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Confluencenter’s Innovation Farm Grantees Showcase Indigenous Rights, Food Justice, and Trans Studies

[TUCSON, ARIZONA, 22 April, 2019] Workshops bringing together scholars in Tucson and in Australia to explore legal protections of Indigenous land, knowledge, and property rights; a wellness curriculum and symposia linking food traditions and spirituality with holistic health and wellness issues in the African American community; and a symposium on rethinking sex and gender in Trans Studies comprise the three diverse faculty/community groups being funded by the Confluencenter’s Innovation Farm program.

Started in early 2014, the Innovation Farm program was created in partnership with the Office of the Vice President for Research to provide critical seed money to interdisciplinary working groups with the potential to achieve greater impact.

“The Innovation Farm grants were awarded to projects that make lasting contributions to scholarly and artistic life at the UA, with this round focusing on the topic of inequality,” explains Confluencenter Director Javier Duran. “To that end, Confluencenter is funding ‘Toward a Vision of Community Wellness: Reclaiming Agency, Self-Care, and Connection to Place,’ ‘Indigenous Inequalities: Intersections of property, place, and rights in the United States and Australia,’ and ‘Trans +/- Sex: Rethinking Sex/Gender in Trans Studies.’”

Spanning Law and Anthropology, the interdisciplinary team behind Indigenous Inequalities: Intersections of property, place, and rights in the United States and Australia is led by Diane Austin of Anthropology. The project fosters scholarly exchange between researchers at the University of Arizona and at the University of Queensland, Australia, along with Indigenous community partners and applied practitioners from both countries.

According to the proposal for Indigenous Inequalities, “This research collaboration will explore a central question: how are intellectual and legal institutional frameworks for recognizing and protecting Indigenous land, knowledge, and property rights implicated in solutions to Indigenous inequality?” The project will facilitate two different workshops, one in Tucson and the other in Brisbane, Australia, along with webinars and a project wiki. The Innovation Farm award will facilitate student workers, honoraria, and web design and web conferencing for this ongoing project.

Toward a Vision Of Community Wellness: Reclaiming Agency, Self-Care, And Connection To Place, builds on an ongoing collaboration between Dunbar Coalition, Inc., El Rio Health Centers, the Coalition for African American Health and Wellbeing, and the UA Center for Regional Food Studies. The Innovation Farm-funded project will expand “workshops, classes, and hands-on experiences focused on addressing the root causes of health inequalities through the revitalization of food and herbal-based treatments, health maintenance, and spiritual rituals.”
Bringing together Jerome Dotson of the Africana Studies Program and Megan Carney of Anthropology, along with several community initiatives, Towards a Vision of Community Wellness will involve community education about gardening, herb identification and usage, and cooking. Innovation Farm support will go towards student staffing of the programming, invited speakers, and domestic travel in order to share local findings more broadly.

Lastly, submitted by the Trans Studies Research Cluster, with principal investigators Dr. Z Nicolazzo of Educational Policy Studies and Practice and Dr. Eva Hayward of Gender and Women’s Studies, Trans ± Sex: Rethinking Sex/Gender in Trans Studies asks the question: “Why were certain conceptualizations of sex/gender championed over others?”

The proposal outlines the challenges for “trans people and scholars of Trans Studies (to) rarely have collective spaces to reflect upon the nuances of trans subjectivity,” and therefore “proposes the development of a two-and-a-half-day symposium titled Trans ± Sex: Rethinking Sex/Gender in Trans Studies.” The symposium will take place in September, 2019, with Innovation Farm funding to support invited speaker honoraria, logistics, graduate assistant staffing, and videography and archival work to ensure the symposium can inform ongoing conversations. A roundtable discussion with local organizations following the symposium will continue the conversation in non-academic spaces.

“The innovative and collaborative nature of the Innovation Farm projects demonstrates how the University of Arizona’s talented and passionate faculty are working together to provide solutions to humanity’s grand challenges,” Duran said. “It is an honor to help facilitate these projects and an inspiration to watch them develop – I look forward to seeing them continue to grow and expand.”

Stay tuned at Confluencenter.arizona.edu and our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for updates about these and other Confluencenter projects.

The Confluencenter for Creative Inquiry facilitates interdisciplinary research at the University of Arizona, especially between the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Confluencenter advances creative, collaborative research and shares it with the community. More details are available at Confluencenter.arizona.edu.