

Through the Public Humanities Exchange (HEX) Fellowship program, UW-Madison's Center for the Humanities provides funding for graduate students who have partnered with community organizations on a project that encourages positive change and development in and around Madison.

Application for HEX Fellowship (2016-2017)

Save the following application form, along with your CV and transcripts, as *one* (1) PDF file.
Name your file: **HEX 1617 SPRING APP_[your last name]**

Part I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Graduate students from across campus are eligible to apply; you don't have to be enrolled in a humanities or arts program, but it may be useful to partner with someone in humanities to develop your proposal. Preference is given to students beyond master's level, with more than two semesters of study left before degree completion.

Name	Vanessa Lauber
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Madison Address, Zip	██████████
Department(s)	English Department
Intended Degree	PhD
Year in Program (bold one)	MA student PhD student Dissertator
Anticipated Graduation Date	Spring 2018



Proposed Title of Your HEX Project	A Roof Over My Head: Housing Precarity in Madison
Community Partner (if known)	Tenant Resource Center

PART II: PROJECT INFORMATION

Please respond to each of the following prompts. Complete and detailed answers are important factors of the selection process, but no answer should be more than 100 words, unless specified.

Project Goals (300 Words):

In the first sentence, the writer introduces the larger societal problem that she is engaging with, and she immediately supports the importance of this issue with numerical evidence.

Madison has less than 48 percent of the county's population, but it houses 73 percent of the county's extremely low-income renter households, creating a desperate need for affordable housing. But what does that mean for the thousands of families whose housing is at risk? What resources are available to them? My proposed project, "A Roof Over My Head," will work in conjunction with the Tenant Resource Center to create a series of podcasts, serving as a platform for those whose lives are affected by the current housing crisis in Madison and developing alternate ways of communicating tenant rights.

By connecting this project with the university's common read program (Go Big Read), this writer taps into a preexisting initiative and situates her interests in relationship to something that the granting organization is already committed to.

During the coming year, the University of Wisconsin-Madison Go Big Read will be curating events to highlight their chosen text, *Eviction* by Matthew Desmond. Given that focus on housing justice, I will situate this project as one of many bridges between the University and the Madison community, distilling information regarding the state of Madison housing regulation, development, and rights through interviews with community members, activists, and legislators, with a specific focus on the low income neighborhoods of Madison's south side. The resulting series of five podcast segments over the course of the year will connect the issues addressed in *Evicted* through the lens of both Madison politics and individual experience. They will be hosted on an independent webpage that will itself serve as a forum, but will link to the TRC and its informational resources. The TRC has expressed excitement in this project as a way to reach a wider audience through alternate media. My primary goal will be to help those individuals whose voices are so often silenced by the systemic inequalities of the housing system develop a way to clearly articulate their experiences, with a vested interest in the community that can develop from shared understanding. "A Roof Over My Head," is founded in the belief that connections formed through a deeper understanding of other people's lived experience, in conjunction with a more thorough understanding of how policies are enacted and enforced, can enable a more just society.

Target Audience (300 Words):

In this case, all of these subheadings were specified and described in the HEX grant call for applications.

This project seeks to engage several different constituencies. The interviews I conduct will include those whose lives have been affected by housing policy, through eviction, scarcity, or other aspects of affordability and accessibility. It is their voices that I wish to prioritize, particularly in the hopes that others who might likewise be experiencing similar circumstances will have greater access to a sense of community via these records.

Each individual podcast will center on one person or family, whose story will be complemented by interviews with 4-5 others whose work and knowledge speaks directly to that experience—whether through advocacy or regulation—and whose familiarity with Madison's housing history helps to illustrate the larger context. I will also interview TRC staff members who can reinforce an understanding of the legal and

regulatory issues that affect tenant rights. One of the effects of placing these voices together will also be to highlight the different levels of administration at work and to encourage collaboration among those players. Additionally, these podcasts will enhance the ability of the TRC to communicate with tenants—both students and community members—who might not otherwise call the Center for counseling.

As a current volunteer with the TRC, I will have direct access to the communities that the TRC serves. The more established cases that TRC staff handle will serve as the primary point of contact for interviews with those who are at risk within the Madison housing system. I am currently working with Professor Revel Sims, whose community action methodologies seminar is compiling a document that consolidates and summarizes current information on Madison housing via fieldwork research. In coordinating with Prof. Sims, I will make initial inquiries with key actors in the non-profit and governmental sectors.

Methodology (300-400 words):

It will be difficult and often time-consuming to conduct the number of interviews I will need to make a thorough representation of the issues at stake in Madison’s complex housing systems. However, I have established important relationships with community members and researchers to begin seeking out those I will interview. Since I am already working at the TRC, I will be more likely to gain the trust of those who are seeking housing assistance in order to interview them. I want to be particularly sensitive to the risks at stake for those who speak out against abuses of power in their own experiences and establish trust through a demonstrated commitment to community-based work and a respect for the privacy of those who don’t wish to speak publicly.

I will be spending three hours a week as a housing counselor at the TRC, during which time I will strengthen my understanding of housing law and develop a deeper understanding of the mission and goals of the TRC. In addition to that that time, I anticipate spending 2-4 hours a week conducting interviews and/or editing the raw sound material. I will conduct interviews at the Center or another community location that will put the individuals at ease, or if necessary, over the phone. My experience in sound and video editing has taught me that putting together a polished piece is not a quick process, so I anticipate that in there will be some weeks in which time spent editing will be a greater time commitment.

I have made initial inquiries with Madison 365—an action-based journalism site that converses primarily with Madison’s communities of color—about including my short segments in their weekly podcast (which is distributed on their website and on iTunes). While each of the shorter pieces I produce will be hosted on web space provided by UW and be distributed widely via the Go Big Read project, the TRC website, and local media, I envision my capstone as a final, longer segment that would be pitched as a feature, to both WPR and nationally distributed podcasts.

In quantifiable terms, I will gauge the success of the project in terms of its reach, both via the estimated listenership of the media outlets that pick it up and through web

By referencing her current work with TRC, this writer builds her credibility and supports the feasibility of her project.

In this paragraph, the writer both commits to working within a specific range of hours and acknowledges the need to be flexible.

This writer provides more than one metric by which to measure her future success. She references both numbers and points of emotional connection. This is a savvy move that accounts for a full picture of what her efforts might achieve.

traffic on its hosted site. But I think that its success is not just to be measured in how many people hear the podcast. In working as a housing counselor with the TRC, I've recognized that beyond providing people who call in with information about their rights, the most important task to help them to feel heard, to let them know that there is someone who is willing to listen to their frustration, and often their feelings of helplessness. My hope for this project is to extend that sense of being heard, not just by person at the other end of the phone, but to others who might be experiencing a similar issue and by those who are working to make the structural changes that would decrease the number of people in Madison who feel their precarity at an affective level day-to-day. I will provide a brief questionnaire to participants after completing each podcast to better understand their investment in and their access to the podcast.

Timeline:

HEX provides standard funding amounts according to how many semesters a project will last. After grant applicants are accepted, they meet with HEX coordinators to draft a formal budget.

I am applying for a two-semester grant. As I already have community partners in place, I would like to prepare this summer and begin the project this fall, in order to coincide with the year of events coordinated for the Go Big Read (GBR Program Lead Sheila Stoeckel has expressed her support for collaboration). Given the time commitments required to produce audio media, I feel that distributing their production over the course of two semesters will ensure the quality and depth of the work that I can do in conducting interviews and understanding the scope of Madison's housing systems.

Summer: Coordinate with Revel Summers' urban planning class and shadow their work with community agents in Madison housing to establish a network of potential interviewees and familiarize myself with housing regulation and mapping. Research community-based participant activism methodologies.

Examine recent storytelling projects/methodologies.

Brainstorm and decide on themes for individual podcast segments

Coordinate with the TRC about their impact priorities

Early Fall: Conduct interviews

Mid-October: First 10-minute podcast segment complete

Early December: Second podcast segment complete; distribute questionnaires

Early Spring: Conduct interviews

Late February: Third podcast segment complete

Early April: Fourth podcast segment complete; distribute questionnaires

Mid-May: Final 15-minute podcast segment complete

Some of the information detailed in the timeline also appears in the methodology section. It is okay to reiterate certain details when doing so for different purposes. In the methodology section the question was, "How are you going to do this?" whereas in the timeline the question is, "When are you going to do this?"

Community Connections (150 words):

During my time as a graduate student, I have sought to understand the conditions of poverty, racial disparities, and systemic inequalities that affect the communities that surround the university. For a year and a half, I volunteered as an intake counselor for Community Justice, Inc., an indigent defense law firm in Madison. In that capacity I

worked with individuals seeking legal assistance for criminal and civil issues. It was during that time that I first became interested in housing justice in Madison, and it was that experience that led me to volunteer at the Tenant Resource Center to focus more pointedly on issues of housing. There, I quickly have established positive working relationships with the campus programming coordinator and the executive director. My familiarity with the networks of non-profit and government agencies assisting low-income individuals and families provides the foundation for mapping the relationships that structure Madison's housing systems in this project.

Additionally, I spent two years working as an instructor in the Oakhill Humanities in Prison project, which has lent me additional understanding of the complexities and rewards of coordinating public humanities programming.

Academic Research (300 words):

In our online materials, "Academic Research" isn't included as a common grant proposal element. However, this section includes some of the backgrounding work commonly done in what we identify as the "Examination of a Need or Problem" section.

My primary research interests lie in LGBTQ cultural history and queer theory. My dissertation focuses on first-person narrative in order to investigate how politically and socially vulnerable populations articulate their identities, their affiliations, and their relationships to the normative majority. I see this project as a way to consider different configurations of vulnerability and supportive alliances, while drawing upon my past research into the rhetorics of testimony, autobiography, and the cultural marks of structural inequality. My minor coursework sought to consider the language of disciplinarily and how that structures academic research. My hope is that this HEX grant will allow me to bring that diverse understanding of disciplinarity to bear on the issues facing populations at risk, using the language of first-person narrative to constellate the disparate conversations surrounding housing justice in Madison.

In looking to past HEX projects for guidance, I was drawn to Garrett Nelson and Rebecca Summer's "Goodman to Garver: Stories of Place on Madison's East Side." Their attention to a specific neighborhood guided my decision to focus on the south side to narrow my scope. I will also follow their lead in ensuring that the stories I collect serve as a forum for interpreting and attending to Madison's housing crisis.

This project has been directly informed by ProPublica's model of journalism in the public interest, particularly Nikole Hannah-Jones sustained coverage of the federal failures to enforce the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

In considering how humanities research can be integrated into public activism, I have long been interested in Housing Works, a non-profit in New York City. Their housing resource center is integrated with a bookstore and studio space, not only as a business model, but as a way of insuring that the population they serve, primarily those suffering from HIV/AIDS whose housing, not only have the resources they need to ensure stable housing, but also have access to a community space and the means to express and chronicle their experiences with housing vulnerability through a variety of practical and creative forums. My hope is that this project is the beginning of a sort of online community space that encourages different ways of speaking to and representing Madison housing.

By drawing parallels between other projects and what she hopes her podcast will achieve, this writer makes a connection between her aspirations and the successes of other HEX fellowships.