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Xavier University of Louisiana Awarded Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant to launch African American & Diasporic Cultures Studies Initiative

New Orleans, LA – Xavier University of Louisiana's College of Arts and Sciences has been awarded a \$500,000 grant to launch an African American and African Diasporic Cultures Studies (AAADCS) program. This initiative, which integrates the study of the African American and African Diasporic experience through an inter- and cross disciplinary approach, is one of the first programs of its kind at a historically Black university. The new program allows Xavier's students to delve fully into the lived experiences Black Americans and people of the African diaspora while empowering them to consider how their own careers might lead to transformative new Black and African diasporic futures.

The grant was awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the largest supporter of the arts and humanities in the United States. Xavier's new AAADCS program is a major program of study that explores our current phenomena and contextualizes ongoing pursuits for social, racial, and economic justice that impacts governance, policy and social interventions in a global society. This unique major program of study advances over 30 years of Xavier's commitment to African American Diaspora Studies (AADS) and Afro-Latin American and Caribbean Studies (ALCS), both currently interdisciplinary minors.

"This new program will provide a distinctly transnational educational opportunity to our students that is in line with our geography and mission," said Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Anne McCall. "This has been a long time coming in many ways, and it will also lay the foundations for more developments in the next 3 to 5 years. By challenging our students to explore their history and how it is directly connected to social justice efforts happening today, we are creating individuals that are both self-aware and globally competent."

Historically, the uniqueness of New Orleans as the northernmost Caribbean city extends from being heavily imbricated in the slave trade, plantation economies, and the destruction of indigenous lives and cultures. Xavier's founder St. Katharine Drexel founded Xavier University in her effort to educationally empower African and Native Americans. As such, the positionality of New Orleans between the United States and the Caribbean, along with the rich history of Xavier makes the University an ideal location to use as a primary tool for an analysis and development of a global Black identity.

Besieged by a global health pandemic coupled with racial injustice endemic to the United States, the year 2020 has put racial issues front and center prompting national and global reckoning over the challenges and structures that continue to impede the type of justice needed for vulnerable and marginalized communities. The AAADCS program will provide a space to engage African American students to explore these challenges in depth and intellectually imagine new modes of being, knowing, and doing necessary for our collective survival.

The newly developed AAADCS initiative seeks to ensure that historically Black institutions remain at the forefront of higher education and curriculum innovation that is inclusive and progressive in its objectives of preparing students of color for leadership on a global level while empowering the local community.

For more information on Xavier's College of Arts and Sciences, follow this [link](#).

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About the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and, where necessary, defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies. To this end, it supports exemplary institutions of higher education and culture as they renew and provide access to an invaluable heritage of ambitious, path-breaking work. The Foundation makes grants in four core program areas: Higher Education and Scholarship in the Humanities, Arts and Cultural Heritage, Scholarly Communications, and International Higher Education and Strategic Projects.

About Xavier University of Louisiana

Being America's only historically Black and Catholic University is just the first of the distinctions that have set Xavier University of Louisiana apart for more than eight decades. Despite its relatively small size (3,300 students), Xavier is a nationally recognized leader in the STEM and the health sciences, producing more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Its College of Pharmacy is among the top producers of African American pharmacists.

Its liberal arts-based programs in such areas as art, business, education, psychology, and political science – as well as such recent additions as bioinformatics, data science, neuroscience, crime and social justice, and jazz studies – offer students an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences. The winning Xavier formula? Provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls.

For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. To book interviews and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications, and the arts, contact Lance Sumler at (504) 520-5240 or lsumler@xula.edu.