Faculty-Student Summer Mentorship Grant Program

Joyce Kinkead
Faculty-Student Summer Mentorship Grant Program in Utah State University College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Claire Harlan with a 17th century almanac at the Folger Shakespeare Library
It’s no secret that students in the humanities often don’t have access to the kind of financial support that advances their research and scholarly activity. Realizing this, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Utah State University created a summer grant program that funds students and faculty on research projects. The grant is sufficiently flexible to focus on research by the professor or the student. 
https://chass.usu.edu/liberalis/liberalis-article-archive/2017-fall/partnered-with-a-professor

The program awards grants of $2,000 to students as well as up to $1000 in travel funds. Faculty members receive $1,000. The grant program is overseen by Associate Dean Matthew Sanders matt.sanders@usu.edu.

Faculty members in the Department of English have taken advantage of this initiative. Following are three examples.

English and Theatre Arts major Claire Harlan served as a research assistant on Professor Phebe Jensen’s book, The Early Modern English Calendar. Harlan assisted with final research, using Early English Books Online, and through two independent research trips to the British Library in London and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. By assisting Jensen, Harlan saw how an academic researcher takes a book from idea through publication. Earlier, Harlan was enrolled in Jensen’s Shakespeare’s class, where she distinguished herself. She was also the student curator for “Unruly Women,” an exhibit in Merrill-Cazier Library, marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death.

The focus of another grant was on the student’s work. Dr. Jennifer Sinor mentored English major Morgan Sanford on a project on Pablo Neruda that took Sanford to Chile to work in the poet’s archives. At the Neruda Foundation, Morgan viewed original copies of his manuscripts, in particular Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair, the collection that contains “Poema XX.” She completed an original translation of this piece. She also traveled to Valparaiso and Isla Negra and visited two of Neruda’s homes to make connections between writer and place. https://english.usu.edu/news/news-articles/2018/urgrants

Professor Joyce Kinkead found that the grant motivated her to think of a digital humanities project to supplement a book project, A Writing Studies Primer. She invited Morgan Wykstra, who emphasized Technical Communication in her English degree to design an interactive website. The website maps important sites in the history of writing across time and place. The result is The Geography of Writing https://geographyofwriting.wordpress.com/, which offers a comprehensive list of museums and historic sites. Until this website was developed, no centralized catalog of
these sites existed to help a scholar or even the casual tourist. Kinkead said, “This project really stimulated my thinking about the book and provided a fabulous foundation for my further research.”

These grant opportunities have given faculty research support that they’ve not necessarily had before and also provided rich experiences for the undergraduates.

Text Courtesy of Professor Joyce Kinkead, Utah State University’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences