

The Slay Fund for Social Justice at Drake University

Report on Grants Awarded and Completed, Academic Year 2020/2021

Submitted by Professor Renée Ann Cramer, September 2021

In academic year 2020/2021 the Slay Fund for Social Justice made grants to projects in four broad categories: student research and internships, pedagogy for social justice, campus-wide events and speakers, and long-term programs with community partners. These funding categories coincide with the three strategic priorities of the Slay Fund, which allocate funding for: speakers and events related to social justice; capacity building and institutional support programming; student-proposed and student-focused initiatives. These categories and priorities overlap to a great extent, but we have identified primary activities in the following ways:

Student Activism, Research, and Internships

The Slay Fund provided funding for five First Generation Drake students to attend the *Circle of Change Virtual Career Leadership Experience*. Grantee **Marina Verlengia** noted that the leadership experience was focused on helping first generation students understand professionalism and leadership in a context that they are unfamiliar with (post-college!), which is truly a service to them in their preparation for leadership. Further, having them “return” from the virtual experience and bring what they learned back to their peers was an essential step in transmitting knowledge and justice.

At the beginning of summer 2020, a small group of faculty donated money and coordinated to feed the several Drake students and recent alums who were engaged in the fight for civil rights and safety via #BlackLives Matter. This was an organic response to the crisis. And, though not officially endorsed by the University, food distribution took place on Helmick Commons, with staff and security present. Though most of the food was covered by donation, **Professor Jennifer Harvey** paid out-of-pocket for a significant amount of the food we provided students on that day. In fall 2020, the Slay Fund for Social Justice, recognizing the work of feeding and providing hospitality as essential to the mission of the Fund, and the University, authorized reimbursement.

Pedagogy for Social Justice

Professor Tim Knepper (Philosophy and Religion) accessed Slay Funding during the summer of 2020 and again in 2021, to pay stipends to Drake students involved in the Inter-Faith Youth Camp. In 2020, the camp’s operation was disrupted due to Covid; they were back to normal size of operations by summer 2021.

Events and Speakers

Lynne Cornelius, Drake’s Violence Prevention Coordinator, used Slay Funds to purchase dozens of copies of *Sexual Citizens: A Landmark Study of Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus*, and pay an honorarium to the authors, Jennifer Hirsch and Shamus Khan, to virtually visit Drake on March 17th for an exceptionally well-attended program that drew

attention to the ways that sexual assault is understood and unfolds on college campuses, and places attention on prevention and healthy relationships.

The Slay Fund supported a collaboration between the **Office of Sustainability (Sophia Siegal) and the Office of Equity and Inclusion (Gabriel Ford)** to bring indigenous speaker Emma Robbins “to campus” for a virtual event. Robbins, a Diné (Navajo) activist and artist and the Director of the Navajo Water Project at Dig Deep Water, spoke to the campus on November 12.

Programs with Community Partners

Alejandro Hernandez, Dean of the College of Business and Public Administration, successfully applied for Slay funding to assist in hosting the Iowa Latinx Project on campus during the summer of 2021. The project uses data-informed approaches to enhance the lives of Latinx people in Central Iowa. Hosting the Latinx Project on campus, in a high-profile venue and with full hospitality, helped the University articulate our shared desire to work with Iowa Latinx Project to eliminate the economic, civic, and social health divides that the Latinx community faces in Central Iowa.

Professors **Megan Brown** and **Deb Delaet**, acting as members of **Drake’s Faculty Senate** used Slay Fund support to partner with Des Moines’ Black Liberation Movement/Black Lives Matter, by providing an honorarium to Maté Muhammad for facilitating a program for faculty, staff, and students, on the importance of this movement – it’s history – and the way that DSM-BLM is transforming our community through liberation work. As an activist, organizer, and cultural worker from Des Moines, Mr. Muhammad’s knowledge and perspective are vital pieces of the work of social justice in Des Moines – he made an important contributor to conversations around anti-racism and emancipation on our campus.

The Slay Fund supports **Professor Renee Cramer** with a stipend each year, for her work to direct the fund (\$6,100 – stipend + benefits).

3% of Slay funds awarded to student activism and support	\$ 689
35% of Slay funds awarded for pedagogy for social justice	\$ 7,652
26% of Slay funds awarded for campus-wide events	\$ 5,700
36% of Slay funds awarded to community partners/support	\$ 8,125
Total funds awarded for academic year 2020-2021	*\$22,166

*These awards are significantly less than the grants usually provided via the Fund, to the campus community; the global pandemic and a year of virtual slowed down the energy and ability of faculty, staff, and students – we look forward to an enriched and enlivened academic year 21/22, and have already seen an uptick in grant requests.