

---

# ACLS 2025 INFO SESSION

- Amanda Swain, School of Humanities, [ajswain@uci.edu](mailto:ajswain@uci.edu)
- Holly Hapke, School of Social Sciences, [hhapke@uci.edu](mailto:hhapke@uci.edu)
- Christofer Rodelo, Assistant Professor of Chicano/Latino Studies, recipient of 2024 ACLS Fellowship
- <https://www.acls.org/competitions-and-deadlines/>

# IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

## ACLS

- **Read the website** – there is a lot of detailed information. Watch webinar if available.
- **Register early** and get to know the online application form. There are additional instructions and a lot of information to manually enter.
- ACLS **requires** all applicants to have an **ORCID ID**.

## INTERNAL – BEFORE you apply

- Notify your department chair NOW. **Leave is not guaranteed** just because you receive a fellowship. It must be approved by the department chair, dean and Academic Personnel.
- The fellowship will not cover your salary. Use of sabbatical credits is expected; salary supplementation, course release, etc. are not guaranteed and should be arranged during the application process, not at time of award.
  - Social Sciences faculty, talk to your department chair, review school policy.
  - Humanities faculty, talk to Amanda Swain to start the process.

## FINALLY

- Work with Holly (SocSci) and Amanda (Humanities) to polish your application



# REVIEW PROCESS

- Staff screens for eligibility and formatting requirements.
- Multi-stage review process, not blind.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Round: 2-3 reviewers including specialists in field; if claim to be interdisciplinary, this stage will include reviewers from both fields. Specialist reviewers understand that proposals written for 2<sup>nd</sup> stage generalist reviewers.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Round: awardees selected by multi-disciplinary committees of 4-5 scholars across humanities and interpretive social sciences.
- All applicants are not reviewed by the same set of reviewers; this ensures everyone is reviewed by at least one specialist among generalists in second round committee.

---

## ADVICE FROM JOHN PAUL CHRISTY FORMER ACLS SENIOR DIRECTOR OF U.S. PROGRAMS

- Your ideas matter – **how you present them matters too**. Think carefully about your audience.
- You are proposing a **project** not just an idea, argument or research question. Show what you will do, not just what you are thinking about.
- Challenge is to demonstrate the stakes of your project to an audience of non-specialists in your field – **craft the rhetoric** of your proposal for this audience, not just the specialists.
- Substantiate your claim. Balance theory and evidence.



# OUTCOMES

## Fellowships

- Ultimate goal of the project should be a **major piece of scholarly work** – involves significant research and advances knowledge in the field.
- At any stage of the project – not just final writing stage.

## Digital Justice Grants

- Funded by Mellon Foundation – core value: racial and social justice.
- Purpose is access through digital platforms that provide “intellectual contributions, innovative use of existing technology, and/or networks of skills-building and sharing.”

# FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- **Personal Statement** – how have you come to focus on these research questions; put this work in context. Successful applicants have talked about personal, pedagogical, and scholarly commitments that animate this project.
- **Writing Sample** – gives the applicant an opportunity to demonstrate capacity to do the work instead of requiring an outside recommendation; can be an unrelated recently published work or current work in process that show how you are engaging in the ideas in proposed project. The writing sample should be a coherent piece within the page limit.
- The **application** includes several short answer blocks in the online form and several components. Use each to provide unique information. An ACLS Program Officer described this as “all valuable real estate.”



# DIGITAL JUSTICE APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- **Budget** – use the ACLS template; “real” costs.
- **Staffing/Resources** – confirm that campus resources will be available in advance; ensure computing and digital platforms expertise.
- **Institutional Verification** – form filled out online agreeing to use of institutional resources (see above).
- **Partners** – if your project will serve a specific community, include that community actively in the design and implementation of the project.

# GRANT WRITING TIPS

- A fellowship proposal is its own genre of writing - not a book proposal or journal article
- Most effective narrative arc frontloads the “action” (important stuff) to engage reader immediately
  - 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph is most important;
  - 1<sup>st</sup> sentence should make clear what the project is about
- Instill LOVE & TRUST on part of reviewers
  - *The goal is to persuade reviewers that the proposed project has the special merit to deserve funding—that the project will stand out as novel and significant, and that the methodology will be recognized as careful and thorough... In the economy of proposal writing, every element must contribute to the argument and to the idiom of persuasion.*  
~ “Writing Proposals for ACLS Fellowship Competitions”
- A sales pitch – need to tell a compelling story
  - Present a novel idea and/or critical problem
  - Propose a sound, realistic plan of action
  - Demonstrate broad impact, importance



# MORE TIPS

- Read the guidelines! Follow the instructions! Especially about formatting.
- Use "strong" action verbs and language (will, expect); don't equivocate (if, try, hope, believe, might, could, etc.)
- Avoid complicated, multiple clause sentences; use paragraph breaks
- Avoid cliches, empty generalities, extraneous text – be SPECIFIC and CONCISE
- Read “Writing Proposals for ACLS Fellowship Competitions,” download available on the ACLS Fellowship webpage. <https://www.acls.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Writing-Fellowship-Proposals-1.pdf> Watch the webinar with this and more info.
- Get feedback on drafts from experts and non-experts



# REVIEWERS FIRST VIEW

- Title, Abstract, and Broader Significance are the **first things** the reviewer sees – take these seriously!
- **Abstract:** concisely present the stakes and payoff, capture the audience's attention, be concise, don't just copy and paste the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph of the proposal. Awardee profiles have abstracts – use as examples.
- **Broader Significance:** legibility and of interest to scholars outside your field, can be squarely in your discipline but the insights can still be portable.



## REVIEWERS

- Usually in a hurry; not getting paid; have regular jobs and do a lot of reading
- Three types:
  - Critical readers – read every word on page, think critically about ideas presented
  - Search readers – search text for responses to review criteria; look for main points
  - Skimmers – will not read the proposal in detail
- Make reading easy for each type of reviewer – esp. Skimmers

# QUESTIONS?

