

H&A in Action - Executive Summary

College of Humanities and the Arts

2023-2024

Our **third** year of the College's initiative "[H&A in Action](#)" allowed us to move beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic and begin to see our numbers across our range of activities start growing again. Our Artistic Excellence Programming Grants, which now can present productions without the limits created by COVID, have been coming back as people begin to return to public events. Our Digital Humanities Center has been remodeled, and we are looking at a soft opening this year; our [Advanced Institute for Ethical Technology](#) was approved as a Research Institute.

The main goals of H&A in Action include: integrating programming and our College's classroom curriculum; establishing curricular communities organized around themes the College has been exploring; expanding our public programming into the City of San Jose and the larger South Bay region; allowing our students and our larger community to be joint producers of knowledge; and promoting the humanities and the arts more generally.

Our students' success is at the heart of our umbrella initiative in the College, H&A in Action. Our goal, with our programming themes of "[Sustainable Futures](#)" and our post-COVID "[Re-Invention: Re-Building; Re-Imagining, Re-Conceptualizing through the Arts and Humanities](#)," is to become a national model for arts and humanities education that integrates student programming into classroom experiences, while drawing in the community as partners in learning. Our rich programming includes our own "[QuickBites](#)," discussions between faculty on current topics, our exploration of the arts and humanities as "[Public Works](#)" for our community, and innovative programming including an opera by Joseph Bologne, born in Senegal, knighted in Paris as the Chevalier St. George, and considered the "black Mozart." In 2023-24, we also supported the 2nd annual Beethoven Ball and our extraordinary Black Cab Jazz performances. All of these engage students, reach out to the community, draw upon faculty strengths, and "Leverage the power of the humanities and arts to ask the most important questions of our time." H&A in Action postcards demonstrate how we continue to reframe these questions through our events while providing wide-ranging programming that touches on everything from weaving, to robots, to comics, to stop motion, to philosophy in narrating our own life stories. Our college also sees the importance of connecting to, and expanding the human footprint of, technology in Silicon Valley. Our Advanced Institute of Ethical Technology has been approved by the University: the Institute begins with the premise that the values of our fields need to be

present at the formative moments of the creation of technology; ethics, human-centered design, and diversity need to be embedded into the DNA of technology for us to develop the kind of tech we all deserve, one that respects privacy, thinks through consequences from the very beginning, and puts our human values as the goal of technological achievement.

And the numbers speak for themselves. [29 projects](#) were funded for 2023-24 (one subsequently had to be cancelled), which [produced 69 events](#), including master classes, craft classes, and workshops. Attendance at the AEPG events climbed from around 7000 people in 2022-23, to 8,245 people in 2023-24, an 18% increase over a year. Our impact on Asian students was notable this year, as their participation in an event this year rose from 26% to 40%, so we are reaching a more diverse population of students. And we are not just talking about increased contact with SJSU students. Our engagement survey allows people to indicate if they are from campus or the community, and though we only have a 7% response rate, those identifying as community members rose from 58 last year to 185 this year, an increase of 219% from the previous year. We have also continued offering \$1000 awards to the [best Interdisciplinary event and the most Community Engaged event, adding this year awards for the most Visionary, the most Innovative, and a People's Choice Award](#).

The quality of the programming and how we are integrating it with the curriculum is one of the many ways this year really shone. The Spring 2024 production of *1984* was an amazing success, and it drew more audience to a non-musical play in the entire history of Film and Theatre.

Yet the impact of this wonderful show connected to our incredibly successful [Curriculum Community](#) that faculty from across the College and from the College of Social Science formed (with support of the Dean's Office). Faculty from Philosophy, English, Justice Studies, Linguistics, Art, and Theater integrated the play into their classes and encouraged students to attend the play, which students did in the largest numbers ever for a non-musical play. This is the very model of integrating productions and curriculum that we have been hoping would emerge through AEPG! This is an extension of the work we have been gathering on our [Teaching Resources page](#) over the last four years, and it offers many examples of curriculum that faculty can integrate into their classes! We hope to continue to encourage faculty to integrate these assignments into their classes!

Our community collaborations through the AEPG projects were also on full display this year with our collaboration with MACLA on the performance of "[Ghostly Labors](#)," and the dance masterclass lead by Vanessa Sanchez of the La Mezcla dance troupe. And

City of San Jose monies supported additional [Public Art as Resistance in San Jose Walking Tours](#). The AEPG program continues to work with community organizations to support the City of San Jose and the Southbay. And our running of the [Hammer Theatre Center](#) makes this such an exciting place for more growth. This year, in addition to the productions of the Addams Family and then *1984*, the Hammer also was the site for the [Broadway Tour of *The Kite Runner*](#), adapted by Matthew Spangler, Chair of the Film, Theatre, and Dance department. [Downtown Soundscapes](#) deployed the Paseo in front of the Hammer for another musical experience drawing in the community and campus, and sponsored by the Abierto grants provided by the City of San Jose. The connections with community groups and community members are only growing, and this is helping our H&A in Action mission. And the use of the City of San Jose's Rotunda for an [electronic music concert](#) which combined ecomusic (sounds created by nature or by cityscapes, freeways, etc) with AI visualizations, continues to knit our activities within the College firmly into the region.

Another part of our H&A in Action Initiative is finding additional resources to support the main activities under its auspices. In terms of supporting our approved, but not yet activated Advanced Institute of Ethical Technology, we submitted two large grant applications to NEH, both to support our investment in framing technology through humanities' values: a Humanities Conversations grant, and an AI Humanities REsearch Centers proposal. Both grants highlight our vision in the College of the role that our students and our community can have in creating better technology moving forward. We designed a proposal for a Center for Humanities Research on AI – the specific funding call – that draws upon exactly who we are as a campus, and thus looked to differentiate us from the kind of center or institute that Stanford or UC Berkeley would put together. Our focus was at the intersection of pedagogy, research, and community involvement. By putting the emphasis on how our enormous number of students – who enter the tech field in large numbers – could further the role of ethical questions being asked during the creation of new tech, we proposed an interrelated combination of internal and external research fellows who would participate in a Certificate for Ethical Technologies and the drafting of a Digital Bill of Rights. Research fellows would hold symposia over three years – with different themes each year – that would draw in students and the community to collectively build the Certificate and the Bill of Rights. The Humanities Conversations proposed an interlocking set of programming opportunities that would bring in many technologists and experts at the intersection of the field of humanities and emerging technology, with a real focus on bringing in our SJ community into the conversation with students, faculty, and experts. Looking at who we are – a campus with a commitment to teaching, while valuing world-redefining research, and a commitment to community engagement – guided our vision of an Institute that is a wonderful blueprint for who we are and what we stand for.

Our growing successes are due in part to the growing numbers of those receiving the [Monday Mailer](#), which was received by 4188 people, while subscriptions to it have risen 300% since last year. All of our AEPG events had SJSU event calendar listings, and we are appearing more and more in other San Jose calendars which push a lot of community traffic our way. We have received a great deal of support from the University Marketing Team in producing [20 new “Stories of Engagement”](#) which highlight the interactive work and experiences that our students are getting as a result of programming and pedagogical innovations under the H&A in Action umbrella. We are particularly excited that the quality of the editorial work of our H&A Marketing team has been recognized by our University Marketing Team, and 18 stories written by our students have been pushed out onto the [SJSUNews blog](#). The goals of actively engaging our students that underpins H&A in Action has been expanded through this collaboration with the University Marketing team.

In reviewing our third year of the H&A in Action Initiative, I am very proud of the work of our tireless Director of Public Programming, [Professor Katherine D. Harris](#), who has expanded the range of events we are engaging in, pushed our community engagement significantly, and built infrastructure to keep this excellent work moving forward.

– Dean Shannon Miller
July 2024