Expanding the National Humanities Center’s Education Programs

The National Humanities Center is a private nonprofit institution in the Research Triangle Park. Its mission is to develop excellence in humanities through fellowships for top scholars. Over 1000 scholars from the US and over 30 countries have benefitted from being a fellow at the Center. Additionally, the Center seeks to strengthen the ability of high school and college teachers to transfer this learning for future generations. The Center seeks the help of the Fuqua Marketing Practicum to establish it as a national leader in professional development teachers of American history and literature.

The Center has developed outstanding teaching materials that build from its relationships with the Fellows. Additionally, since 1984 the Center has offered multi-week professional development seminars for high school teachers. These programs have proved successful so Center has sought to expand their reach by bringing the seminar experience to teachers in their own locales across the country. This effort came to focus on teachers of American history and literature and led to the creation of a library of online “toolboxes” that provide, for free, historical documents, literary texts, visual images, and audio material teachers can use in professional development seminars and in classroom instruction. Further, to bring teachers to the toolboxes, in 2008 the Center inaugurated a series of live online workshops and seminars in which leading scholars, usually Center Fellows, explore toolbox texts to give teachers new material and fresh ideas to strengthen their instruction. In addition to the toolboxes, the Center has built TeacherServe®, a Website featuring three “instructional guides” that offer advice on teaching American environmental history, African American culture, and the role of religion in the nation’s development.

The Center’s online resources and programs place it in a position to become a national leader in teacher professional development, but to achieve that goal, it will have to overcome staffing, space, and financial limitations. The Center asks the Practicum’s to help it find creative ways to do so. Specifically, it would like the Practicum help develop a vision of national leadership in teacher professional development for the National Humanities Center by answering the following questions:

- How can the Center better leverage online technology to expand the reach of its education programs and resources?
- How do the Center’s education programs fit into the broader national environment of professional development for teachers of American history and literature?
- What strategies would enable the Center to most effectively expand its programs nationally while keeping them manageable within its financial, space, and staffing limitations?
- How can the Center evaluate its education programs to meet the demands of funders and other stakeholders?

To answer these questions the Practicum team would:

- Interview stakeholders in the Center’s education programs: scholars who lead them; teachers who participate in them; professional development planners at school, district, state, and national levels; program evaluation professionals, and Center staff and trustees
- Conduct a national environmental scan of professional development programs for teachers of American history and literature
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Center’s current education programs
- Compare the education program’s use of technology with new and emerging internet applications

The Practicum team would report its finds to the Center's senior management and trustees in a presentation that would:

- Place the Center’s education program’s in a national context
- Describe a strategy for national expansion of the education programs
- Identify potential funders for the expansion effort
- Define key evaluative measurements of effectiveness