

Project Title

Revamping the Undergraduate Network for Research in the Humanities

Project Description

UNRH is an international conference *for undergraduates, by undergraduates*. It **first emerged** out of the leadership of undergraduate students at an ILiADS conference who identified a need for undergraduate research and labor in the digital humanities to be professionally showcased and supported. While the conference has run successfully for four iterations, UNRH is now at a breaking point where no members of previous leadership regimes are currently undergraduates, and funding avenues which previously sustained the conference's budget have now run dry. The following project team is therefore committed to revitalizing the UNRH network to continue to provide the foundational values of undergraduate professional development and student advocacy support that it was built upon with a stronger infrastructure for long-term sustainability.

Team Information

Pending proposal acceptance and institutional funding, the full team would like to work together on this project at ILiADS 2019. In the event of only partial funding for particular individuals, our team intends to Zoom call those who were not able to come in person for planning sessions in which their expertise and perspective will be particularly important.

*Arianna
Montero-Colbert*

Arianna is currently an undergraduate senior at Davidson College. Arianna attended UNRH 2018 as a participant and took on key roles in the steering committee for the

2019 conference. Arianna is invested in reinvigorating the institutional structure and steering committee for the purposes of the sustainability of this conference so that other participants may have as-full and more-full of an undergraduate network and array of research opportunities as she has had in her years with the digital humanities community. Her particular expertise and area of focus for this project will be working to advise on questions of **steering committee leadership structure** and working to create improved **documentation of operations and funding**.

Because Arianna is graduating this year, throughout ILiADS conference decisions and following the completion of the ILiADS week, she will primarily serve in a distanced advisory capacity to the execution of the UNRH 2020 conference.

*Taylor
Mills*

Taylor is currently in her first year of a dual graduate and law program at Michigan State University. Taylor has been a key leader involved in each year of the conference's successes. She brings to the project team the most extensive history and background, having been one of the conference's original founders and having served as the chair of the conference for the past two years of its execution. That being said, Taylor is committed to a long-term vision for this network, and in addition to advising on questions of **history, mission, and operations**, is especially interested in devoting her time and energy throughout this conference to developing a **stronger infrastructure for virtual networked communications** for each past and future cohort/iteration of the conference.

Because Taylor has already graduated, throughout ILiADS conference decisions and following the completion of the ILiADS week, she will primarily serve in a distanced advisory capacity to the execution of the UNRH 2020 conference.

*Tanaka
Chingonzo*

Tanaka is currently an undergraduate sophomore at Wooster College. Tanaka also attended UNRH 2018 and took on key roles in the steering committee for the 2019 conference. Having hosted the most recent UNRH conference with fellow undergraduate Scott Stout at Wooster, Tanaka brings to the team a unique perspective about the challenges and feedback from the perspective of navigating the host institution's needs as an undergraduate. In addition, Tanaka is the only member of the 2019 Steering Committee who will also serve on the 2020 Steering Committee for the conference, so having him involved in all decision-making spaces regarding the future of the conference will greatly aid the **execution of transitions and decisions** made at

ILiADS.

*Gabby
Miller*

Gabby is currently an undergraduate sophomore at Allegheny College. Gabby attended UNRH 2019 as a participant and has already expressed interest and initiative in hosting UNRH 2020. As such, Gabby represents one of the key stakeholders for making decisions about what the future of UNRH looks like, with special attention to making sure **SMART goals are established for hosting this upcoming year's conference** and procedures are established for achieving those goals (setting an ideal number of conference attendees, creating an initial budget and asks of key administrative and academic departments at Allegheny, determining external funding logistics, etc.)

*Sanzari
Aranyak*

Sanzari is currently an undergraduate first-year at Davidson College. As a first year, Sanzari is one of only three people at UNRH 2019 who will also be attending UNRH 2020, making her perspective incredibly important for hosting a successful and welcoming conference that builds upon weaknesses and strengths of the past. Sanzari also intends on serving on the Steering Committee for UNRH 2020. A key part of the sustainability of the conference involves making sure there are current undergraduates from several different institutions (not just the host institution) working together to continue the mission and execution of the conference. Because of her experience in direct action organizing and academic expertise in gender and sexuality studies and the sociology of race and ethnicity, Sanzari is especially interested in creating a **stronger process for project selection and conference outreach** that allows the network to effectively showcase the work of underrepresented scholars and projects in the digital humanities.

(+ *Emily Yochim, Ph.D.*, possibly via Skype)

Emily is an Associate Professor of Communication Arts at Allegheny College. Students from Allegheny College have attended UNRH under Emily's leadership and support for the previous two years of the conference's iteration. Following the completion of UNRH 2019, the Steering Committee's most salient feedback was a need for faculty and staff at the host institution to be involved much earlier in the process so that they may state needs and interests from **the institution's administrative perspective** more fully for undergraduates to be the most successful

in making asks of the college. Therefore, Emily's participation will be crucial to successful implementation of ILiADS decisions to UNRH 2020. She also will offer expertise in areas of **Allegheny-specific navigation**.

(+ *Mark Douglas*, via Skype)

Mark Douglas is currently an undergraduate senior at Allegheny College. Mark attended UNRH 2019 as a senior participant, allowing him to offer a different perspective for feedback and suggestions of improvement for this year's iteration. However, Mark's main area of expertise will be **Allegheny-specific navigation** and knowledge transfer and **mentorship of underclasspeople** on the project team, especially Gabby.

Because Mark is graduating this year, throughout ILiADS conference decisions and following the completion of the ILiADS week, she will primarily serve in a distanced advisory capacity to the execution of the UNRH 2020 conference.

Role of ILiADS

During the week of ILiADS, central overarching problems for the project team to solve include:

- Who are key potential sponsors for annual UNRH conference? How much of the annual conference budget should be obtained from the specific local host institution? Should the host institution sponsor through an academic department or external grant funds?
- How do we get buy-in early enough from host institutions to officially sponsor the conference that we can plan logistics in the fall semester?
- How do we cement a stream of funding without depending on an unsteady transfer of information between undergraduates trapped in a four-year graduation cycle?
- How do we cement the process of knowledge transfer and documentation of institutional memory in an accessible and useful way to future steering committees?
- What kind of time commitment is this going to be for each member of the steering committee and for the affiliated faculty/staff sponsor?
- *And perhaps most importantly*, how do each of these questions play out with regards to UNRH 2020 at Allegheny College?

Key documentation to create and organize includes:

- Host Packet (information + asks of potential future host institutions)
- Basic “Contracts” for Future Steering Committee Members (detailing the structure and roles the steering committee should serve)
- Virtual Networking Community Access (a platform for networking past and future cohorts of the conference)
- Budget Template for UNRH 2020 (anticipating the needs we can present to administrative figures at Allegheny College)
- *And a cleaned up, condensed UNRH Google Drive* (for future steering committees to be able to navigate with little guidance from past steering committees)

Particular gaps in our project team that could be aided with the expertise of a liaison include (in order of current gap/importance):

- Project management / operations experience: someone with an eye to aiding organization while still guaranteeing full agency to different members of the project team. This person could be especially useful in helping to facilitate group settings to achieve goals on an expedited timeline without making decisions for the group.
- Social networking experience: someone with an eye towards creating thriving virtual communication networks for folks to keep in communication throughout the different cohorts/years. Past years have failed to establish this successfully on different platforms and could use advice on ways to create thriving and active virtual communities.
- Higher education experience: someone who knows the ins and outs of higher education institutions, where power is held, typical budget timelines for academic departments, etc. All members of the group will have their own perspective of the institution and ideally, Dr. Yochim will provide the lead in this role, but any additional expertise will certainly be useful as the team is primarily composed of undergraduates.

Project
Timeline

**END OF SPRING 2019 SEMESTER / BEGINNING OF SUMMER 2019
TERM**

- Obtain funding for ILiADS 2019 attendance.
- Begin identifying Allegheny-specific needs and key points of contact for hosting UNRH 2019.

ILIADS 2019

- (See “*Role of ILiADS*” above.)

END OF SUMMER 2019 TERM

- Pitch budget and confirm sponsorship from necessary parties/departments/institutions.
- Confirm Steering Committee 2020.

FALL 2019 SEMESTER

- Steering Committee 2020 releases Call for Proposals and selects cohort for 2020.

SPRING 2020 SEMESTER

- Host UNRH 2020 at Allegheny College
- Identify Steering Committee members for UNRH 2021 and potential host institution.

Sustainability

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In parallel to ILiADS, UNRH was established to migrate constantly between different host institutions. Because UNRH is at a turning point, we wish to leverage past institutional memory, current institutional memory, and ILiADS community institutional

memory to determine what models have worked most successfully at other conferences that migrate. Ultimately, more than half of the project team's work will be developing a more solidified and committed migration plan for future hosts.

Though staffing and support specifically devoted to our project would be useful, we find it most likely that the Steering Committee each year will take on the bulk of the conference's work, ideally with the support of an active advisory board, and potentially including in the structure a single post-bac chair that serves as a liaison between the Steering Committee and the larger advisory community when necessary.

- Is this a collaborative project that includes students? Will they bring a team with the appropriate content or other expertise to ILiADS?
 - Yes, absolutely.
- Is the work proposed for the week of ILiADS feasible? If not, what would make it achievable?
 - Yes
- Are there areas of this proposal that need further development prior to the proposal being accepted? If so, please provide comments or prompts for that development.
 - No
- Which areas of expertise would be ideal for a liaison paired with this team?
 - Project management, higher ed administration, systematic thinking / design thinking, outreach and engagement
- Any other concerns or comments about this proposal?