



\$591,315

NEH Funding at Vanderbilt, from FY 2017 to FY 2021

\$13.6 MILLION

NEH Funding given to Tenn., from FY 2017 to FY 2021

\$480,000

NEH Challenge Grant awarded to Vanderbilt in 1989

\$1.9 MILLION

Leveraged by Vanderbilt's 1989 Challenge Grant

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

In 1989, Vanderbilt's Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities was awarded a \$480,000 Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to help establish a permanent endowment for the center. The grant had to be matched 4:1 with funds from the private sector, which helped leverage an additional \$1.9 million. This award signified the nationally recognized achievements of the center and helped ensure its long-term future. The center facilitates interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences by hosting annual faculty fellows and convening faculty and graduate students to find both short- and long-term ways to support and promote the humanities at Vanderbilt and beyond. The center supports and promotes the humanities in three main areas: career diversity and development for graduate and undergraduate students, humanities-led solutions to real-world problems, and community partnerships. In FY 2021, the Robert Penn Warren Center:

- Offered the *Scholarship of Everyday Life: Coffee* in conjunction with the Wond'ry, Vanderbilt's Innovation Center. This multidisciplinary, co-curricular series of talks and interactive, hands-on experiences enabled undergraduates to discover the connections between their classwork, scholarly research, everyday objects, and how those can affect people in communities from the local to



The Vaughn Home located on Vanderbilt's campus, which houses the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities (Vanderbilt University)

the global scale. Students explored the complex sociocultural, economic, environmental and political circumstances that shape the global coffee supply chain, which allowed them to see how their everyday choices can contribute to inclusive economies, healthy environments, and social and environmental justice.

- Hosted the *Community Voices* podcast which featured interviews with members of the local community to document both the everyday lives and the extraordinary experiences of Nashvillians. The center also launched The Pod—a community of podcasters that share resources, tips and strategies for using the power of storytelling to address a variety of issues that are crucial in the humanities.

\$500K grant to fund postdoctoral program to elevate collaborative humanities scholarship

The College of Arts and Science was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the NEH, as part of the American Rescue Plan, that ensures humanities-related groups across the nation can continue their mission during the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant enables Vanderbilt to establish the Collaborative Humanities Postdoctoral Program, which will fund 10 postdoctoral fellowships for the next academic year using the grant and college resources. Postdoctoral scholars will select one of three tracks: urban, environmental or global humanities and each track will have three central components: project development, pedagogy and professionalization.

NEH Connection Grants

During the fall 2019 semester, the RPW Center was awarded an NEH Humanities Connections Implementation Grant entitled “‘Humanities in Place’: An Immersive, Place-Based Curriculum for Historic Preservation and Humanities-Centered Land Use at Vanderbilt University.” The nearly \$100,000 grant is being used for a series of classes and programming in the 2020–22 academic years. This innovative curriculum initiative uses Vanderbilt University’s historic Vaughn Home (built in 1875) as a hands-on lab where students can develop skills relevant to nonacademic careers in the humanities, such as archival and archaeological research, historic preservation, museum curation, land use and human-centered design, digital humanities, news, and public affairs.

History, archaeology and anthropology professors’ classes are using the Vaughn Home and the land surrounding it to investigate multiple aspects of the site. One student in the class uncovered clues that show that it was originally two separate buildings, suggesting the existence of previously unknown servants’ quarters. One of the foundational courses in the series examined the history of the United States, from the post-Civil War era to the modern day, through the lens of the American research university, using Vanderbilt as a case study. The course came alive when students worked in the Special Collections and University Archives. The materials pulled by archivists, and the projects created through the various classes, ultimately will populate a digital archive at the Vanderbilt library as well as potential exhibits on campus. A civil and environmental engineering professor, who is an expert in human-centered design, is leading a sustainable development class in partnership with the FutureVU Land Use Planning Initiative. The goal is to create a public space on the Vaughn Terrace, which sits squarely between the engineering school’s Featheringill Hall and the Vaughn Home.



An anthropology class excavated a site that used to hold servants’ quarters dating back to the founding of the university in 1873. Through their research, two post-emancipation African American women who worked in the Vaughn Home are now a part of Vanderbilt’s written history. (Vanderbilt University)

Making history more accessible

Vanderbilt faculty and staff have been awarded NEH grants to support their efforts to make history more accessible to the public.

- A professor of French was awarded a nearly \$240,000 Institutes for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities Grant from the NEH. She will use this grant to launch the Immersive global Middle Ages Institute for Advanced Topics, a 28-month initiative studying the use of immersive digital technologies for teaching and learning about the Global Middle Ages through in-person and virtual workshops.
- A research assistant professor of communication studies and assistant dean of graduate education and strategic initiatives for the College of Arts and Science received two grants: a nearly \$100,000 Digital Humanities Advancement Grant from the NEH, as well as a nearly \$100,000 grant from the National Park Service. Funding from these grants will support the creation of a database of more than 16,000 enslaved and free Black laborers and soldiers who built and defended Nashville’s fortifications during the Civil War, serving as a great resource for Tennesseans tracing their ancestry.

Vanderbilt slavery archive to reach wider audience through data hub

A digital archive of the oldest records for Africans in the Americas, directed by a Vanderbilt history professor and hosted at the Vanderbilt Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries, will join a new online data hub. This will enable researchers and the public to access and analyze millions of pieces of data from collections across eight institutions, including Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt’s Slave Societies Digital Archive, supported in part by NEH, is the largest digital collection of records for Africans in the Atlantic world, approaching 700,000 digitized images from the U.S., the Caribbean region, and Latin America. These records date from the 16th to the 20th centuries and document the history of between six and eight million individuals. The collection is the most extensive serial record of the history of Africans in the Atlantic world and also includes valuable information on the indigenous, European and Asian populations who lived alongside them.



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