

6. REVIEW & SUBMIT

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I. About the Applicant

Project Name Graduate English Students Association's Annual Graduate Conference (UVA GradCon)

Project Director Cherrie Kwok and John Modica

Project Director Co-Chairs

Title Department, Area, or Year 2nd year Ph.D. Candidates

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Names and titles of any codirectors

Additional team members

Abstracts Chair: Alexandra Kennedy

Budget Chair: Justin Stec

Program Management: Elise Foote

Publicity Chair: Matthew Martello

II. Authorized Person

Name Cherrie Kwok

Title Co-Chair

Email mk7kf@virginia.edu

III. Program Overview

A. Abstract — Brief description of program

On 26 - 27 March 2020, the Graduate English Students Association will present our annual graduate conference, titled and themed *Transformation*. It will contain graduate student presentations on all aspects of transformation — its catalyses and etiologies; its poetics and processual character; its formalization and thematization in art and literature, media and politics; its affordances for societies and individuals, as well as its correlative risks. Although we belong to UVA's Department of English, the interests of Transformation extend beyond disciplinary borders: in our view, philosophy, history, literary studies, and the natural and social sciences should contribute to shared conversations. Thus, we convene graduate scholars from diverse fields so that our differences can generate richer discussion. Our event includes two masterclasses taught by UVA faculty: a seminar by **Jahan Ramazani** (University Professor & Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English) and a Digital Humanities class by **Brad Pasanek** (Mayo-NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor, UVA) & **Brandon Walsh** (UVA Library Scholars' Lab), and a keynote by **Kandice Chuh** (Professor of English, CUNY).

B. Narrative — Describe succinctly (1) the nature of the program and (2) the program goal

Our graduate conference is a collegial and intellectually enriching site for graduate students from all departments at UVA and external institutions to publicly present their research and network with like-minded scholars. Aware of the financial and professional hardships that face graduate students today, our event has two central goals: to make the conference affordable *and* academically meaningful. As such, we do not charge a conference or registration fee, and we typically house participants with current graduate students in our department to save on accommodation costs. Additionally, all participants will have the opportunity to take two masterclasses run by UVA professors—one focused on world literature, poetry, and translation, and the other focused on building digital humanities skills. By sharing the scholarly expertise and resources that UVA has to offer more widely with participants who may belong to institutions that have not yet built the infrastructure that we are so fortunate to benefit from, we hope to amplify our event as the premier graduate conference in the United States. Moreover, this year's conference theme, Transformation, seeks to provoke the scholarly community to reflect on the ways that societies—both in our time and in the past—have created aesthetic, political, or social change. What can literature make possible? How can art inspire reform? How can the humanities and social sciences transform the way we conceptualize ourselves, and our worlds?

C. Goals of the Jefferson Trust — Address how your program meets the stated goals of the Jefferson Trust; namely how your program encourages (1) creativity, (2) innovation, (3) leadership, and (4) how your program enhances the University and/or student experience

Our conference encourages creativity and innovation because it invites graduate students to present original and thought-provoking research about a long-standing concept. Moreover, since many of our participants are doctoral students, the work that they have submitted to us are excerpted from the theses and dissertations that they are currently creating. What they will present at our conference, then, are not merely seminar papers: they are explicit interventions into the conversations that are occurring in the scholarly field. After presenting their original work, participants will also receive feedback from UVA's faculty and students—feedback that will go on to shape their scholarly development as they expand their work into journal articles or full dissertation chapters. Our conference's interdisciplinary dimension in particular invites our participants to step beyond the boundaries of their discipline and consider perspectives outside of their own, fostering the kind of intellectually enriching discussions that drive creative and innovative research forward.

Our conference encourages leadership because it helps participants develop a key skill that they need to become leaders in academia and in the public eye: the ability to clearly communicate their research to those within—and outside of—their own discipline. If researchers want to lead, they need to develop flexible communication skills. They will need to convey intellectual nuance that beats at the heart of their scholarly work without relying on complex jargon and discipline-specific language so that their work can influence a wide audience—and, at our conference, our participants will practice precisely that, for our event's interdisciplinary audience means that they must present their work in an accessible yet sophisticated manner.

Our conference enhances the university and student experience because it is completely redefining what a graduate conference could become. Although academics have not typically centered graduate conferences as a crucial step for one's academic development, ours is set apart in that it provides two masterclasses that explore two major areas of inquiry in academia—world literature and the digital humanities—in addition to the opportunity to present a paper. To our knowledge, we are the first graduate conference that offers these particular opportunities—and all for no cost, as we do not charge a registration fee and both masterclasses are free.

IV. Determining Results

A. Program Goals/Objectives — What changes/outcomes that will improve the University do you expect? Who will be impacted?

The following outcomes, which we anticipate will be enabled by funding from the Trust, correspond to the measurement techniques listed in the “Measuring Success” section below:

1. **Increased participation in conference activities.** This refers first to the primary demographic for presentation of academic work at the conference, which includes UVA graduate students in English, UVA graduate students in other departments, and non-UVA graduate students concerned with literary and cultural studies; and refers second to faculty, staff, undergraduates, and members of the general public who can participate in other capacities besides presenting work.
2. **Increased cross-disciplinary and -institutional interest in graduate student work, and open avenues for further collaboration during-and-after the conference,** concerning the same general demographics above. We especially want to ensure that the conference itself is the groundwork for important connections that can build and grow after the conference is over. We want to be attentive to how this is done before, during, and after the conference.
3. **Increased engagement with conference-, department-, and University-affiliated media, institutes, programs, events and resources.** We hope that our conference connects participants with resources meaningful to their academic and professional lives—and, in turn, that our partners who are advertising these resources through the conference have more opportunities to connect with available audiences.

B. Measuring Success — In list format, outline the measurement techniques, including the frequency of assessments, you will use to assess your success.

A post-conference survey will be sent to all of our participants. It will ask them about their general satisfaction with the conference organization and activities; it will also solicit them to provide feedback about interesting panels/classes/talks they attended, connections they made, media they engaged with/followed, and further opportunities connected to conference partners that they might be interested in.

The following measurement techniques correspond to each of the goals listed above, and are in some way supplementary to the feedback survey:

1. **Tracking attendance:** At least one member of the organizing team will be present at each conference activity (panel/master class/social/keynote) to note the number of attendees, both of conference participants and in certain cases members of the public (besides the master-class)
2. **Conference reports:** For the first time this year, graduate students from our department will be writing conference reports of each panel, and publishing them in the week following on our conference website. These reports are an additional opportunity for participants to follow up on work they liked, share news about their own presentation, and engage both attendees in work they might have missed and organizers/volunteers with presented work in a meaningful way. We will track the amount of visits to these reports and how often they are shared on social media;
3. **Promoting participant media:** We will actively promote the digital media of participants and conference partners throughout our materials/programming, and our post-conference survey will solicit feedback about engagements with this media.

V. Work Plan

A. Organizational Structure and Capability

- i. Is your project new or currently existing? If existing, what new element is the Trust being asked to support?

GradCon is hosted annually by the English Department. Our ambition for this year’s conference, however, is distinct from the efforts of past years—and we believe begins a necessary move toward a more public-facing, interdisciplinary graduate conference that could improve the experience of our traditional attendees *and also* expand the audiences affected by our conference. This comes out of a need we have identified for more programming at the University led by graduate students that not only considers the role of the humanities in higher education and society, but offers opportunities for graduate students themselves to share and collaborate on scholarship actively transforming our disciplines.

Our theme for this year, “Transformation,” makes explicit this concern. But we are also making structural changes to the conference that we hope will reshape the orientation of GradCon in the years to come. This includes:

1. Bringing in partners outside of the department (this year, UVA’s Scholar’s Lab) to host master classes in addition to English faculty-led classes, adding to the variety of our offerings, and making rich training experiences accessible to more attendees;
2. Integrating the entirety of conference into the work week (rather than over the weekend as in past years), moving the conference into spaces on Central Grounds, and gearing advertising toward the public, all to improve accessibility of programming to a wider audience on-Grounds;
3. Publishing post-conference reports of participant’s work, and amplifying the use of digital media to connect participants to one another and University resources.

We request funding from the Trust to help cover the potential costs incurred by a more public and collaborative orientation to the conference. We imagine that an investment from the Trust this year will enable a kind of outward growth for GradCon that, in turn, will encourage more interdepartmental partnerships and institutional investment in subsequent years.

ii. What experience/expertise does your area/organization/team have with similar programs or projects?

Each member of our organizing committee has at least some experience organizing department- or University-wide programming, and have participated in academic conferences both at the professional and graduate level. Subcommittee chairs (Abstracts, Budget, Conference Reports, Program Management, and Public Relations) were chosen by the Co-Chairs based on existing skill sets carried over from prior graduate, undergraduate, or professional experiences.

In addition to the skills provided by each member of the organizing committee, the faculty, staff, and advanced graduate students in the English Department regularly serve as mentors to the current organizers. Previous Co-Chairs and subcommittee chairs offer advice for current position-holders throughout the year; department staff assist with acquiring and filling out University- and state-specific financial and logistical forms; and faculty mentors provide their professional experience to suggest ways for creating an engaging and collegial conference environment.

Each committee is also staffed by a handful of first- and second-year graduate student volunteers. These volunteer opportunities are minor but important opportunities for new graduate students to gain experience organizing an academic conference, and their help makes a tremendous difference for our chairs both in planning and during the conference activities.

iii. Are other organizations doing similar work? Will you collaborate with them? Why/why not?

Other humanities departments sometimes host graduate conferences/symposia, and students in the English department regularly attend and participate in those events. GradCon, however, is the most consistently-held and widely-attended opportunity available at UVA for graduate students interested in literary and cultural studies to present their work. In organizing this year’s conference, we want to maintain that distinct opportunity for literary/cultural studies work *and also* expand the opportunities for our conference participants to engage in transdisciplinary conversations.

Collaboration is the ethos of this conference—which is why our current planning involves making GradCon into a better platform for collaboration itself. In our experience, we know that most graduate students are eager for opportunities to rethink their work alongside peers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Graduate conferences are often limited in their ability to provide such professional opportunities. This usually relates to programming being catered specifically to an audience within rather than beyond an individual department; shorter/compressed planning timelines; and restricted funding, resources, and institutional support. In other words, collaboration across disciplines is a common concern in the humanities, but it is rarely reflected in the structure of a graduate conference given the limitations that we hope GradCon can and should push beyond this year and in coming years. And, as we have mentioned elsewhere in this application, we believe that this reimagined structure will begin to make GradCon a more desirable opportunity for students in other departments and at other institutions.

iv. If you are a student group, please outline your plans for successful transition in leadership.

The conference Co-Chairs keep an extensive digital database with records regarding each step of the conference planning, including copies of the relevant forms, contacts, and expenditures from past

years. This year, the Co-Chairs also created a year-long detailed outline listing time-specific tasks related to each subcommittee. This timeline combined with our file-saving practices makes it easy for next year’s committee to chart out the logistics of the conference, and leaves them plenty of time/room to make revisions as they see fit.

Co-Chairs for next year’s conference will be selected by the current Co-Chairs from among the current first-year Ph.D. students in the English Department early this spring, well before the conference in March. Most if not all first-year Ph.D. students volunteer on a subcommittee in some capacity, if they are not also presenting at the conference itself. In addition to their current or previous involvement in conference organizing, the incoming Co-Chairs are selected based on their ability to foster a collegial academic and professional environment and previous leadership experience. The current Co-Chairs also try to make sure the incoming Co-Chairs have different academic interests.

Leading up to this year’s conference, the current and incoming Co-Chairs will meet to discuss the responsibilities of the role, and ask that the two incoming co-Chairs actively observe the activities at the upcoming conference. The transition of documents and putting Co-Chairs in touch with necessary contacts happens progressively over the spring, so the new Co-Chairs can begin planning as soon as possible after this year’s. The Co-Chairs and previous subcommittee chairs also meet with their successors later in the spring, and remain in contact over the course of the remaining academic year for advice/assistance.

B. Activities — List all activities, individuals responsible, and timelines

Activity	Responsible Party	Timeline: Start	Timeline: Complete
Fill in later	Cherrie Kwok, John Modica	4/1/2019	4/1/2020

VI. Financial

A. Total Program Funding

1. Total Overall Program Funding Required	\$100,000.00
2. Jefferson Trust: Of Total Overall Program Funding Required, what amount is being requested from the Je"erson Trust?	\$100.00
3. Applicant: What amount (if any) of the Total Overall Program Funding Required are you, the applicant, contributing? This might include personal contributions or departmental contributions. Do NOT include VALUES listed in 4 and 5.	\$900,000.00
If you are not contributing, why not? Your text here	
4. Other Firm Funding Sources: What amount (if any) has been or will be funded by other sources (e.g. government agencies, other private foundations, businesses, individuals)? Do NOT include funds listed in items 2 or 3 ABOVE.	\$0.00

5. **Other Pending Funding Sources:** What amount (if any) *is not yet funded but is under consideration* by additional sources? *Do **NOT** include funds listed in items 2, 3, or 4 ABOVE.*

\$0.00

Line 1 should match the sum of Lines 2–5. If they don’t match, why not?

Your text here

B. Other Funding Information

1. Has funding been approved or denied in the University budget process or in any other manner? If so, please explain when it was approved or denied.

No.

2. Have you or another party to this application applied previously to the Trust for funds for this program or any other program? If yes to either, please state when, the name of the program, and whether or not it was approved.

No.

3. If your grant is not fully funded by the Trust, or you do not receive the full alternate source funding requested, explain **in detail** how you would use a reduced allotment. Please indicate partial minimum funding threshold recieved from the Trust which would allow the project to move forward. Briefly describe how the project scope would change if only threshold funding is provided.

Your text here

4. If your program is to continue beyond the grant project timeline, what are your plans for future, ongoing funding? how will the program be sustained? (NOTE: if your program is not designed to continue, but is self-contained, please answer "N/A").

Your text here

C. Detailed Program Costs

Item	Amount	Status	Source	Required for Completion?
Your text here	\$99,900.00	Firm	N/A	Yes
Your text here	\$100.00	Pending	Je"erson Trust, Est. Draw Date: 5/2/2019	Yes

VII. Additional Information

A. Project Leader Resumes

B. Additional Materials

Review & Submit

☐ Applicant acknowledges Trust's right to audit the process and recall funds if (1) project completion does not require the full amount requested in the approved grant; (2) not used for stated purpose; (3) not used timely; or (4) in case of multi-year commitment, no longer relevant. *

Submit

