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Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
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University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
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June 24, 2022

**THERESA MALDONADO, VICE PRESIDENT
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

Re: Five-Year Review of The Dickens Project

Dear Theresa:

At its June 22, 2022 meeting, the Academic Council approved the attached Five-Year Review of The Dickens Project Multi-campus Research Unit (MRU). Following procedures outlined in the Compendium, the review was performed by a Joint Senate Review Committee, led by the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) with input from the University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB) and the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA).

The Review Committee recommends renewing The Dickens Project as an MRU unit for five years, and also makes recommendations for strengthening the multi-campus nature of the MRU, attracting sustainable funding, and tracking diversity statistics. We request that that you forward the report to The Dickens Project director.

The Academic Council appreciates the time and effort the Review Committee spent in preparing and writing this report. In particular, I want to recognize the substantial contributions of UCORP Chair Karen Bales, who led the review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Horwitz".

Robert Horwitz, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: Academic Council
UCORP
Senate Directors
Executive Director Lin

Encl.

The Dickens Project Five-Year Review

University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP)

(Lead Committee)

University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB)

Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA)

June 1, 2022

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UCORP reviewed the annual and five-year reports of the Dickens Project, and met with leadership including the Director and Co-Director. The MRU leadership responded to questions in an organized and thoughtful way, and it is clear that they have also managed the MRU in this fashion. In particular, they have successfully weathered pandemic conditions, as well as reimagining their topics and scope in ways that are inclusive. UCORP recommends the renewal of the MRU for another five-year period, with a number of specific recommendations at the end of this document. Broadly, UCORP recommends strengthening within-UC ties as well as tracking diversity at all levels.

II. INTRODUCTION: HISTORY AND MISSION

The Dickens Project is a thriving multi-campus consortium focused on the study of the work of Charles Dickens. Based at the University of California, Santa Cruz, this MRU engages 40 member institutions around the country as well as internationally through its program of meetings, workshops and its week-long summer program known as the Dickens Universe. The Dickens Project was founded in 1981, and has been an MRU since 1993. Financially supported by national arts and humanities agencies, private donors, campus membership dues and participating members of the public, the Dickens Project is dedicated to the ongoing scholarly examination of 19th century literature by financially supporting the participation of graduate, undergraduate and high school students. The Dickens Project is directed by UCSC Professor John Jordan, who co-founded the institute in 1971, and Assistant Professor Renee Fox, who specializes in Victorian literature.

The mission of the Dickens Project is to promote and carry out research on the literary works and culture of the 19th century around the world, as it pertains to the writings of Charles Dickens, and to bring these findings to scholars, students and members of the public.

III. EVIDENCE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

a) RESEARCH

The faculty who take part in the Dickens Project have produced an extraordinary amount of scholarship, some of which is credited directly to participation in the project. Recently published, *The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens* (ed. Patten, Jordan, Waters; Oxford UP, 2018), contains 49 essays about Dickens, 29 of which were written by scholars with a connection to the Dickens Project. The MRU lists over 200 publications during the five year review period, as well as one patent.

b) UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

While the Dickens Project is mainly geared to scholars and graduate students, it does offer important opportunities for undergraduate participation. Several faculty participants bring undergraduate students with them to attend the week-long Dickens Universe conference. The Dickens Universe program includes an undergraduate component that offers credit through the UCSC summer session. The annual summer conference is an intensive, one-week, for-credit course at UCSC. Most who attend are enrolled Santa Cruz students, or other UC students, but there is also a scholarship that brings four community college students to the course (who can also get credit). USC is the only non-UC school that offers credit. Members of the public can also attend, and some of their fees subsidize the students and faculty.

Further opportunities are present for interested undergraduates who may want to attend other events. Participation in the winter and spring graduate student conference is possible for undergraduates who attended the previous summer's conference.

Undergraduate participation has had a track record of creating a pathway to graduate school and the professoriate. For instance, Assistant Professor Renee Fox has been Co-Director of the Dickens Project since 2016 and she had initially attended as an undergraduate at Stanford University.

c) GRADUATE EDUCATION

Over its 42 years of operations, the Dickens Project has had an impressive record of serving graduate students on a variety of levels. The MRU offers graduate seminars and workshops during the summer, and a graduate student conference in the winter. These activities are meant to foster "the next generation of 19th-century studies scholars," as the MRU executive summary states.

The conference activities cultivate connections for graduate students with their peers and with international scholars in the field. This helps not only with their graduate studies but with creating networks for finding positions upon graduating. There is a significant record of graduate alumni who have entered the profession and then returned to the Dickens Project consortium as faculty members. Thereby, the Dickens project is an important means of forging bridges among universities. Notably, Dickens participants sponsor National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) summer seminars and institutes, another means of cultivating the field and connections for future graduates.

The winter conference is specifically geared toward graduate students. It allows the students not only to present their work, but to take on the administrative role in the function of running a conference, which is good experience for future work. This also enables students to develop skills that may be useful for non-academic positions. In addition to the winter conference, during the Dickens Universe conference in the summer there are daily faculty-led graduate seminars and special professionalization workshops on topics including: journal publications, publishing the dissertation as a book, the academic job market, and non-

academic opportunities for humanities students. This emphasis on non-academic opportunities is especially noteworthy, as humanities academic positions have decreased over the years. The attentiveness to this change in the field is one of the many ways that the Project is serving its constituents. During the Universe, the graduate students are assigned a “job” allowing them to receive travel funds. These jobs also enable students to develop skills that will make them more employable, such as co-teaching small discussion groups for members of the general public and participating in one of several workshops on pedagogy, oral presentation, writing, and publishing. There is also a graduate student representative, who is a returning student, selected by the graduate student Universe attendees for service. These combined opportunities allow the graduate students to take on leadership roles within the Project as a whole.

During the COVID years, the Dickens Project continued to be active, holding two virtual summer conferences and one virtual winter graduate student/post doc conference. The Project received two major grants from the NEH American Rescue plan as well as a Monterey Peninsula Foundation grant which provided full grants to graduate students to attend the conferences. As a result, graduate students have not had to pay to participate virtually, and they do not have to pay to participate in-person either. This is laudable in a humanities field which often relies on dues by members. The Dickens Project is also extending winter conference opportunities to recent graduates, in recognition of the challenges faced during the COVID period with finding employment. The additional time and community will surely benefit recent graduates. This demonstrates a very intentional way the Project has addressed graduate students and graduate education before and during the COVID period.

d) RECOGNITION FOR EXCELLENCE BEYOND UC

The Dickens Project is a vibrant and productive MRU with a global reputation for excellence and conviviality. Indeed, original research and creative works, along with graduate and undergraduate education, are the significant contributions of the Dickens Project to the University of California community. But the celebration of Dickens’ writing and Victorian culture extends far beyond scholarly activity. The most impactful of these activities is the annual week-long Dickens Universe research conference held in Santa Cruz during the summer, to which each member institution can send at least one faculty member and up to two graduate student delegates. The winter graduate Dickens Project conference offers another opportunity for graduate student training in Victorian literature and culture. It is important to note that all student participants are supported by funds from the Dickens Project, as are invited faculty.

Deliverables from Dickens Project include publications in the form of essays, books and articles published by university presses. The Dickens Project has a long-standing agreement with *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays in Victorian Fiction*, a leading publication in the field, which has the right to first invitation for essays presented publicly at the Dickens Universe conference.

Graduate student training includes seminar presentations by both students and faculty, professionalization activities such as workshops on writing and becoming published, and employment opportunities in academia and beyond. Related notable contributions include partnerships with the Neighborhood Academic Initiative, a college preparatory program for low-income students in Los Angeles, and the engagement of the public, including senior members through the Elderhostel/Roads Scholar programs.

The Dickens Project has engaged in several events and strategies to ensure regional and national visibility. The primary event consists of the Dickens Universe, the annual week-long research institute gathering held between July and August at UC Santa Cruz. Typically, 250-300 participants attend including the general public (125-150), faculty and graduate student delegates (100-125), Road Scholars (50) as well as undergraduates. This academic forum functions as a laboratory that facilitates presentation of work in

progress, and critical feedback from lectures on various topics including digital humanities, big data, literary tests, science and animal studies, queer theory, eco-criticism, critical race studies and new formalism. As a result, there is publication of research through an agreement with the *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays in Victorian Fiction*, or articles in major scholarly journal, chapters in single-authored books or essays in edited collections that are published by university presses. There are daily faculty-led graduate student seminars that include special professionalization workshops on topics such as journal publication, turning the dissertation into a book, academic job market, and non-academic employment opportunities. The institute provides opportunities for networking with other graduate students and faculty in informal interactions.

Of note, the Dickens Universe on Lola Leroy and David Copperfield that was planned for July 2020 was postponed and is now scheduled for July 2022. The virtual 2020 Conference on Frances E.W. Harper, Black Victorians and 19th Century transatlantic studies was attended by 500 participants. The virtual Dickens Universe conference that was held in July 2020 focused on 'A Christmas Carol' and was attended by 25 participants.

There have been short themed conferences held at UC Santa Cruz in the past decade. The Long, Wide Nineteenth Century conference was held in 2015. In 2016, 2018 and 2019 there were 3- and 4-week National Endowment of the Humanities summer seminars. A "Form and Reform" conference was held in 2017.

The Annual Winter/Spring Dickens Graduate Student conference is held in February and alternates between UC Santa Cruz and non-UC campuses east of the Rocky Mountains. The conference is attended by 30-40 participants. During the pandemic, the 3-day virtual event was attended by both faculty and graduate students.

International events include occasional conferences that are co-sponsored by entities outside the US. For example, in May 2019, the Mapping Victorian Empires, Cultures, Identities conference was co-sponsored at the University of Haifa. In March 2018, the International Nineteenth-Century Studies Organization co-sponsored the event in San Francisco.

e) PUBLIC SERVICE AND OUTREACH

The Dickens Project has a number of programs related to public service and outreach. It maintains a scholarship program with the USC Neighborhood Academic initiative, which is a seven-year college prep program for student attending public school in South and East Los Angeles. The Friends of the Dickens project purchases books for two senior English classes at NAI and sponsors an essay contest. The writers of the top four essays about these books receive scholarships to attend the next summer's Dickens Universe.

In addition, there is scholarship program for community college students that brings up to four students to the Dickens Universe conference. Importantly, attendees are from diverse backgrounds.

During COVID, the Project produced 40 short videos of faculty and community members discussing their favorite passages from Dickens, and made these available on their website. Another new initiative, the "Dickens Day of Writing", is a writing retreat and competition for high school students. Finally, it is notable that many attendees of the Summer Dickens Universe are community members rather than academics, and that the Project also maintains association with a local Santa Cruz book club focused on Dickens. The Dickens Project website is easy to use and public programs are prominently featured.

Attempts are being made to create diversity in the membership and participation in Dickens activities.

f) DICKENS PROJECT MEMBERS

California members: UC Berkeley, UCLA, UCSC, Stanford University, Dominican University of California, San Francisco State University, and the University of Southern California.

National members: Princeton University, Columbia University, New York University, the City University of New York; Graduate Center, Cornell University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston University, Rutgers University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Maryland, Indiana University, Ohio State University, Kalamazoo College, the University of Kentucky, Vanderbilt University, the University of Georgia, Virginia Polytechnic University, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, the University of Mississippi, Louisiana State University, the University of Texas at Austin, Southern Methodist University, Rice University, the University of North Texas, the University of Iowa, and Arizona State University.

International members: (6): the University of Exeter (UK), the University of York (UK), Royal Holloway (University of London), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ryerson University (Canada), and the University of New England (Australia).

IV. BUDGET

a) MATERIALS PROVIDED FOR ASSESSMENT

To review the budgetary status and prospects of the Dickens Project (DP), the review committee considered materials including:

- Key sections of the MRU – Five-Year Review document, notably Section 5 and Appendix 1, but also contextual information provided in the narrative (e.g., Section 4) and other relevant Appendices;
- Key sections of the DP 2019-20 Annual report, also focusing on Section 5 and Appendix 1.
- Additional material (MRU 5-year-review slide show) and information provided by DP staff in a formal meeting with UCORP on 02-14-2022.

b) PROFILE OF EXPENSES

The main categories of expenses in the last five years include Salary/Benefits (which saw a ~28% decline in '20-21 due to a temporary staff reduction), General Admin/Overhead (no expenditures in '21-22), Facilities/Infrastructure (no expenditures in '20-21 or '21-22), Meeting costs (only in 2 of the 5 years), Supplies, Public Outreach (peaking in '18-19), and Education.

Most of these categories saw considerable variability over the 5-year review period, due in part to the adjustment of activities around the pandemic, and in part to other efforts and events that either began during, or only spanned part of, the 5-year period (see, e.g., Section 3 of the 5-year Review Document).

c) CENTRAL SUPPORT

The Dickens Project received no UCOP funds during the five-year period. Revenue from UC sources comes mainly from the host campus (UCSC), with a small portion from other UC campuses that are DP members (in '17-20).

d) LOCAL CAMPUS SUPPORT

Local campus support for the Dickens Project comes mainly from the Friends of the Dickens Project fundraising organization, in-kind support, and funds from the Jordan-Stern Presidential Chair Endowment. Loss of revenue on campus (i.e., reduced enrollments) due to COVID-19 has impacted local funding sources. To sustain its activities, the Project recently relied more heavily on contributions from the Friends of the Dickens Project and from the Jordan-Stern presidential Chair Endowment.

e) EXTERNAL SUPPORT

The Dickens Project has a variety of external support sources, including external grants, membership fees, conference registration fees, and products sold. Each of the over 40 member institutions makes a 5-year membership commitment and pays an annual fee of \$1,000 (\$600 for schools without PhD programs).

The Dickens Project staff apply for external, UC, and UCSC grants whenever possible. Non-campus funding streams include consortium membership fees, Dickens Universe registration fees, and private gifts, although the latter appears to be routed routinely through the local UCSC Dickens Project. The MRU suffered loss of memberships and donorships due to COVID-19. Two major grants were obtained in 2021-2022: an NEH American Recovery Program Grant of \$50,000 (\$40,000 after subtraction of indirect costs) to support Project staffing during this academic year and an external grant from the Monterey Peninsula Foundation of \$40,000 to support the 2022 Dickens Day of Writing. A NEH program funding seminars for high school teachers was applied for and received many times in the past, but has been retired, which has affected outreach efforts.

f) PROJECTED SUPPORT

Regarding projected support, it is anticipated that some revenues should return post-COVID-19 when Dickens Project events can resume. Several efforts are being made by MRU staff to increase future funding: 1) working with the Development Office at UCSC to identify potential foundation support; 2) working to increase Planned Giving commitments from the community as well as to expand the Dickens Project donor list; 3) increasing Dickens Universe registration fees in 2022 to better reflect the value of the event and its content; 4) actively fundraising to better fund the Friends of the Dickens Project endowment; and 5) seeking new consortium members and re-establishing suspended memberships post COVID-19.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE GOVERNANCE

a) OVERVIEW

The governance of the Dickens Project consists of a Director, a Co-Director and a faculty steering/Executive Committee. The committee includes the Director, Co-Director, Dickens Universe conference organizers (appointed by directors on a staggered basis), the Chair of the Diversity Inclusion, and Equity Committee, the Best Practices Coordinator, the Public Outreach Coordinator, the Graduate Student Representative, and four elected members. The same person may fill more than one of these committee positions. A graduate student representative may also participate in all executive committee meetings and may serve up to two 1.5 year-long terms. Governance is based on the collective decision-making between the steering committee and the co-directors. Bylaws were recently adopted in April 2021.

b) DIRECTOR

The Director is the chief executive officer of the Dickens Project whose role is to guide, nurture, and protect the Dickens Project in the fulfillment of its mission. The organization's director, Professor John Jordan, is an original founding member and has been serving as Director since 1986. His depth of experience and establishment in his field demonstrates a stalwart commitment to this MRU over many years. In addition to organizing over 40 national and international conferences, he has been instrumental in securing funds including grants from the NEH, private funding raising and securing funds for the Chair in Dickens and Nineteenth-century studies at UCSC in 2015.

The Co-Director, Associate Professor Renee Fox, has served since 2016. Her research fields include diverse and relevant topics that include queer theory and pop culture in addition to Victorian and Irish studies. She serves on board of Friends of the Dickens Project to support fundraising, conference organization, and outreach programs and has organized several successful project-sponsored MLA panels. The Role of the Co-Director is to assist the Director with Project administration.

c) PERSONNEL

The Dickens Project has an Assistant Director who provides full time staff support throughout the year. Staff support appears adequate relative to the administrative needs of the MRU.

d) SPACE AND RESOURCES

The Dickens Project MRU is a multi-campus research consortium headquartered at UC Santa Cruz. The Project receives no direct support from the Office of the President and no direct support from other UC campuses (aside from the membership fees). The Project receives space for an administrative office and the Project library. It also has access to Humanities Division staff for some financial services and assistance with development.

e) CONTRACT AND GRANT SUPPORT

Funding for Dickens Project events comes from three principal sources: consortium membership fees, Dickens Universe registration fees, and grants.

Each member institution pays an annual membership fee of \$1,800 and agrees to pay for its participants' travel and housing expenses at the annual Dickens Universe. There are currently 36 institutional members of the Dickens Project.

The Project's external federal funding is a 2021-22 NEH American Recovery Program Grant: \$50,000 (\$40,000 after subtracting indirect costs) to support DP staffing during the current academic year.

The Project received an additional 2021-22 external grant from the Monterey Peninsula Foundation: \$40,000 to support the 2022 Dickens Day of Writing.

Finally, the Project's staff are working with the Development Office at UCSC to identify potential foundation support and apply for external, UC, and UCSC grants whenever they can.

VI. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Dickens project does not maintain separate internal and external advisory committees. Rather, there is an Executive Committee and a Friends of the Dickens Project Committee.

The Executive Committee is made up of seven ex-officio members and four elected members. Ex-officio members include the Co-Directors, the Director of Outreach, the Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and the faculty organizers of the next two Dickens Universe gatherings. Elected members serve a three-year term and may come from any member institution. The main job of the Executive Committee is to plan the academic programming. They plan the focus of the summer conference two years out. A subcommittee is charged with recruiting the speakers. They meet at least twice during the summer conference and as needed the rest of the year.

The current Executive Committee includes (besides the Director and co-Director), faculty members from Kalamazoo College, UCLA, Ohio State, Indiana University, University of Georgia, NYU, University of Maryland, and Rutgers University. There is also a member from an educational foundation. While there appears to be substantial gender (and of course institutional) diversity on the board, it was not clear if other forms of diversity were considered in appointing members.

The Friends are more involved in the community programming. The Assistant Director acts as a liaison to this group, which provides funding for the Dickens Universe conference and the Graduate Student conference. They have been working towards integrating the academic and community tasks. There is a new “Friends Faculty Fellowship”, in which the Friends of the Dickens Project rewards faculty who will bring their scholarship to speak to the Friends and members of the general public. The Friends have also started a newsletter and a reading group has become authorized to be a branch of the international Dickens fellowship.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review committee found the Dickens Project to be a healthy and well-focused MRU that gave a very organized and thoughtful presentation. It is impressively managed and the structure seems extraordinarily collaborative. There is a strong focus on graduate education and community outreach.

There are also conscious efforts at diversity including having a Chair of DEI, a high school outreach program and a focus on Black Victorian studies at the 2020 meeting. The review committee recommends that the Project start tracking diversity statistics, as well as seeking out additional memberships from HBCUs.

The consortium fee amount, at \$1800/year for each member institution, or \$600 for institutions without doctoral projects (and even lower for first-time members), charged by the Project is extremely low. We realize that there has been a conscious effort to keep it low so as not to lose members; however, it does represent an avenue for increased funding.

The Dickens Project seems to have successfully weathered the challenges of COVID, however, during that period two UCs either left (Merced) or suspended (Davis) their memberships for financial reasons. A general, but very important recommendation of the review committee is to renew/increase within-UC ties. If UCOP does have the resources to support the Project, we recommend that it consider providing funding for institutional memberships for those UCs that left and any other interested UC campus. We also recommend that the Project renew its attempts to gain funding from programs such as MRPI, UCHRI, or to investigate UCOP HBCU and HSI funding.

IN SUMMARY, THE REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT:

- a) The Dickens Project start tracking diversity statistics at all levels, including high school, undergraduate, graduate, faculty, community participants, and leadership.
- b) The Dickens Project re-explore options for funding through increase of consortium fees and applications for MRPI or UCHRI funding.
- c) UCOP consider providing a small level of financial support to re-engage UCs that have suspended involvement due to the expense, and to support other interested UC campuses.
- d) The Dickens Project leadership consciously reach out to the other UC's in order to truly strengthen the multi-campus nature of the MRU.

Submitted by:

The Dickens Project Review Committee

Lead: Karen Bales, UC Davis, UCORP Chair

Susanne Nicholas, UCLA

Jarmila Pittermann, UC Santa Cruz

Stephanie Richards, UC San Diego

Jason Sexton, UC Merced

Weixin Yao, UC Riverside

UCPB Liaison: Gedeon Deák, UC San Diego

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