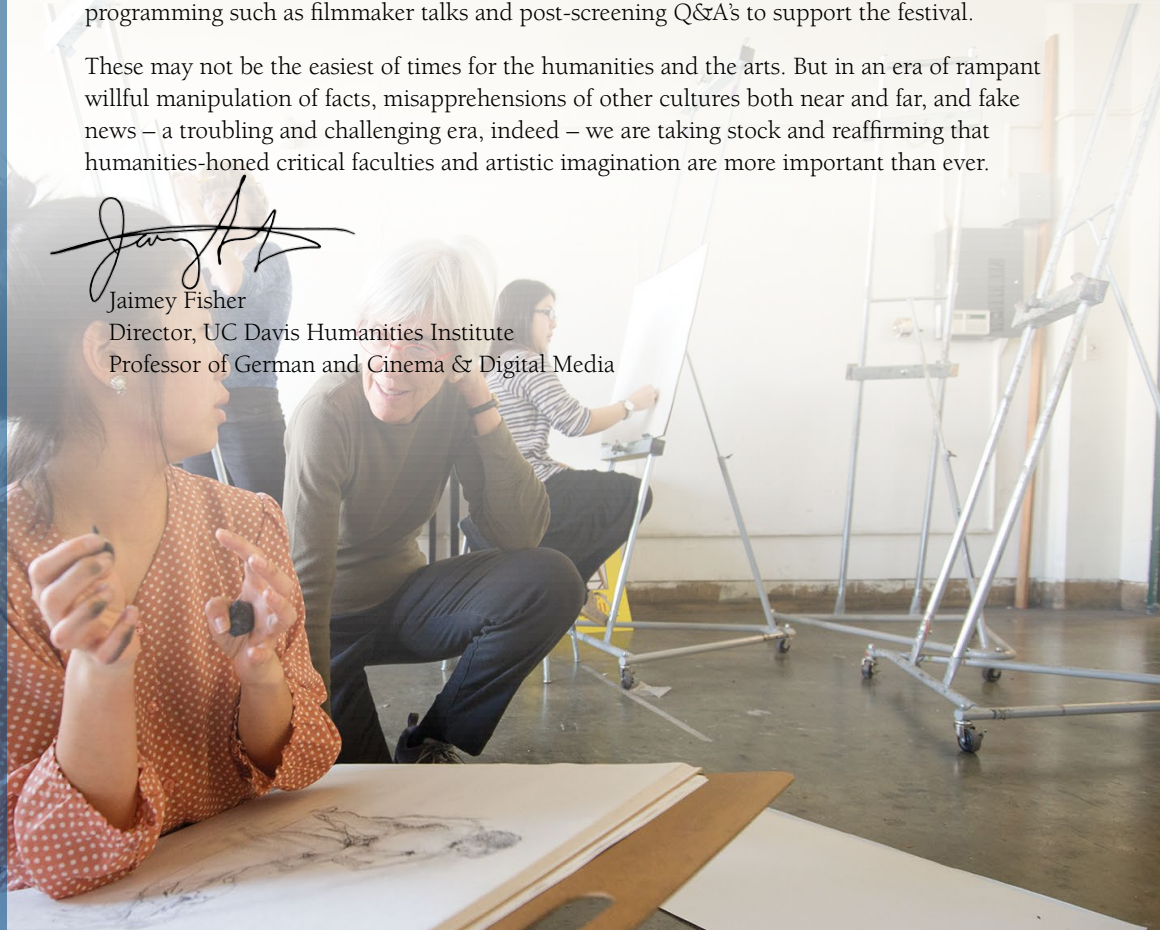
In line with this new mission, we have restructured our Annual Report to correspond to our strategic goals and projects to realize them. For example, in the section on the institute’s role in humanities and arts education, we detail our move into undergraduate research and teaching in the humanities and arts, including the Mentor/Mentee Program for undergraduate honors theses and new collaborations with the University Honors program and the Humanities Instructional Program.

Other sections, besides highlighting our continued and expanding work on behalf of humanities research and arts creative projects, focus on our engaging the broader public.

Looking forward. We will inaugurate a UC Davis Human Rights Film Festival in fall 2017, in partnership with the international NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW). HRW screens its festival in some 20 major cities around the world, including London, New York, and Sydney. The Humanities Institute, in partnership with HRW, is bringing a selection of these films to Davis and Sacramento for the first time. In cooperation with our campus Human Rights Initiative as well as the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, the institute will also mount public programming such as filmmaker talks and post-screening Q&A’s to support the festival.

These may not be the easiest of times for the humanities and the arts. But in an era of rampant willful manipulation of facts, misapprehensions of other cultures both near and far, and fake news – a troubling and challenging era, indeed – we are taking stock and reaffirming that humanities-honed critical faculties and artistic imagination are more important than ever.

Jaimey Fisher  
Director, UC Davis Humanities Institute  
Professor of German and Cinema & Digital Media







The UC Davis Humanities Institute (DHI) welcomes funding from individual donors and charitable organizations to support its interdisciplinary and collaborative research initiatives. As a “research hub” for the humanities at UC Davis, DHI exists to facilitate the research study of UC Davis faculty and graduate students and to convey that work to audiences beyond the university. Fulfilling this mission would not be possible without the generous support of private foundations and individuals who understand the role that humanities play in creating a vibrant and robust university as well as an informed community.

Please consider a making a gift to the **DHI Annual Fund**. Your unrestricted support will assist the DHI in its important initiatives to foster the humanities. Furthermore, a multi-year pledge option to DHI would make it possible to support a graduate fellow, research forum or public lecture.

To give please go online to **dhi.ucdavis.edu** and click the “gift” button on the top menu bar, or contact Christine Tebes (cmtebes@ucdavis.edu) at 530-754-2221.



# Promote Education



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**“This is our chance to forge closer connections to undergraduates and underscore the relevance and application of research in the humanities.”**

## Opening Doors for Undergraduate Research

In 2016-2017, the UC Davis Humanities Institute, which is housed in the College of Letters and Science, took over the administration of the Mentor-Mentee Program serving undergraduates in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. The program, launched in 2012 and previously housed in the Undergraduate Research Center, introduces undergraduates to academic research by pairing them with graduate students who guide them in developing individual research projects.

With the DHI now at the helm, our hope is to continue to grow the program that has already doubled in size and last year served 28 undergraduates with 24 graduate mentors. The program and its support of undergraduate research aligns with our strategic goal of supporting the liberal arts at all levels of education. Since the DHI is a research center independent of any humanities department or program, it has had fewer opportunities to interact directly with undergraduates. This is our chance to forge closer connections to undergraduates and underscore the relevance and application of research in the humanities. To further enhance undergraduate research, the institute's director, Jaimey Fisher, will teach a one-unit course in the University Honors Program next spring preparing students to conduct research.

Each mentor and mentee commits to meeting weekly, attending workshops and completing mid-year and end-of-year program evaluations. Many students end up presenting their projects at the annual Undergraduate Research Conference in the spring quarter. Among the benefits for mentees is acquiring valuable skills to help them find

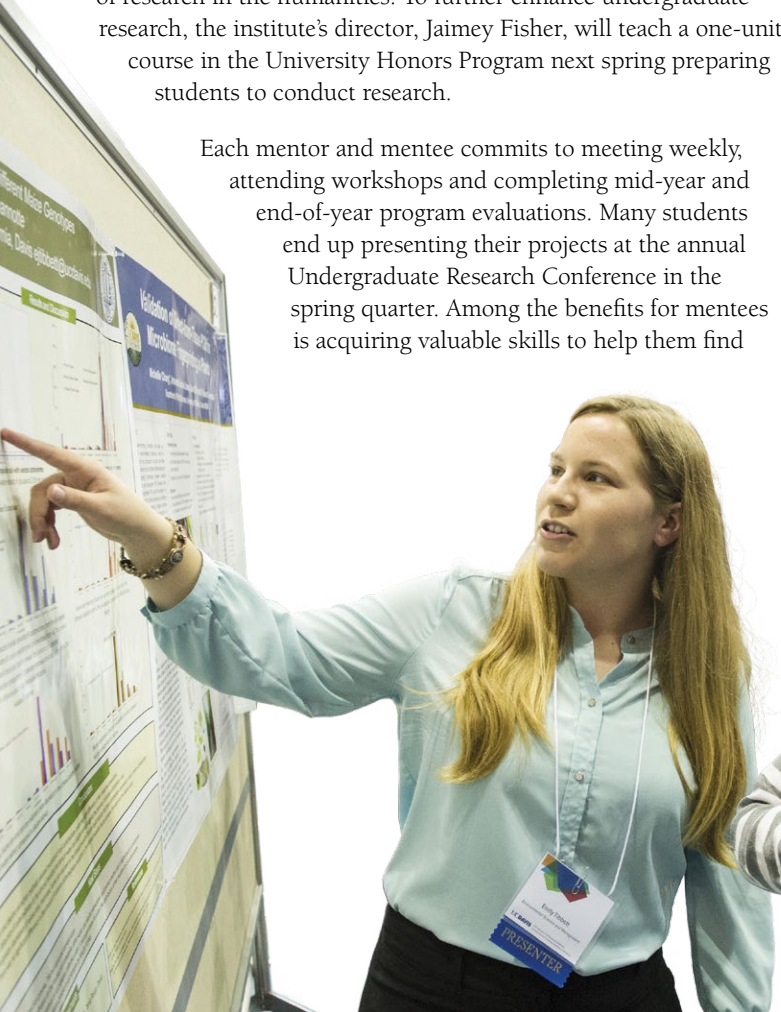
a faculty research mentor and preparing for a thesis project. Mentors gain mentoring and teaching experience and earn a quarterly stipend.

Mentors hail from many disciplines, including art history, sociology, history, linguistics, and political science. Mentees, often double majors, are equally diverse, with research interests ranging from global environmental policy to early Dutch secular art.

### ENRICHING K-12 LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM

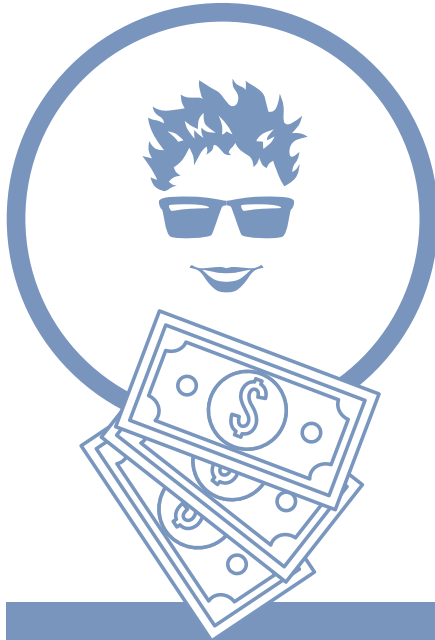
The UC Davis Humanities Institute hosted its first National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Seminar in July 2017. Based on the political theory of Hannah Arendt and led by UC Davis Visiting Scholar Kathleen Jones of San Diego State University, the seminar brought together 16 K-12 teachers from around the nation to Voorhies Hall for the intense four-week seminar. Many of the participants said they hoped knowing more about Arendt's work and reputation as a public intellectual would help them frame current debates about political conflict, the conditions of democracy, and the importance of human rights.

We hope the seminar is the first of many the DHI can bring to campus, a fulfillment to promote the liberal arts in all students' education. We encourage faculty members interested in applying for an NEH Summer Seminar or Institute to contact the DHI who can assist with the proposal and administration – now that we're experts!



# Foster Research

## Supporting Scholarship.



DHI Associate Director **Molly McCarthy** helps UC Davis faculty develop their research and refine their proposals, facilitating the application process from start to finish. Her work helped raise \$815,000 in grants for the 2016-2017 academic year alone.

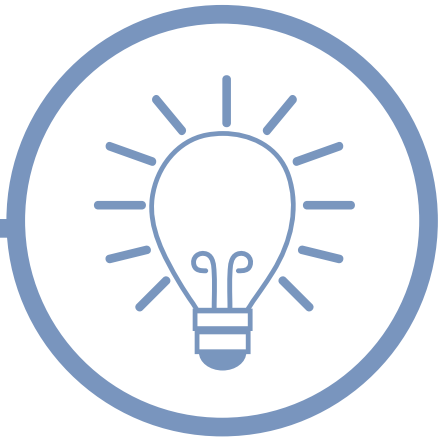
## Celebrating Collaboration.



Support for faculty and graduate scholars to conduct novel research and generate new knowledge is key to the UC Davis Humanities Institute's power to help shape the arts and humanities at UC Davis and beyond. In addition to directly awarding funds and helping scholars seek and apply for grants and fellowships from governmental agencies, funders and foundations, the DHI serves as a hub for cross-disciplinary collaboration.

At the heart of our work lies the Faculty Research Seminar. Once a week each spring, faculty from different departments and diverse disciplines come together in our conference room to share their works in progress—a book or article or piece of visual art or musical composition—and offer their insights and ideas in a collegial and welcoming space.

## Incubating Ideas.



In the 2016-17 academic year, the DHI raised and distributed nearly

**\$1.5 million**

to support research at UC Davis in the humanities and arts.

### Grants

**\$815,000** for support of research by 13 faculty and graduate student, and for delivery of workshops and training in communicating about the humanities

Generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, UC Humanities Research Institute, the Fulbright Program, the Hellman Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, National Endowment for the Humanities, Stanford Humanities Center, and the UC Office of the President.

### College of Letters and Science Dean's Funding

**\$100,000** for research collaborations, summer support, and public scholarship

**\$65,000** for faculty research fellowships and event support

### UC Davis Graduate Studies and Undergraduate Research Center

**\$10,000** for undergraduate mentoring program

### UC Humanities Research Institute

**\$30,000** for faculty research fellowships

### UC Davis Office of Research

**\$25,000** for funding research collaborations across disciplines

### Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

**\$450,000** for support of Mellon Research Initiatives Comparative Border Studies and Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds, and the second cohort of Mellon Public Scholars

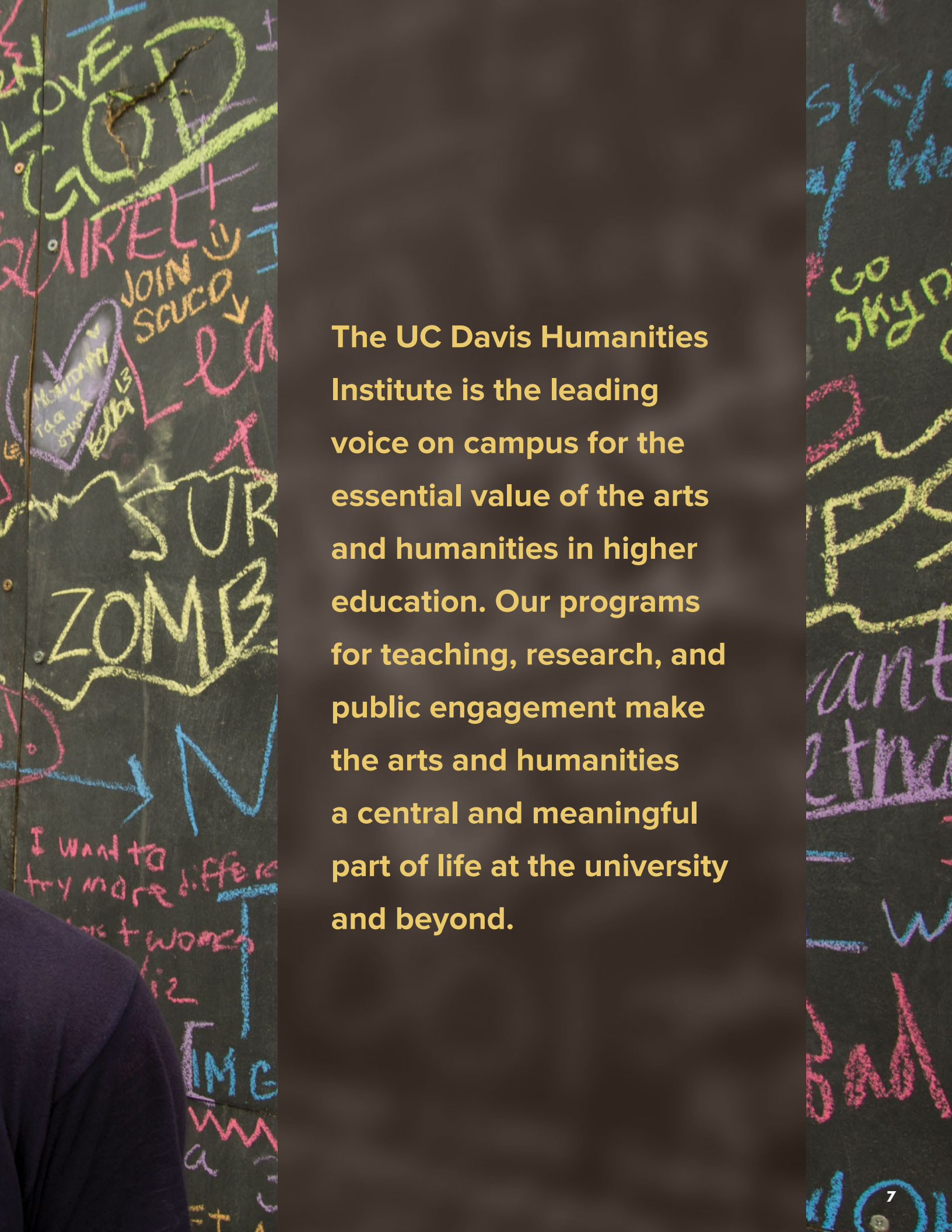
This year, topics ranged from associate professor of French Claire Goldstein's examination of epistemology in early modern France to ethnomusicologist Henry Spiller's exploration of the connections between the history of bamboo and Indonesian music. During the seminar, historian Lisa Materson learned that she had been awarded a UC President's Faculty Fellowship in the Humanities for her book, a biography of Puerto Rican independence activist Ruth Reynolds. And anthropologist Suzana Sawyer learned she had received a UC President's Faculty Fellowship for 2017-2018 and a research fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies to support her book-length study on the legal battles over environmental degradation and petroleum interests in Ecuador's Amazon.





**UC DAVIS**





**The UC Davis Humanities Institute is the leading voice on campus for the essential value of the arts and humanities in higher education. Our programs for teaching, research, and public engagement make the arts and humanities a central and meaningful part of life at the university and beyond.**



# Engage the Public

## Building Community Partnerships

“I am a scholar and a dance practitioner,” says Deepa Mahadevan. As part of this year’s Mellon Public Scholars Program, she is also a public arts program consultant. Two alumni of Deepa’s Performance Studies doctoral program, Dr. Shelly Gilbride and Dr. Josy Miller, guide her work for the California Arts Council. Working with them, Deepa expands her understanding of where scholarship happens, as well as her own career horizons.

“Their career path runs alongside their research. I look at them as scholars who are using their skill to read, analyze, critique, write, and reflect in order to work for the artistic community across the state of California. My understanding of a scholar has been enriched by this project,” said Deepa.

The Public Scholars Program supports graduate students who want to think about the significance of their humanistic training for people outside of the university. Ten selected students participate in a spring-quarter seminar and carry out a summer project with an off-campus partner. As they design mutually beneficial projects and work closely with a faculty mentor, these students make meaningful connections outside of their department and beyond the university.

These students represent art history, anthropology, cultural studies, history, world cultures, language studies, and literature, and their projects reflect the variety of efforts that benefit from the skills and approaches offered in humanities graduate programs. These ranged from lesson plans — such as ancient Mayan archeology for fifth graders and writing workshops for women in a Mexican prison — to interactive digital maps of Akwesasne Mohawk cultural sites and gentrification in the Oak Park neighborhood of Sacramento.

Mentors from policy institutes, state agencies, local food banks, and grassroots organizations stepped forward to guide the projects. These community partners welcomed the scholars’ capacity for qualitative, experience-focused research. Smaller nonprofit partners valued their ability to combine theoretical depth with focused project management.

UC Davis’s faculty are leading from the front in their commitment to engaging communities with their research. With their support, Public Scholars Program is changing the culture of graduate training. Students like Deepa help to embody and shape a doctoral education that encompasses the many meaningful ways in which humanities scholars engage the world.





# » 33 Scholars 11 Nations 14 Departments

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## MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH ART

As the Mellon Research Initiatives (MRI) program enters its seventh year at the DHI, these academic conversations around issues of social justice, the environment, and migration have extended into more public settings.

The Comparative Borders MRI in 2016-2017 collaborated with the DHI Research Cluster on Narrative and Performance to create theatrical piece called "Un-Stories" depicting — with first-hand accounts and transcriptions — the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. Nicole Ranganath of the Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds MRI used a faculty research grant to digitize historical material for a website documenting the history of Punjabis in California. Ranganath's project went on to receive a \$15,000 award from the California Humanities council to add Punjabi women's stories to the digital archives. Participants of the Comparative Borders MRI were also able to leverage their Mellon funding to raise additional support from the UC-Mexus program as well as Mexico's National Council for Science and Technology for a digital storytelling project that seeks to humanize deportation.

All of these efforts bring issues into the public realm encouraging dialogue and open debate.



# Mentor our Next Generation

## Young Scholars Pursue Diverse Career Paths

In spring 2017, the Humanities Institute partnered with the College of Letters and Sciences Institute for Social Sciences on a career networking event, inviting Ph.D. alumni and friends to discuss their diverse career paths in nonprofits, state government, tech, health care, publishing, and academic administration. Both the career mentors and students walked away with a handful of business cards and a better appreciation for the importance of networking.

“It was amazing,” said Elizabeth Grennan Browning, who completed her Ph.D. in history last spring. “The event gave me new insight into the rich diversity of career paths pursued by social science and humanities alumni and inspired me to think about a number

of fields that I had not previously considered.” Students also noted the “collegial atmosphere” and relished the opportunity to put into practice tips they had gleaned at a morning presentation on “How to Network,” delivered by Marjannie Akintunde, a Ph.D. career adviser at the UC Davis Internship and Career Center.

The mentors were just as excited to be part of the event, and some even expressed a wish that they had had a similar opportunity when they were getting their degrees. “I had such a wonderful experience this afternoon,” wrote Beverly Sandeen, executive director of the Yolo Community Foundation. Monica Westin, the publishing outreach coordinator for the California Digital Library, said she got a lot out of the conversations with students since it

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helped her to understand her own path into libraries. “It’s all about creating a narrative in some ways,” Westin said, adding that she hoped she helped students think about how to frame their stories.

The networking roundtable was part of a DHI career development series called PhD Unlimited. Launched in 2014, the series takes a broad approach to professional development with workshops and presentations on issues ranging from how to craft a teaching statement to the benefits of writing for a non-academic audience. The DHI provides a place, outside of academic departments and programs, for students to explore where their Ph.Ds. might take them.

## TRANSLATING RESEARCH FOR DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Every year we ask the recipients of the Margrit Mondavi and Letters and Science’s Dean’s Summer awards to distill their summer research projects into a single poster for our annual fall reception. As graduate students in the humanities and social sciences, it’s not a medium that they’re accustomed to as Anne O’Connor, a doctoral candidate in Cultural Studies, recalled: “It was a bit of a struggle. I hadn’t made one like this before.”

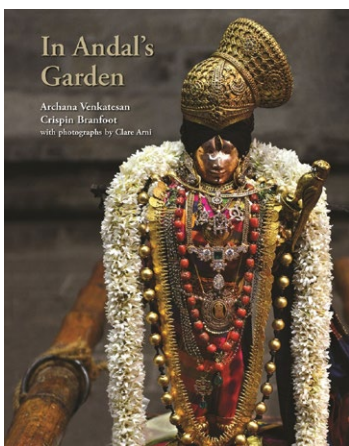
We provided the students with samples and templates, and some, like Jennifer Tinonga-Valle in English, looked for visual inspiration in their own subject matter. “I went to the bookstore and looked at designs of books associated with my topic (craft/writers’ residences) and tried to recreate that aesthetic in my poster,” said Tinonga-Valle. The results are always remarkable, and the students come away having learned valuable lessons. For Tinonga-Valle, she said “there’s a lot of value in repositioning your work to be public-facing and accessible to a nonexpert audience.” For O’Connor, she said the poster was a “helpful start” in preparing an article she produced from her research.





# Cultivate Communities

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## Sharing Our Work

A lunchtime talk series, the DHI Book Chats provide a forum for UC Davis faculty to share their new publications with the Davis community. Our Book Chats celebrate the artistic and intellectual ventures of our UC Davis faculty. Through this series the UC Davis Humanities Institute promotes the range and culmination of UC Davis' collective work.

Our 2016-2017 line up started with a discussion of English professor Scott Cutler Shershow's new book, *Bread*. This lively discussion with Shershow was well attended, perhaps partially because of his generous gift of freshly baked bread that helped illustrate his work on bread's place as a symbol for both social communion and social exclusion. DHI also hosted our first double billed Book Chat this year. James Housefield, associate professor of design, and Diana K. Davis, professor of history, came together to present their books, *Playing with Earth and Sky: Astronomy, Geography, and the Art of Marcel Duchamp* and *The Arid Lands: History, Power, Knowledge*. Presenting two very different books in one event drew a diverse audience to this Book Chat and encouraged both historians and artists to learn from their colleagues in different disciplines.

Archana Venkatesan, chair of religious studies, also joined us for a Book Chat about her new book, *In Andal's Garden*. This event, moderated by Chancellor's Colloquium speaker Davesh Soneji, was accompanied by vivid images from Venkatesan's book that allowed us to explore Andal's temple in Srivilliputtur while we learned more about the history and sacred landscape of southern Tamil Nadu under the Pandyas, in India.





## Sparking Engaging Conversations

**The Chancellor's Colloquium** is produced as a partnership between the UC Davis Humanities Institute and the Chancellor's Office. Since 2010, the series has invited leaders in government, industry, and higher education who spark engaging conversations with our academic community and the broader public around pressing issues of the day. In the 2016-2017 season, we had colloquia

whose subjects ranged from the history of museums to ocean acidification. Colloquium speakers often benefit the campus community in other ways during their time at UC Davis. Davesh Soneji and Katherine Butler Schofield gave a riveting colloquium on Indian music in March 2017. We were also lucky to have Soneji moderate a DHI Book Chat with religious studies professor Archana Venkatesan.

## MEET OUR CORRESPONDENTS

Every year, the DHI is joined by a team of talented Ph.D. students who keep the College of Letters and Science and the entire campus informed about humanities research and events. They profile new faculty and research groups, write features about exciting talks and lectures, and cover exhibition openings and arts events. And every Monday, they send out our newsletter with a round-up of the week's news and events. They play a critical role in fostering community and

creating connections. As Claire Goldstein, an associate professor of French and DHI Advisory Board member, observed: "This Week in the Humanities' is the single only effective/compelling piece of internal UC Davis communication that I get in my inbox. It's attractive and easy to read and manages to keep us all abreast of a wide variety of happenings, initiatives, accomplishments, and opportunities in what otherwise can be a rather architecturally and administratively diffuse environment." We could not have accomplished this without our 2016-2017 correspondents: Stephanie Maroney in cultural studies, Michael Accinno in music, Cordelia Ross and Jennifer Tinonga-Valle in English, and Kaleb Knoblauch and Nicholas Garcia in history.



Garcia, in his second year in the history doctoral program, said the experience has given him an appreciation for the diversity of research in the humanities and social sciences. "In my time at the DHI, I learned about topics and research methodologies that both fascinated me and pushed beyond what I thought to be possible," Garcia said. "It has meant a great deal to me to be one of the people delivering this information to the public. If the humanities are about figuring out why people do what they do, then I see building interest in the humanities as a crucial step to giving people a better understanding of both themselves and the society that they live in."





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