

A&S Strategic Planning for Research – Social Sciences Focus Group Meeting (1/11/2024)

Facilitated by: Fiona Greenland and Andrew Kahrl

Present: 14 faculty participants representing various departments in the division

- I. Introduction of facilitators and faculty participants
- II. Comments on focus of session from Fiona Greenland – Dean Acampora’s charge to engage in strategic planning for research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA) among A&S divisions. Referred to previous A&S strategic plans as well as goal to identify opportunities and barriers to research excellence. Fiona mentioned possible thematic areas that A&S faculty might be interested in before opening discussion to faculty.
- III. Feedback from faculty participants
 - a. Various participants expressed interest in an environment with less competition for funding, that recognizes individual’s research interests as worth investing in rather than top-down initiatives aiming to incentivize faculty to shape their research interests into something they were not originally
 - b. Perception shared of scarce funding and pressure to engage in exhausting cycle of applications for funding for interdisciplinary RSCA rather than within-discipline work
 - c. Some interest in supporting centers that facilitate interdisciplinary work as well
 - d. Comment that faculty put in large amounts of work submitting proposals for internal funding that do not have transparent selection methods and/or sufficient funding to merit that much effort
 - e. Perception that UVA offers less in financial and administrative support for RSCA than other R1 universities, with request to increase both forms of support
 - f. Financial support for conference-related travel would help, in addition to bundling teaching requirements into one semester to focus on RSCA the other semester
 - g. Faculty expressed interest in staff support that would help them get “unstuck” – this might be support for writing, pre-/post-award, data reduction, analytic work, etc.
 - h. Comment that faculty in smaller departments struggle to research because they need to teach – more graduate students and postdocs would help to fill these needs
 - i. Developmental editors could make a significant impact on faculty productivity
 - j. Request for access to high-quality data (sharing and storage) and library resources
 - k. Staff support for promoting finished books/articles and translating their impact
 - l. Larger/long-term grant applications like the democracy initiative grants can have significant positive impact – even if one isn’t awarded the grant, their research might benefit from opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary manner with colleagues
 - m. More transparency is needed about the number of grants or amount of funding available when funding calls are disseminated – this helps faculty to understand their chances to get funding and weigh the costs and benefits of applying
 - n. Desire for leadership from the College that supports all researchers and their daily challenges/obstacles rather than investing only in RSCA that is trendy and new
- IV. Closing – request to take survey coming out next month and attend town halls in Feb., encouragement to contact Fiona or Andrew with additional ideas