

UMN awarded \$1 million from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for Indigenous-centered environmental stewardship initiative in the humanities

The University of Minnesota was awarded a \$1,077,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to develop a statewide, humanities-led environmental stewardship and community initiative that centers on respect for traditional Indigenous ways of understanding the world.

The Duluth, Morris and Twin Cities campuses will collaborate in a systematic approach for integrating Indigenous ideas and research methods in humanities scholarship and environmental stewardship. This initiative will reach across Minnesota and further the mission of research, education and outreach at the University of Minnesota.

The University's Institute for Advanced Study will establish and sustain a network of UMN-System scholars and community partners to focus on:

- creating collaborative humanities-based work that centers on culturally informed community engagement and place-based knowledge, which promotes learning rooted in the unique local history, environment, culture, economy, literature and art;
- developing new curricula that integrate diversity in knowledge creation and emphasize environmental stewardship approaches within the humanities;
- encouraging Indigenous and other underrepresented students to visualize the value their role in the humanities and arts can bring to their communities and to academia;
- addressing critical environmental challenges facing our local and global communities through collective response at the intersection of place, community, and stewardship.

“The Institute for Advanced Study is excited by the paths this grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation opens for building strong, interdisciplinary partnerships across our campuses and communities, using the humanities and arts to bring people together to seek collective solutions to critical problems we face as a society,” said Professor Jennifer Gunn, director of the Institute for Advanced Study and grant principal investigator.

By incorporating local community-based participatory research and Indigenous knowledge, the University of Minnesota is seeking to expand the methods of the humanities and create greater intellectual diversity in the academy.

Executive Vice President and Provost Karen Hanson stated, “I am delighted that The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has recognized the importance of this humanities-led project. The

proposal sprang from our University's understanding of our critical responsibilities to the communities that support us and, perhaps in particular, to the communities upon whose original land we sit; and it was based on our absolute faith in the central contribution the humanities can make to addressing the critical environmental problems facing our world. Further, as our state has become less homogeneous, we have recognized that the University must reflect in new ways on its land-grant mission—on the historical context and the present implications of that mission—and on the challenges and responsibilities we face. This project will advance that reflection."

This effort aligns with the Twin Cities campus strategic plan, *Driving Tomorrow*, which directs the University community to marshal its strengths in collaboration with local communities in order to realize the full potential of an integrative, inclusive and deeply engaged research university.