



SMU RECEIVES \$300,000 GRANT FROM ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION FOR THE MEADOWS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS IGNITE/ARTS DALLAS INITIATIVE

*Grant will support key programs and projects
integrating artistic practice and community engagement*

DALLAS (SMU) November 16, 2016 – SMU has received a three-year grant totaling \$300,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the Ignite/Arts Dallas initiative at the Meadows School of the Arts. The grant will support two key programs and a variety of special projects for Ignite/Arts, which launched in 2015 to integrate artistic practice and community engagement in ways that would involve Meadows School students, the wider SMU campus, the city of Dallas and the arts field at large.

“SMU is honored to be recognized by the Mellon Foundation in this way,” said SMU President R. Gerald Turner. “SMU and Dallas have worked together for most of the last 100 years to make Dallas the arts center it has become, and this grant will help ensure that there will be many more opportunities to expand the benefits of the arts in our community and beyond in the years ahead.”

“We are thrilled to receive this generous grant from the Mellon Foundation for Ignite/Arts Dallas, one of our most important and innovative initiatives,” said Samuel Holland, Algur H. Meadows Dean of the Meadows School. “Under the leadership of Director Clyde Valentín, Ignite/Arts has partnered with artists and organizations throughout Dallas and across the country to support and develop meaningful cultural programs that benefit the local community, connect Dallas’s cultural energy to other creative communities, and introduce students to the arts’ critical role in social engagement. Mellon’s gift will allow Ignite/Arts to further develop its programs and serve its mission: to challenge the imaginations of students and citizens to create more just and vibrant communities through art.”

The two key programs to be funded by the Mellon grant are the Dallas Arts Project and Purposeful Presentation Program (P3).

The Dallas Arts Project (DAP) will support two local arts projects per year – either studio or performance-based – that are designed around social, civic or public practice and are interdisciplinary. Each project selected will receive funding, along with advocacy and technical support from Ignite/Arts Dallas, which will promote the work to other communities outside North Texas. Artists who live or work in Dallas will be able to apply for the DAP; winners will be chosen by a five-member committee of local and national representatives. Applications for the first DAP will be open in March 2017.

P3, or Purposeful Presentation Program, was developed by Ignite/Arts Dallas to collaborate with organizations around the city to present important, mid-size touring works from throughout the U.S.; the aim is to benefit both the local Dallas community and the work itself by positioning Dallas as a key location for innovative traveling theater productions of varying scales. P3's goal is to present non-traditional, multidisciplinary performance work exploring the themes of racial and cultural equity, religion, immigration, the environment and other contemporary issues. For example, from October 20 to 23, 2016, Ignite/Arts, Cara Mia Theatre Company and the Latino Cultural Center co-presented [*Juarez: A Documentary Mythology*](#), a theater work created by New York-based Theater Mitu from a series of interviews Mitu conducted in and around the border city of Juarez, Mexico, once known as the "Murder Capital of the World." In April 2017, Ignite/Arts and the South Dallas Cultural Center will co-present *Gomela/to return: Movement of Our Mother Tongue*, an original dance theater performance by Junebug Productions of New Orleans that highlights the stories and histories of New Orleans' African American communities, connecting the ancient art forms of African dance and drumming with new artistic expressions – jazz, spoken word, hip-hop – and showing the connection between Africa, Haiti and New Orleans.

The Mellon gift will also support new and ongoing projects involving students and local artists and organizations. One example is Creative Solutions, a summer arts camp for at-risk teens run by Big Thought and hosted at SMU Meadows; Ignite/Arts Dallas augments the program by providing local and national performing and visual artists to work with the teens. Another is the trans.lation project, founded by MacArthur Fellow Rick Lowe in Vickery Meadows, one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Dallas and home to refugees from over 130 countries.

Trans.lation hosts art classes, community events, pop-up exhibits and more for local residents. Ignite/Arts supports trans.lation's current artist-in-residence, Carol Zou, and also recruited Zou to teach a class on arts and social practice at Meadows in fall 2016. In addition, Ignite/Arts is co-hosting several national meetings of arts organizations, and was a partner in presenting the Alternate ROOTS Weekend in Dallas, Oct. 20-23, which brought together artists and community advocates to share work and ideas while championing social and economic justice. The ROOTS Weekend series is taking place in cities across the South through 2017 and is also supported by the Mellon Foundation.

Funds will also help support an ongoing partnership with the Creative Capital Foundation to offer its nationally recognized artists' Professional Development Program to SMU graduate students and individual artists in North Texas March 24-25, 2017. Creative Capital brought the workshop to Dallas in 2015 through the Ignite/Arts partnership, the first time it had visited the region with its critically acclaimed curriculum designed for working artists.

In addition, the grant provides funds for a new program coordinator to aid in the development and advancement of all Ignite/Arts projects.

“I am deeply appreciative of the Mellon Foundation’s recognition of our early work in Dallas,” said Clyde Valentín. “Their gift will be critical in carrying the momentum of our initiative in SMU Meadows from the first three pilot years into the next three years of building an up-and-coming organization. The work we are supporting, the ways we are collaborating are not new to many parts of the country, but are relatively new to Dallas. We want to continue to be good stewards for our students, local artists and communities in general by fostering artistic experiences that challenge ourselves and each other about the issues of the day.”

About the Meadows School of the Arts

The Meadows School of the Arts, formally established at SMU in 1969 and named in honor of benefactor Algur H. Meadows, is one of the foremost arts education institutions in the United States. The Meadows School offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in advertising, art, art history, arts management and arts entrepreneurship, communication studies, creative computation, dance, film and media arts, journalism, music and theatre. The goal of the Meadows School of the Arts, as a comprehensive educational institution, is to prepare students to meet the demands of professional careers. The Meadows School is a leader in developing innovative outreach and community engagement programs, challenging its students to make a difference locally and globally by developing connections between art, entrepreneurship and change. The Meadows School of the Arts is also a convener for the arts in North Texas, serving as a catalyst for new collaborations and providing critical industry research. For more information, visit www.smu.edu/meadows.

###

Contacts:

Victoria Winkelman
Meadows School of the Arts
214-768-3785; ywinkelm@smu.edu

Arden Shwayder/May Wijaya
Resnicow and Associates
212-671-5172/ 212-671-5167
ashwayder/mwijaya@resnicow.com