

## COVID-19 ARTISTIMULUS: Redirecting Research Funds for Artist Honoraria

Many scholars have experienced the cancellation or uncertain postponement of research activities scheduled for this spring, such as conference attendance, ethnographic fieldwork, and trips to archives. For those employed in institutions of higher education, this situation may also mean that research funds earmarked for those activities are now sitting unspent. Institutions may have extended the deadlines for spending these funds so that conference and research travel can resume in the fall semester. However, if you do not have that option - or do, but want to use the funds a different way - one option might be to redirect research monies to artists, culture bearers, community scholars, and others whose livelihoods are perilously threatened by COVID-19.

This is a call to scholars of the performing arts to recuperate resources allotted for faculty research, educational programming, and curriculum development to engage and support the artists and culture bearers we work with, teach, and write about. This call is in line with recent proclamations made throughout arts and design communities, urging gatekeepers to [call upon artists right now](#) to guide difficult conversations, and to compensate them for their much-needed expertise, [supporting freelancers, service workers and gig economy folks](#). Although we may need to act fast in order to leverage funds before the end of this semester, we would do well to heed the call from dancer, social justice practitioner, and writer Michele Kumi Baer, who urges us to take the time to [ask questions to deepen racial equity](#) when making funding decisions in quick response to COVID-19.

We can start by asking our institutions to revise the intended use of our research funds for Spring and Summer 2020. Instead of paying for airfare, hotel rooms, conference registrations, etc., those funds can be paid out to artists in exchange for other kinds of research and pedagogical labor, such as virtual interviews, Zoom class visits, “tickets” for an entire class to attend a live-streamed performance, or other virtual options.

If you’re thinking, “This is a great idea, but who do I ask? What do I say? How do I make my case?” then here are some guidelines and language that you can copy, paste, and tailor to your situation.

### GUIDELINES FOR MAKING THE ASK

- Acknowledge efforts already underway and the hard, long hours your chair, director, dean, etc. are already doing to keep teaching and research moving forward in these incredibly trying times.

- Consider the category of funding you were granted (Research, Teaching, or Special Program) and see how best to frame the redirection of funds in that area while underscoring the unique opportunity to engage with artists remotely.
- Make it clear that you understand the pressures on university/college spending at this moment. Emphasize that your ask is a simple and elegant rerouting of funds already allocated. Think about /ask what the shift in spending might mean logistically for the offices that process the payments and determine if one approach is easier than another.

### **SAMPLE EMAIL LANGUAGE**

Dear ADMINISTRATOR,

[Insert here: Something that acknowledges efforts already underway by chair, director, dean, etc. to sustain teaching and research in these incredibly trying times.]

I am writing to ask about using funds already allocated for my research and travel this semester, all of which has now been canceled, for opportunities that are now newly available through remote channels. [Insert here your specific proposal: ex: I would like to pay artists for virtual interviews / invite culture bearers to visit my class through Zoom / other activities, which would help me move forward with my research / class / programming and how/why].

I understand that, in general, we try to keep expenditures within the frame of the original intent of the funding application. While this is undoubtedly good practice in ordinary times, these are extenuating circumstances. What was most valuable for my research agenda / class syllabus / programming a month ago is no longer an option; however, our current online context actually provides new opportunities to engage with artists/culture bearers/community activists in ways that were less possible before. The proposed activities will [insert: do XYZ for my research/course/department].

Can you help me determine what the process would/could be for providing these kinds of participant stipends and if there are any regulatory limitations of which to be aware? Or could you point me to the person who could best make those determinations? If this is possible, I would also like to determine estimated processing time for payment to reach artists. I understand that all systems are overloaded right now that processing times may take longer than usual, but it would be helpful to give my invited guests a sense of the timeline so that they can plan accordingly.

Many thanks for your creative vision and flexibility in these uncertain times,  
YOUR NAME

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

### **Conference Funds for Interviews**

Rachel was granted permission to redirect her unspent conference travel funds for Spring 2020 to pay honoraria to New Orleans musicians for Zoom interviews. She was planning to present her research to date with these musicians at a conference in April. Instead, she is continuing the research through virtual interviews. She is in the process of modifying her existing IRB protocol to allow for virtual interviews and financial remuneration.

### **Programmatic Funds for Virtual Speaker Series**

Hannah was granted permission to redirect unspent Spring travel funds, awarded her as Director of the Arts in NYC semester program, to host a virtual dance speaker series for her home department and their networks. Funds will go directly to independent dance artists, administrators, curators, and core members of webbed collectives who are invited to share their novel strategies for creatively sustaining and critically revising the dance landscape during this time.

### **Course Development Funds for In-Class Zoom Guests**

Dasha had previously received a Civic Engagement Course Development grant for one specific course she's teaching in Spring 2020. The funds were originally earmarked for guests and museum visits. When campus shut down, she inquired if she could redistribute the funds across her three classes, and her chair encouraged her to use the funds in whatever ways best suited her class/teaching for the moment. She was able to invite more people to Zoom in, and included some of them as guests in her other classes. Still using the funds for "Civic Engagement" and "course development," she was able to adapt to the unanticipated move to online teaching. The funds have gone farther by covering simply an honorarium rather than travel, housing, and meal expenses as well. She has been able to connect her students with a wide range of artists and community-engaged practitioners in ways that would otherwise not have been possible.

[Rachel Carrico](#), Assistant Professor, University of Florida School of Theatre + Dance

[Hannah Schwadron](#), Assistant Professor, Florida State University, School of Dance

[Dasha Chapman](#), Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance, Davidson College