

H&A in Action Executive Summary

College of Humanities and the Arts

2024-2025

Our **fourth** year of the College's initiative "[H&A in Action](#)" has moved us fully out of the shadow of the COVID-19 Pandemic as attendance at events and lively, innovative programming has marked the three main strands of our Initiative: our AEPG programming and adjacent curriculum innovation; our now-open [Digital Humanities Center](#); and the supporting [programming](#) that explores the goals and commitments of our [Advanced Institute for Ethical Technology](#). Our Artistic Excellence Programming Grant events – [78 distinct events](#) this year! - have been flourishing with people returning to public events. 9,696 people attended AEPG events this year, up 17.6% from 2023-2024, and up 40% from 2022-2023. Our Digital Humanities Center has had an active programming schedule since its opening and is a very vibrant space (though we are awaiting the final technology installation). And our Advanced Institute for Ethical Technology, still not funded after a series of grant writing efforts, has continued to host vibrant events at the intersection of humanities' values and responsible technology. I continue to be amazed at how much we are accomplishing without many resources.

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.

Because of budget cuts this year, we were forced to pull back funding for our Director of Public Programming by 33%, which has made her vast workload much more cumbersome, and we will need to continue to either limit her efforts or find additional support for the position.

Even with this cut, our programming was astonishing and wide-ranging this year. Our students' success is at the heart of our umbrella initiative in the College, H&A in Action. Our goal 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. Specific events included writers like poet Ross Gay, novelist Tommy Orange, and graphic novelist Gene Leun Yang, who received the Steinbeck Award. Programming on turning [Climate Anxiety into Climate Action](#), our [San Antonio Festival](#) which activated the San Antonio Paseo, a Dungeons and Dragons

Decision making series of events, and events centered around the Desi and Iranian diaspora have allowed to students to be challenged, exposed to new ideas, and see professional-level theater and music events throughout the year. Read more about this year's activities in our [Stories of Engagement](#).

The Fall 2025 production of *Cabaret* was amazing. Patrons reacted with glee to discover the joy of live theater in downtown San Jose:

Wow! I am still stunned by yesterday's performance of ***Cabaret!*** "Catharsis" is the only word that describes how I felt when the curtain finally descended. I merely gasped at the end of Act 1 when the banners descended.

Cabaret is the best theater I've seen in the Bay Area in years of regularly attending Theatreworks, SJ Stage, the Pear, *et al.* Janie Scott's directing was impeccable. But so was Lofn Young's conducting and modulating of the music to complement the singers' voices. Casting was splendid, as were the performances of all the actors/dancers.

The impact of this wonderful show was significantly expanded through our second incredibly successful [Curricular Community](#), where faculty from across the College introduced students to the musical background of the production and the historical forces that make *Cabaret* such a moving production. Faculty from Philosophy, English, Art, School of Journalism & Mass Communication, and Theater integrated the production into their classes and encouraged students to consider the relevance of this play today. This is the very model of integrating productions and curriculum that we have been hoping would emerge through AEPG; it is an extension of the work we have been highlighting for four years on our [Teaching Resources page](#) that offers many examples of curriculum that faculty can integrate into their classes. We hope to continue to encourage faculty to integrate more events into their curriculum (see below on the new H&A curriculum). We have also continued offering \$1000 awards to the [best](#) Interdisciplinary event, the most Community Engaged event, and we have continued to give awards for the most Visionary, the most Innovative, and a People's Choice Award.

I am very proud of the process we have established and the positive responses to the programming from both students and community members, more and more of whom are discovering, and praising, the amazing work we are presenting in our AEPG events. We track this through our engagement survey, which has shown increased attendance by community members as well as the programming having an even stronger pull for our minority students on campus.

Having students engage with such high quality programming, whether that be H&A produced or events that are happening in the San Jose community, is a major goal of the College. Our [H&A Passport program](#), which we piloted this year, allowed 180 students to get a physical passport to “travel to” and describe their reactions and thoughts to AEPG programming, art exhibits on campus, the San Jose Museum of Art, the Institute for Contemporary Art, and many other other events and venues. The goals behind the passports also became a major component of our new H&A curriculum that starts this Fall with our HA 44 courses; up to 275 first-year students will engage with issues around their career aspirations and also attend 6–8 events on or off campus that introduces them to new experiences. Each department or school in the College has created a version of HA 44 “Design Your Life; Design Your Semester; Design Your World” – see the [versions](#) of HA 44 in Design, English, Art, Humanities, and Philosophy. Students are invited to take this course in any department to explore different disciplines. We are very excited about this curriculum development that aligns explicitly with the College’s many programming events.

Our impact on our students continues to show us serving more minority students, with Latinx student numbers rising significantly this year. 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 22 in 2022-2023 to 183 now, an increase of 730%. Our continuing successes are due in part to the growing numbers of those receiving the [Monday Mailer](#), which was received by 4188 people in Spring 2025. All of our AEPG events had SJSU event calendar listings, and we are appearing more and more in other San Jose calendars – the San Jose Downtown Association with 30,000 subscribers and Visit San Jose with 80,000 subscribers—that pushes a lot of community traffic our way. We have in the past received a great deal of support from the University Marketing Team; this year there were 14 stories published in [SJSUNews](#), and 5 in [Washington Square](#). We hope that we can increase those numbers this year and have more of a focus on the amazing programming we are doing as the focus of *Washington Square* and other publicity outlets are clarified. 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 stories written by our students continue to be 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.

While we look to support our students with these amazing events, many community members and alumni are also attending AEPG events that introduce them to both the College and the University. Two events this year were specifically effective at drawing in

community members as well as alumni. “Beethoven Sources and the Living Artwork: A String Quartet Masterclass and Performance” explored through music and a lecture by our Beethoven Center Director the new documents SJSU acquired for the [Center](#). “[Nizkor: A Journey of Remembrance](#)” brought over 500 people, including donors, alums, and friends of the University for the premiere of the new work and a performance of Beethoven.

Our engagement with the university and the San Jose community and beyond takes many forms. There has been extensive collaboration between H&A and library faculty and administrators that includes a broad range of events, workshops, trainings and colloquia; most recently we completed the process of developing a mission statement for the newly-opened Digital Humanities Center with leadership from H&A, the SJSU library and San Jose Public Library. And we have built relationships and co-created programming with staff, faculty and students from University Housing Services, with an emphasis on fostering inclusion, belonging and participation among the community at the Spartan Village on the Paseo. For the third year, myself and the Director of Public Programming, Katherine D. Harris, traveled to the National Humanities Alliance Conference and [Advocacy Day](#) to discuss the importance of the Humanities with legislators and federal representatives on Capitol Hill. We created unique materials for the senators’ and representatives’ offices, and we constructed [a website](#) just for advocacy of the humanities, including interviews with faculty and students. These materials are an incredible resource to promote the College and its majors to anyone interested.

We also have been working to improve the process and experience for our intrepid faculty who undertake these wonderful AEPG projects by streamlining financial processes, clarifying tasks, and marking their successes in communication and award announcements.

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 a second National Endowment for the Humanities proposal for an AI Humanities Research Center, this one focused on the role of AI-washing in narratives around the technology and the need to establish definitions (Critical AI Keywords) so that faculty and researchers across fields can effectively talk to one another. We await that decision in August 2025. In the meantime, we hosted notable humanities scholars working in and around the field of artificial intelligence as we continue to demonstrate that H&A faculty are at the bleeding edge in the discussions about the use of machine learning, generative AI, and humanities computing – including a well-attended hybrid lecture by [Dr. Lauren Klein](#) on

Datafeminism, a well-attended hybrid book talk with [Drs. Emily Bender and Alex Hanna](#) on *The AI Con*, and a QuickBites symposium on [AI in Creative Spaces](#) with three of our own SJSU faculty. H&A faculty continue to participate in the university-wide 90+ faculty cluster about “AI” and represent H&A in the [SJSU x AI initiative](#).

In reviewing our fourth 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 2025