

# **Mellema Program in Western American Studies Organizational Document**

## **I. Name**

The name of this organization is the Mellema Program in Western American Studies (MPWAS). The name indicates the interdisciplinary interests of the program across academic fields and cultural activities. "Western American" means, narrowly, American territory West of the Mississippi River, including Alaska and Hawaii; broadly, it also includes the Canadian West and Northern Mexico, and relations between the American West and the larger Pacific Rim. The name "Mellema" refers to the donation by Dirk and JoAnn Mellema that endowed the program.

## **II. Background**

In 1993 Dirk and JoAnn Mellema provided a generous donation for the establishment of a Western American Studies Program at Calvin College and an endowed Chair in the Department of History. The resources for the program will become available incrementally over a period of years. The ongoing evolution of the program takes this fact into account. The organization and mandate of the program will continue to change as it is fully endowed.

The first phase of the program was organized by Acting Director James D. Bratt, History Department Chairperson, beginning in 1995-1996. This involved library enhancement, course development, and an inaugural conference. Library enhancement began with the purchase of several hundred books, entire runs of five scholarly journals, microform collections containing some 1500 nineteenth century primary sources, and three video series related to the American West. Early course development grants led to courses in "Natural Resources and Westward Expansion" and "Western American Literature."

The inaugural Mellema Program conference was held in 1997. It included lectures by prominent historians of the American West as well as seminars for Calvin College alumni social science teachers working in Western states. It also familiarized the larger College community with the subject and promise of the new program.

Developments in 1997-1998 expanded the parameters of the program. To build on the success of library and course development, as well as the 1997 conference, the program was expanded to include the North American West. This would provide MPWAS with a distinctive identity in the field and reflect Calvin College's historic Canadian connection. In addition, the program continued to purchase materials for the library, fund and host annual Mellema Lectures, and provide grants for research and course development by faculty in departments such as History, Literature, Religion, and Geology.

Together with other College faculty, the Acting Director also proposed setting up a North American Cultural Studies Program at Calvin College. Such a program would build on courses currently taught in American and Canadian history, geography, literature, politics, economics, CAS, religion, etc. In addition, the MPWAS would fund new courses, some of which would be taught by the Mellema Chair holder, related to cultural studies methods and the North American West. The Western American field would be a centerpiece in the program. The cultural studies

program would advance the MPWAS mandate to promote not just academic study of the West but also public events and cultural activities.

With these general goals in mind, in 1998-1999 Calvin College conducted a search for a permanent Director of the Mellema Program. The History Department would house the position, but the Director would promote Western American studies across the disciplines. The candidate hired would be an American cultural historian (or a cultural studies scholar with strong historical interests) who could develop an ongoing program of research in the North American West and enhance a Reformed Christian perspective Western American cultural studies. In February 1999 William Katerberg was hired to teach in the History Department and Direct the MPWAS. In 2000, he took over as Director of the Mellema Program.

In the past two years the MPWAS has continued to purchase library materials, including significant microform collections of primary sources. Calvin College's library now holds the largest collection of Western American studies material in Michigan. The Mellema Program has also continued to fund research and course development and invite annual Mellema lecturers. In the coming years the Mellema Program will sponsor cultural events such as concerts.

### **III. Purpose**

The purpose of the MPWAS is to promote the study of Western American culture, land, and history, and more broadly that of the North American West. This involves specific academic goals of research and teaching related to the West. It also includes public lectures and cultural events that serve the larger Western Michigan and Calvin College communities.

### **IV. Activities of the Program**

MPWAS activities include regular and Interim courses taught in disciplines across the Calvin College academic program. The MPWAS will promote research, publishing, and new course development through grants. It will support annual lectures and public cultural events. Its mandate includes sponsoring academic conferences. Generally the program will fund projects through the MPWAS endowment, but where appropriate it may seek external funding for special events and projects. It may also coordinate projects with other programs at Calvin College and in the larger West Michigan community. Where appropriate, the MPWAS also will coordinate with Off-Campus Programs to allow faculty to teach and students to study in the West.

### **V. Governance and Administration**

- A. The MPWAS will be located in the Academic Affairs Division in conjunction with the History Department.
- B. The Director will report to the Academic Dean for the Social Sciences and

Contextual Disciplines in all program matters, with the exception of specific History Department teaching assignments. In this regard, the Director will report to the History Department chairperson. (In the case of a North American Cultural Studies Program, the Director will report to the History Department chairperson and the appropriate Academic Deans.)

C. Governing Board

1. The governing board will be **composed** of the Director plus five members representing the following interests:
  - a. Academic: one faculty member from each of the academic divisions.
  - b. Non-academic: one representative from a Calvin College office or Program responsible for promoting cultural events.
  - c. Administrative: Academic Dean for the Social Sciences and Contextual Disciplines.
2. The governing board members will be **nominated** by the Provost and the President and **appointed** by the Committee on Governance. Normally they will serve for four years.
3. The governing board normally will **meet** twice a year, at the beginning of the Fall term and at the end of the Spring term.
4. The **mandate** of the governing board is as follows:
  - a. Annually adopt a plan for the activities of the MPWAS.
  - b. Approve all policies for the operation of the MPWAS.
  - c. Approve the MPWAS budget recommended to Provost by the Director.
  - d. Evaluate the work of the Director and review annual activities.
  - e. Advise the Director regarding major library purchases, special events, pursuit of outside grants, and program commitments to course development and regular faculty research grants in areas related to Western American Studies.

D. Director

1. The Director shall ordinarily be a member of the History Department, appointed through the normal process for the appointment of tenure track faculty.
2. The responsibilities of the Director are as follows:
  - a. Teach regular and Interim courses related to the MPWAS and in History Department, and develop a program of research related to Western North American studies.
  - b. Promote course development and research in areas related to the North American West through grants to regular College faculty.
  - c. Plan annual Mellema lectures and/or other public cultural events related to the North American West.
  - d. Organize special events and programs, such as conferences, related to the North American West.
  - e. Develop library resources relevant to the interdisciplinary study of the North American West.
  - f. Report to the MPWAS Governing Committee on an annual basis.
  - g. Report regularly to the Mellemas on program activities.
3. Term of appointment: three years, renewable
4. The Director's work will be part of his or her regular duties as a faculty member at Calvin College. The Director, History Department chairperson, Dean for Research, and Dean for the Contextual Disciplines will mutually determine the proportion of time devoted to the program, with advice from the governing board. Factors involved in the allocation of time will include revenues from the MPWAS endowment and grants, History Department needs, and the level of MPWAS activities.

## **VI. Future of the Program**

The original intent of the program was to endow a permanent Chair in Western American studies, with a reduced teaching load to provide time to direct the program and conduct research in the field. Because the MPWAS endowment is not complete, currently the Director's teaching load is reduced minimally on an ad hoc basis. This practice will be reevaluated as the program

endowment matures, with the intent of establishing the completed Mellema Chair when financial circumstances permit.

The duties of the Program Chair, as outlined in the proposal approved by Faculty Senate in 1998, will be the following: serve as Director of the program; coordinate the annual Mellema Lectureship, curriculum development, and resource acquisition; give the Mellema lecture every two or three years; teach the equivalent of five courses per year, some of which will be in the MPWAS; pursue a program of research in Western American studies; participate in public forums, where he or she can advance and convey the product of that research; and, contribute to the life of the department and college. Holders of the chair will receive the salary and benefits appropriate to their position on the Calvin College salary schedule, plus a summer stipend. The chair will also have a discretionary fund in the amount of ten percent of college's base salary for research related to the MPWAS and for program development.

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