

The Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students

Background and History

The Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students (also known previously as *Connecting with the Community*) began in 2003, spurred by the University of Washington's participation in the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's *The Responsive Ph.D.* initiative. First proposed by the Simpson Center for the Humanities' Director, Kathleen Woodward, the Institute received initial funding from the Graduate School. Simpson Center continued to partner with the Graduate School on the Institute in subsequent years; that partnership has been expanded more recently to include sponsorship from the Divisional Dean of the Arts & Humanities and the Divisional Dean of the Social Sciences in the College of Arts & Sciences. The advocacy of graduate student participants has been instrumental in securing this on-going support, as well as in raising the profile of the program locally and nationally, and in developing related and more extensive opportunities for training in the field of public humanities practice. These include a series of continuing workshops in community-based course design, project development and assessment, and cultural policy, among other practices.

Two areas—group work and site visits—have emerged as centrally important to the Institute's elaboration as a place to refigure more collaboratively the cultural work of the humanities and the place of the university. In 2005, Bruce Burgett, Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences at UW Bothell, graduate faculty in English, and co-organizer of the Cultural Studies Praxis Collective was invited to join the Institute as co-director to deepen these practice-based aspects of the program. The evolving design of the Institute has subsequently emphasized collaborative group work and off-campus site visits as critical to its exploration of "community" and "cultural work." Participants in recent Institutes have spent full days off-campus at various community sites; they also worked together in groups designing prospective projects. Since 2006, the Institute's collaborative work has involved two former graduate fellows who return to help co-design and co-facilitate the program.