

## Ethnic Arts Festival Grant Proposal Memorandum

TO: DJS Fund Committee  
FROM: Ben Leschensky  
SUBJECT: Ethnic Arts Festival At PLU  
DATE: November 21, 2017

### **Project Description:**

The current state of our country sees people more divided than ever as numerous rifts exist between people of different backgrounds or cultures. On a smaller level, these same problems can be seen in the PLU community. Issues that have brought tension to our university include the political election aftermath, the issues surrounding DACA students, and PLU's membership as a Sanctuary school. There is a need for inclusion, community, and diversity if these rifts are to be healed on any level.

This proposal is encouraging the implementation of an Ethnic Arts Festival for Pacific Lutheran University and the communities of Parkland, Tacoma, and the greater Seattle/Tacoma area. This festival is important for PLU, and we see three important outcomes that can be gained by an Ethnic Arts Festival.

- Access to diversity will improve student learning and will help make our university a more accepting and sustainable community.
- Promoting inclusion of diverse peoples will allow for people to broaden their perspectives about cultures different than their own, and will positively influence recruitment and retention at PLU.
- Involving people within the communities of Parkland, Tacoma, and Seattle will allow for positive relationships and networking to occur between PLU and the local communities.

The event will be held either on Foss Field or Olson Gym (weather dependent). Members of the PLU community (students, faculty/staff) as well as people from Parkland, Tacoma, and Seattle will be invited to participate in the festival. Those who represent a certain country or culture will be given a booth/table to display artifacts from their home or native culture. Artifacts could include arts from home, unique foods or drinks from the culture/country, and any other items the

individual(s) deem important and worthwhile to show others. Furthermore, those involved (which could include clubs on campus or local culture clubs from the area) could use the festival as a source of revenue, as they'd be able to sell food or products. Community members and the rest of the PLU community will have the opportunity to do a "global tour" of all the different cultures and countries represented at PLU. Another facet of the festival would be various performances of art, live music, dance, and a meal held during the day.

We are confident this program will be successful for PLU, as the benefits of putting on an Ethnic Arts Festival have been shown in other places. Multiple other schools, including Luther College, Harvard College, and the University of Hawai'i (Maui) have held similar ethnic festivals. Fellow Lutheran institution Luther College (IA) holds an Ethnic Arts Festival every year. The event, which has been held since the 1980s, is "family friendly, educational, and enjoyed by people of all ages" and engages the surrounding town of Decorah (Luther College, 2017). Harvard College holds a celebration of different cultures in their "Cultural Rhythms" fest that celebrates different ethnicities and diversity. It is one of the most highly anticipated events of the year at Harvard (Harvard College, 2017). Finally, the University of Hawai'i also holds a diversity fest called iFest, which stands for International Festival. The event celebrates "the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide" and is popular among students (Kit Zulueta, 2017).

We believe an ethnic arts festival directly connects with the PLU mission statement, as well as the Diversity, Justice, and Sustainability (DJS) values on campus. An ethnic arts festival would help students live lives of thoughtful inquiry (in relation to diversity) and promote caring for other people within our community. The festival also connects with the DJS fund, as diversity and justice of unique individuals would be celebrated. The benefits of diversity and learning are also important. Pearson, a leading resource for education, states "the importance of diversity within the higher education learning environment cannot be understated" (Pearson, 2017). Additionally, if we don't promote diversity on campus, we as an institution are failing to live up to our core values. The time is now to hold this event, as the festival will bring people together in a time where people are constantly being driven apart by politics, race, and other factors.

### **Benefits:**

At PLU, students are required to take at least two classes that show them varying perspectives on diversity. The benefits of an ethnic arts festival and the diversity it encourages have been shown to improve student's learning experiences. This has been shown and reported by education company Pearson, who stated "exposure to diverse backgrounds and perspectives improves

academic achievement” (Pearson, 2017). The benefits of holding a festival would directly impact and positively influence students’ learning. The ethnic arts festival could be an extra credit event for students, thus encouraging attendance or participation.

This event will positively affect campus culture and life. Students and members of the PLU community will be presented with glimpses into cultures different than their own, allowing for a broadened view on other people’s perspectives. By introducing students and community members to new cultures through this program, there would be a decrease the number of stereotypes and accusations made against other cultures. Furthermore, this festival will also be an event that people look forward to attending and will be a yearly event.

In addition to the many benefits that stem from having an ethnic arts festival, this could be used as a recruitment tool for the future. By inviting surrounding high school and middle school students, we can inspire students at a young age to celebrate diversity and let them know they have a place here at PLU. When young students have the chance to experience the festival, they will experience PLU in a way that is warm and welcoming. The festival could also improve retention rates among students, as students of different cultural backgrounds would want to be a part of the festival year after year.

### **DJS Connections:**

An ethnic arts festival will benefit the PLU community as it connects with the diversity, justice, and sustainability components of PLU’s mission statement. Pacific Lutheran University’s mission statement is “Educating students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care—for other people, for their communities and for the Earth.” With PLU’s mission statement in mind, our team believes it would be culturally appropriate to introduce an annual ethnic arts festival to our PLU community. With the incorporation of an annual ethnic arts festival, we are able to create a sense of belonging for not only students and faculty, but also the greater surrounding communities of Parkland, Tacoma, and Seattle area through thoughtful dialog and interaction.

The ethnic arts festival would provide students with an opportunity to learn and expand their knowledge on not only their own cultures, but other cultures as well. Students can gain a sense of pride in their school as well as a sense of belonging when they see their culture being represented amongst so many others. When students participate in this festival, they will feel like their school acknowledges and accepts them, thus creating a sense of justice. Other students who have never

been exposed to diversity will get a first hand experience into many of the cultures they are surrounded with. By knowing and understanding our fellow peers' cultures, we can create a better sense of unity amongst the PLU student body.

Ethnic arts festivals are a good way to recognize and celebrate the various different backgrounds and cultures that are already present on campus. The introduction of a formal ethnic arts festival could help students learn more about cultures they already identify with, as well as creating a valuable network of people that they can connect with outside of PLU.

The lasting impact on the student body would be significant. As a result of this festival, students would gain connections to the world outside of their campus, as well as establish new relationships between the university and the greater surrounding communities. This is important for the university moving forward, as the more ways PLU can positively interact with the community, the better our image will be and the more respect we will have as an institution.

#### **Budget/Timeline:**

There are multiple steps needed to pull off this event. First, we will survey students from different cultural backgrounds and countries by contacting them and gauging if they would have interest and willingness to participate in the festival. From there, we will work with the community and promote the event by advertising it on social media, newspaper ads, and online. Once all participants agree to participate, we will work to plan out a time and date that works for everyone.

We will hold this event on Foss Field, however Olson Gym will be available as a backup space if weather interferes. We will find a time that works with athletic teams in regards to the gym so we do not negatively affect any sports teams. The event will most likely be held during the spring semester. All participating groups will need to be there at least one hour early to set up. Once the event is over and all groups have left, the vendor would come and retrieve the tents.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Total</b>
Vendor Tables/Tents	\$130 (x40)	\$5,200

These prices were derived from a tent company in San Diego called Food Booth Tents by A&L Products Inc., and are the general cost of tables/tents.

Additionally, those involved (which could include clubs on campus or local culture clubs from the area) could sell food or products at the festival. There would also be advertisement costs, however those costs are unknown at this time.

**Assessment:**

We will conduct two surveys following the event to gauge how successful the festival is. The first survey will be given to those who participated and those who attended immediately after the festival, as to gain their immediate responses. The second survey will be given to the same two groups of people, however, they will be asked the questions one month following the event, as to see how their values and thoughts regarding the event might have changed. By gaining the insight of those involved in the festival, we can then adequately prepare for future festivals.

In conclusion, holding an Ethnic Arts Festival at Pacific Lutheran University will benefit the university and its students. The festival will have the following outcomes:

- Access to diversity will improve student learning and will help make our university a more accepting and sustainable community.
- Promoting inclusion of diverse peoples will allow for people to broaden their perspectives about cultures different than their own, and will positively influence recruitment and retention at PLU..
- Involving people within the communities of Parkland, Tacoma, and Seattle will allow for positive relationships and networking to occur between PLU and the local communities.

It is in the best interest of PLU to hold an Ethnic Arts Festival, as the outcomes listed above will reinforce PLU's mission statement and the strengthen the values of DJS seen on campus.

## Resources

Zulueta, Kit. 2017. "International food, exhibits and performances at UH Maui College festival."

Hawaii.edu. Accessed November 16, 2017.

<https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2017/11/10/uh-maui-college-international-festival/>

College, Harvard. 2017. "Student Activities." College.harvard.edu. Accessed November 16,

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College, Luther. 2017. "Ethnic Arts Festival." Luther.edu. Accessed November 16, 2017.

<http://www.luther.edu/diversity/events/signature/ethnicarts/>

Pearson. 2017. "Diversity in Schools Improves Learning Outcomes." Pearsoned.com. Accessed

November 19, 2017.

<https://www.pearsoned.com/diversity-in-schools-improves-learning-outcomes/>