

Check-Ins

Description

Bi-weekly meetings between the Humanities Director (previously the Humanities Scholar) and each fellow. These meetings are scheduled for 45 minutes and have been generally conducted via Zoom. Some fellows have requested meeting in person, and we have been able to accommodate some of those requests.

Goals

The main goal of the check-ins is to learn how the fellows are. These would allow the Humanities Director (and leadership when needed) to identify areas of support and intervention. Constant communication is key to address fellows' concerns before they develop into bigger issues. The check-ins are also a space to reflect on the HA experience and how it connects to the fellows professional and personal trajectories.

Process

The conversations of the check-in are generally directed to different areas:

- Overall well-being.
 - *How are you? How are you feeling?* Check-ins generally open with these questions, to get a general sense of fellows state. By following up with more specific questions and modeling his own answers, the HD has signaled that his interests do not pertain solely to the Fellowship. With this questions, we look to learn about external factors that impact on fellows capacity.
- Academic Progress.
 - *How are your courses? Your exams? Your dissertation.* The HA Fellowship is meant to complement fellows professional development, recognizing that academic “progress” is a priority. These questions aim to help fellows find connections between the thinking that they do at the HA and their own scholarly work. They also help fellows in finding a healthy balance between HA responsibilities and their academic ones. They also serve to identify areas of support (i.e., fellows have expressed difficulty writing, so we created writing spaces for them).
- Other Endeavors.
 - *How is your organizing work? How is your theater production going?* Our visions of the humanities as a discipline has always been questioned and expanded by our fellows' complex array of interests. They have experiences (and current jobs, and projects) beyond the HA, and beyond Academia. By talking about these experiences, we want to keep an expansive view of the Humanities, and identify methods and skills that are generated elsewhere and benefit their roles as HA fellows.
- Institutional awareness.
 - *What are you seeing at the CCs? At the GC? Elsewhere? How are your students feeling?* The work that we do exists in a very particular context, and one of the

goals of the program is to help fellows develop a deeper understanding of CUNY, CCs and Higher Ed.

- Campus partners and projects.
 - *How is the project going? How is the relationship with the faculty/staff? Do you have a clear understanding of your role?* These questions are aimed to learn about the specifics of their role as fellows in the campus projects, but also to gauge the relationships. For example, we have learned of fellows' frustrations with unclear tasks. That allowed us to go to our partners and ask to communicate explicit and clear expectations.
I purposely ask these questions toward the end of the check-in, to let the fellows know that our interest in them is not merely in relation to the work that they do for the HA.

The order of these questions vary from fellow to fellow, and meeting to meeting. These conversations are structured based on fellows' needs, sense of urgency and interests. There could be sessions when we talk solely of dissertation work, or of something else going on in the institution.

These check-ins are also flexible in length and frequency. Fellows can also do it asynchronously via e-mail, if needed. These have been communicated clearly and frequently.

Reasoning

Check-ins have been shaped by the Pedagogy of Listening, which invites teachers to look for emerging themes and interests in students. In this case, the space itself is designed for fellows to talk about what they need to talk about, while the facilitator (HD) is responding to them. They also are inspired by bell hooks approach to the student as a whole, and the need to take into account our fellows' lives outside of the HA. The HA doesn't exist in a disciplinary void but in connection to many facets of our lives. Also important, is Paulo Freire's concept of "naming the world." These check-ins are spaces for fellows to name their experience.

Antecedents

During Phase I, check-ins were held by the Director of Programs and Administration (Kaysi Holman).