HUMANITIES INSTITUTE AT STONY BROOK

"HISB lends distinction to Stony Brook humanities as a whole because of the distinctive profile and prominence it has achieved."
External Reviewers' Report

Founded in 1987, the Humanities Institute at Stony Brook, under the leadership of Professor E. Ann Kaplan, has grown from a small entity localized within the Division of the Humanities and Fine Arts to one that is known nationally and internationally. HISB has become familiar across the campus through co-sponsoring a wide variety of activities with many different departments, divisions and schools. With the move to the College of Arts and Sciences in 2000, HISB's ability to work with other entities on campus was enhanced. Since its inception, HISB has made a priority of bringing famous and cutting-edge thinkers, artists and writers to Stony Brook. These have included Laurie Anderson, Alain Badiou, Etienne Balibar, Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, Heidi Cullen, Jacques Derrida, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Julia Kristeva, Jean-François Lyotard, Elaine Pagels, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others. "One of the hallmarks of the Humanities Institute under E. Ann Kaplan's leadership has been its high-profile international collaborations, bringing the very best of the world's scholars in the humanities to Stony Brook," stated a distinguished External Review Panel. Results of these unique collaborations, such as that with Le Collège International de Philosophy in Paris, have been circulated through our books and other publications. Our events—covering a broad range of topics, from Freud to jazz to climate change—have been written up in *The New York Times* and *Newsday* and bring high visibility to the humanities at Stony Brook.

HISB's main missions are: the generation and dissemination of innovative interdisciplinary research through its many and varied programs; faculty and student education in a broad sense, including curricular development; and community outreach. Now nearing its 25th anniversary year, HISB has successfully carried out these missions through conferences, fellowships, Distinguished Lecturer Series, Faculty Colloquium Lecture Series/In-Dialogue, faculty and graduate student seminars, film series, events co-sponsored with other Stony Brook units, events organized in collaboration with local institutions, publications, awards and more. According to the External Review Panel, "It can be easily asserted that on its modest budget, HISB has repaid the university's investment many times over."

In addition to our public programming, HISB has undertaken curricular initiatives relevant to our interdisciplinary mission, even though we are not as such a curricular unit. We worked in collaboration with faculty across a number of disciplines to establish a Cultural Studies Graduate Certificate, ultimately housed in the Comparative Literature Department, resulting in the change of name to Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies. Now, with the assistance and guidance of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, we are initiating a program to integrate our offerings into the curriculum of departments across the university. In this way, HISB's resources will be shared more widely than before and faculty will benefit from their interdisciplinary dialogue as well. According to the Review Panel, "Its track record of generating innovative new curricular initiatives might be considered another concrete 'value-added' of the Institute." In addition, community outreach has always been an important goal for the HISB, and, as we discuss below, this work took a new successful turn a few years ago.

We are an effective tool for Stony Brook's efforts to attract and retain top-notch humanities scholars. According to a distinguished External Review Panel, "The prestige of HISB compensates for SBU's numerically small humanities faculty by making the university attractive to top-flight young faculty. It is thus a formidable recruiting mechanism." And our faculty members agree. HISB "was very important in keeping me here at Stony Brook," reported an SBU faculty member to the External Review Panel. And it's essential to graduate recruiting as well. "I applied to Stony Brook in part because the Humanities Institute was here," stated a graduate student to the Panel.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As we look towards the next five years, HISB plans to initiate new programs while building on past research. The projects listed below indicate past and future interdisciplinary projects while indicating our collaborative partners in each case.

COLLABORATIONS WITH THE SCIENCES

We plan to expand new projects with applied sciences. As the External Review Panel asserted, "It is not farfetched to see HISB, like other interdisciplinary humanities centers, as the equivalent of a *laboratory for humanists.*"

"Changing Climates, Changing Minds." This project, a collaboration between HISB and the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences (SoMAS), is predicated upon the belief that changing societal attitudes and practices is key to responding to the urgent issue of climate change. It brings leading scientists together with humanists and writers to discuss our society's responses to the realities of climate change. The project has included interdisciplinary conferences as well as film screenings, community outreach and more.

"Coastlines." Using the local geography of Long Island as a prism through which to consider global issues, this project, another collaboration between HISB and SoMAS, and select CAS departments as well as the University Libraries, seeks to examine how historical scholarship can illuminate our understanding of urgent questions such as climate change, immigration policy, and environmental sustainability—theoretical concerns that have become especially pressing in the wake of the Gulf oil spill tragedy. This project includes a lecture series, a reading group, an exhibition and more, and involves the collaboration of a new post-doctoral fellow hosted by HISB jointly with SoMAS.

COLLABORATIONS WITH THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

"Migrations and Transnational Identities." This project, involving faculty in political science, sociology, literature and history, focuses on the worldwide phenomenon of crossing borders—crossing, that is, state lines, race and gender boundaries, social class levels, economic barriers, psychosocial filters, logical codes and epistemological frames. What began as an interdisciplinary international conference is giving rise to a new undergraduate interdisciplinary curricular program.

"Unsettled Concepts: Disturbing Memory and Emotion." Research in the cognitive sciences and the humanities is putting received notions of how and what we remember and feel into question. Memories, no longer understood by scientists as packets of stored information, are now seen as the response of neural networks to the changing dynamics of the current situation. According to psychologists, what we remember isn't the past, but how the present can make use of past experiences.

Similarly, humanists argue that emotions are not private experiences but are powerful responses determined largely by our social and cultural environment. This project brings these varied disciplines into dialogue with one another in confronting such fundamental human issues.

COLLABORATIONS WITH THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES

"Global Modernisms." In the last ten years, Early Modern studies have become increasingly transnational and cross-disciplinary in scope, as scholars have moved away from the traditional designation "Renaissance" and now seek to account for a broader, world-wide phenomenon that may be understood as a precursor to modernity. This project, including a lecture series and reading group, builds on the growing interest at Stony Brook in collaborative approaches to studying the origins of the modern world and its legacies in today's globalized environment.

"Rival Sisters: Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism." This project, involving an international conference along with associated musical programming, will examine the changing nature of the relationship between the "sister" arts in the nineteenth century, from one in which each art form asserted its dominance to one, at century's end, whereby synaesthesia and collaboration were the order of the day.

FACULTY AND STUDENT EDUCATION

a. Curricular Initiatives:

As we look to the future, the HISB Advisory Board is working with the Director to consider establishing an undergraduate program in Migration Studies. This idea emerged from our conference on "Migrations" described above. We will also consider establishing an M.A. in Public Humanities. In both cases, we plan to work collaboratively with select CAS departments. HISB has experimented successfully with linking specific courses to our lecture series, and this is something we plan to expand in the future. Our "Voices in Cultural Studies" lecture series enabled faculty co-teaching an Introduction to Cultural Studies to bring Distinguished Guests in conjunction with the course each year. Our vision for the future is to apply this model widely, as noted above, so as to link courses across CAS departments, thus enhancing teaching and sharing HISB's resources broadly.

b. HISB Seminars:

"Transmission of Cultures." This Seminar, hosted by E. Ann Kaplan and now in its fourth year, brings together interdisciplinary faculty at SBU to discuss new humanities and social science scholarship. Each year, we select a broad theme around which to structure our meetings. Past themes include philosophy and psychoanalysis; post-colonial literature and film; ethnicity and emotion. As we look to the future, the Seminar will consider the futures of global politics and ethnicity with a focus on affects. New research on feelings is increasing in the humanities and very much warrants close analysis of the kind our Seminar engages.

"Science and Art." From very earliest days, HISB reached out to the natural as well as the social sciences. Our innovative project, "Researching the Researcher," brought scientists, social scientists and humanities and arts faculty together in a conference to discuss our varied methods in going about research. We followed this

event with an ongoing HISB seminar, "Science and Art," that for years enabled dialogue to take place between humanities and hard science scholars about research methods and the meaning of our work. As we look to the future, we will build on new projects in this case with applied sciences.

" Early Modernities" Seminar This seminar was organized originally in conjunction with a lecture series hosted by HISB and organized by faculty in English and History. Faculty studied research by the scholars who gave talks, and then engaged in discussion with them. The seminar will continue in the future as a way for interdisciplinary Stony Brook University faculty to continue to read and analyze increasing research that pushes back the origins of "becoming modern," and looks at cross-national transfers and influences in an already globalized world. This seminar is one example of how HISB fosters faculty dialogue across disciplines. "The Institute is a cosmopolitan space, a space of community, of dialogue," said one faculty member to the External Review Panel.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

"Port Jefferson Village-Go Green." Through a combination of educational events and community activism, this project has helped transform the university's surrounding community into a model of green living and business practices. Activities have included an annual information fair and smaller events throughout the year. Themes have ranged from recycling to clean energy to "Youth Leads the Way."

"Point of View Cinema." This project brought leading humanities scholars to the surrounding community to present films on urgent societal issues and lead a post-screening discussion. Topics have included immigration, suburbanization, environmentalism and other issues of importance to the Long Island region..

PLANS TO MAKE HISB SELF-SUFFICIENT

The Director and the Consulting Board will work towards setting up a "Friends of HISB" group, in consultation with the Vice-President for Research and the SBU Advancement Office. The main way in which other Institutes obtain self-sufficiency is through a substantial donation. Many Institutes carry the name of their donor. We would hope to join this group eventually.

We will continue to write grants. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has piloted a program called "Environment, Society, and the Economy" that is designed to support collaborative interdisciplinary projects such as the ones we are undertaking at HISB in collaboration with SoMAS under the rubrics of "Changing Climates, Changing Minds" and "Coastlines." In addition, the Andrew Mellon Foundation supports fellows, lecture series and seminars in the Humanities. They supported a seminar led by Peter Manning that HISB hosted over the past two years, and they are currently supporting a Post-Doctoral Fellow at HISB. In addition, local funders with whom we have worked include the New York Council for the Humanities, the Suffolk County Office of Cultural Affairs and the Kraft Fund of the Long Island Community Foundation.

The Humanities Institute has been a vital center for stimulating interdisciplinary research and creativity on the part of students and faculty. Our presence effectively changed that national and international face of humanities at Stony Brook, and has increasingly attracted the interest of both social science and natural science research

faculty. Our international collaborations and our publications mean that our research is widely distributed. We gain new perspectives in working with directors in the international Consortium for Humanities Institutes and Centers in which HISB's director has played a central role historically and today. We look forward to continuing to contribute to the ongoing intellectual life at SBU. As a lively center where faculty and students from varied disciplines meet to share ideas and engage in debate, we hope to continue making our contribution to building an ever more vitalized University.