History
The University Central Research Scholar Grants (RSG) Program was initiated in fall 1999 by the Office of the Provost as a companion to the Intramural Discovery Grants Programs in University Central\(^1\) and the Medical Center\(^2\). The RSG program was designed to enhance research by Vanderbilt faculty in the humanities and other disciplines for which extramural support is limited. The program has been open since its inception to full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty in such disciplines and to faculty holding equivalent ranks in the Blair School of Music. In 2000, the program was placed under the responsibility of Dennis Hall, (now) Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, where it continues to reside.

Its specific aims, as outlined in a memo from then-Provost Thomas Burish, were to support the highest quality, innovative interdisciplinary research; promote cross-fertilization among fields; support faculty development; and enhance the visibility of scholarship in the humanities and related disciplines. The first round of funding was awarded in spring 2000 and began July 1 of that year. The program initially offered funding in five categories, four of them intended to be “highly competitive:”

- **Interdisciplinary Research Grants:** Two or more investigators from different fields, generally different departments or schools, to propose new ideas for cross-disciplinary work; awards were for one year, with a maximum of two years in special circumstances.
- **Faculty Development Grants (FDG):** An individual or possibly more than one faculty member in the same department or field, to explore a new research area, develop a novel research method, pursue a non-traditional research project; also possible was a traditional research project of “the very highest quality;” projects were those for which school support was not available. Awards were for one year, with a maximum of two for special circumstances.
- **Research Scholar Fellowships (RSF):** Partial salary support for a second-semester extended leave for a faculty member already granted leave with pay for one semester. Stipends were not to exceed one-third of the faculty member’s annual salary, with priority consideration given to those who had also applied for extramural second-semester support. If external support were awarded, the faculty member could still receive salary support through the RSG program up to a limit of one-half annual salary. An additional grant was available in that case for direct support of research, as justified by the project proposed.
- **Lectures and Symposia:** Proposals which made a convincing case for a positive impact on the intellectual environment and on research conducted by the faculty involved. In addition to competitive proposals, the program planned to support three to four major lectures each year through the Robert Penn Warren Center.

\(^1\) Now known as the University Central Discovery Grant Program, or UCDG or DG Program.
\(^2\) No longer operating as a single program, but through smaller area-specific programs in the Medical Center.
The fifth category, **Special Opportunity Grants**, was open for submissions throughout the fiscal year. These grants were intended to enable faculty to respond quickly to “an unexpected but truly extraordinary opportunity for research.” Grants were expected to be limited and awards, modest; they were not to fund faculty travel. All university faculty were eligible initially to apply for support in Lectures and Symposia and Special Opportunity Grants, regardless of the availability of external support for their research.

Over the past 10 years, modifications have been made to the program based on demand, or lack thereof. Beginning in 2002-03, a new category of funding, **Summer Stipends (SS)** was added. Summer Stipends provide funds for faculty to conduct research during the summer, and can be used either as salary or to fund travel or other research-related expenses. Many faculty who submit proposals for a second semester of paid leave (RSF) also apply for support during the summer. Also in 2002-03, the Special Opportunity Grants were dropped as a separate category, since these requests were entirely for book subventions. While not a formal proposal category, supporting the publication of monographs and books by faculty in the humanities is in keeping with the spirit of the program. The general practice is for the RSG program to provide half the cost of the subvention, if the faculty member’s dean agrees to provide the other half.

The Lectures and Symposia category was revised in advance of the call for proposals for 2004-05, to limit its focus to proposals of interest within or across disciplines in the humanities. The **Undergraduate Research Supervision Grant (URSG)** category was added in 2006-07, to encourage faculty eligible for the RSG program to work with undergraduates under the umbrella of the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Summer Research Program³ (VUSR). To receive an award, faculty must submit a URSG application through the RSG program and must serve as the named faculty sponsor for a successful VUSR application.

The Interdisciplinary Research Grant category was dropped in 2004-05 due to a lack of submissions for the four years prior. However, in 2008-09, it was reconstituted as the **Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research Grant (CIRG)** category. This category was intended to continue the type of interdisciplinary activity of the Center for the Americas and the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, which were funded through the Academic Venture Capital Fund. The CIRG category involves scholars and specialists from different fields in collaborative exploration of an important topic. The primary goal is to produce jointly authored articles, monographs, or similar publications; the secondary goal is to lay the foundation for preparation and submission of a significant proposal to an external funder. This is the only category of the RSG program which requires a pre-proposal submission, and full submissions are by invitation only. This brings the number of submission categories to six.

**Data and Analysis**
In 2000, the program’s inaugural award year, ten awards were made to ten individual PIs, for a total of just over $129,000. Eight of the PIs were in the College of Arts and Science, and two were in the Blair School; two of the awards were for Lectures and Symposia (one for the Physics and Astronomy department, the other for Philosophy). The next year, the program’s popularity

³ For more information on the VUSR, see [http://vusrp.vanderbilt.edu/](http://vusrp.vanderbilt.edu/).
had clearly jumped – 27 awards totaling almost $276,000 were made to 23 PIs in Arts and Science and four PIs in Blair. Three of that year’s awards were for Lectures and Symposia – two for seminars in conjunction with the Robert Penn Warren Center, and one for Mathematics. In 2002, 29 awards totaling almost $250,000 were made, with all of the awards but one going to Arts and Science faculty. Six of the 2002 awards were for Lectures: Two in Physics, two in Mathematics, one in Law, and one for the Penn Warren Center.

Data for submissions for the first three years are not readily available. Beginning with awards made in 2003, however, we have complete information on submissions, awards, and faculty involvement. In fall 2012, as the program entered its 13th year, the vice provost commissioned this comprehensive analysis of the program and an assessment of its impact. The analysis covers submissions and awards made from 2003 to 2012, to ensure accurate year-to-year comparisons. Our office also conducted the first survey of faculty who had received an RSG award; the survey focuses on completed awards for 2003-2011. Since most awards are for one year, this ensured that most if not all of the projects were complete when faculty were surveyed.

The analysis and survey demonstrate that the Research Scholar Grant program, like its partner the Discovery Grant Program, has been a valuable resource in supporting faculty research and scholarship. And even though the RSG program is not intended to increase external support for Vanderbilt, it has supported faculty in their pursuit of external awards to a considerable degree.

**Analysis: Submissions and Awards, 2003-2012**

During the period 2003-2012, the program received 347 proposal submissions totaling almost $6 million. The average number of submissions per year is 35, but the range has varied considerably over that time, from a low of 26 in 2007 to a high of 50 in 2012. The odds of a proposal being funded remain comparatively high (74% on average). Of the proposals submitted, 257 awards totaling just over $3.8 million were made. In general the number of both submissions and awards has been trending up. Submissions have risen 72% from 2003, while awards have increased 64% from 2003.
The requested annual funding has varied considerably over time, from a low of just over $260,000 in 2006 to a high of over $1 million in 2009. The value of the awards has also fluctuated, as the vice provost has had access from time to time to a small pool of additional funds to supplement the RSG awards. On average, however, the RSG program targets awarding under $500,000 per year.

Given the increasingly dismal success rates for NEH funding, the RSG program provides an appealing alternative for faculty in the humanities to find support for their work. The average success rate for the program is 74%, and for 2006 and 2007 almost everyone received an award:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Submitted</th>
<th>Number Awarded</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
<th>$ Value Submitted</th>
<th>$ Value Awarded</th>
<th>$ Value Awards to Submissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>$432,236</td>
<td>$297,158</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>$441,295</td>
<td>$286,910</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>$458,127</td>
<td>$276,629</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>$260,184</td>
<td>$249,054</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>$447,984</td>
<td>$407,568</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>$693,089</td>
<td>$362,484</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>$1,017,383</td>
<td>$623,845</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>$710,028</td>
<td>$474,854</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>$566,900</td>
<td>$378,125</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>$946,631</td>
<td>$466,209</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>$5,973,857</td>
<td>$3,821,459</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>$597,386</td>
<td>$382,146</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4% for NEH summer stipends (http://www.neh.gov/grants/research/summer-stipends), 7% for NEH fellowships (http://www.neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships).
In general, however, the program has become more competitive. In August 2010, Vice Provost Hall sent a memo\(^5\) to deans, department chairs, and program directors associated with the humanities, stressing the competitive nature of the program. In September 2012, our office hosted its first workshop on both the Research Scholar and Discovery Grant programs, as part of the Faculty Development Series hosted by the Vice Provost for Faculty. At that time a number of urban myths surrounding both programs were dispelled (for example, the assumption that all faculty who submit a proposal for a Research Scholar Fellowship automatically receive an award; in 2013, only 10 of the 22 RSF submissions were funded). We plan to host this workshop annually to help faculty prepare competitive proposals.

The chart below shows submissions and awards by those funding categories which are competitive, with their attendant success rates. Neither URSG or book subvention requests are part of the internal review process (and are routinely funded), so they are not listed here. The most popular category is the Research Scholar Fellowship, which accounted for 43% of all submissions in these categories, and 40% of all awards made. The Summer Stipend and Faculty Development Grant categories are each roughly one-quarter of the submissions and the awards.

While the RSG program overall has a 74% success rate, the success rates in each of the competitive categories varies slightly. Not surprisingly, the Research Scholar Fellowships are most competitive, followed closely by the Summer Stipends. Each of the four Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research submissions (made since that category was added in 2008-09) has been selected for an award.

The dollar value of competitive submissions and awards is similarly concentrated in the RSF category – 64% of the dollar value of submissions, and 66% of the dollar value of awards made.

\(^5\) http://research.vanderbilt.edu/policy/internal-grants/rsg-memo-83010/
Summer Stipends and Faculty Development Grants represent significantly smaller percentages of the amounts awarded, about 9% for Stipends and an average of 17% for Faculty Development Grants. This isn’t surprising, since Fellowship grants, which support a second semester of leave, can provide up to $30,000 for salary support (maximum) plus fringe benefits, while Summer Stipends are capped at $6,000 (initially $5,000) plus any fringe benefits. Faculty Development Grant submissions have ranged from $2,000 to $70,000, and awards have ranged from $3,000 to $26,000.

The Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research Grant submissions, due to their interdisciplinary nature and the fact that they are potentially awarded for up to two years, are larger. They have ranged from $50,000 to over $148,000 (submissions) and $10,000 to almost $96,000 (awards). Because the amount targeted for awards each year for the entire program is under $500,000, one CIRG proposal can potentially consume a significant percentage of that year’s awards. As part of the pre-proposal review of CIRG submissions, faculty are often asked to revise their proposed budgets.

It is worth noting that, based on ten years’ worth of data, faculty engaged in humanities-related research have seemed relatively uninterested in interdisciplinary or collaborative research. The original RSG program category to fund interdisciplinary research was dropped in 2005 due to a lack of submissions; the CIRG category, its successor, was created in 2008. Yet for the period 2003-2012, there were only four submissions for interdisciplinary research – none for 2003-2008; three in 2009, the first year of the new CIRG category; none in 2010 or 2011; and only one in 2012. Those four submissions, all of which were awarded, represented 1% of all submissions for that period and 1.6% of all awards.
There are exceptions; Blair faculty involved in performance are collaborators, and different disciplines are represented among the faculty who plan and participate in the Robert Penn Warren Center’s annual symposia (see Support for the Penn Warren Center, pg. 11 below). But it does not appear as if the presence of funds specifically designated for interdisciplinary research has significantly increased faculty proposals to support such research.

As with the Discovery Grant program, there are no formal guidelines favoring one category or another. Many faculty submit both an RSF and a Summer Stipend proposal, hoping to secure a complete 12 months’ of support for their proposed research. There are no formal guidelines regarding this, either (although faculty are limited to two submissions per year). It is possible for a faculty member to receive both an RSF and a Summer Stipend, although the proposals should be clear in distinguishing between work to be done during the summer and work to be done in the second semester of leave.

**Faculty Involvement**

Given the nature of humanities-related scholarship, the majority of RSG submissions are submitted by and awards are made to individual faculty. There have been some cases where proposals include collaborators, most frequently with faculty from the Blair School who are engaged in composition and performances, with submissions from the Penn Warren Center for symposia, and by definition those submissions via the CIRG category.

Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty in University Central schools, and their equivalent rank in Blair, are eligible to submit proposals. In 2003-2012, almost 380 faculty (including several from the Medical Center) participated in 347 submissions as PI or co-PI\(^6\). Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of submissions have come from faculty in Arts and Science, and the majority of awards have been to those faculty as well.

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6 School is defined by the PI’s home department.
Annual success rates for each of the schools primarily involved in the program follow.

Blair and Divinity faculty do not always submit proposals every year; for those years they do, they are quite successful.

Divinity School faculty in fact have received awards for every proposal submitted for this review period; admittedly, the number of submissions have been much smaller for both Blair and Divinity than Arts and Science.
It is not surprising, given the lack of external funding for humanities-based scholarship, for faculty to apply to the RSG multiple times. The 347 submissions represent 164 individual PIs (and 180 individual faculty overall, either as PI or co-PI). Almost a quarter of those PIs have submitted two proposals, and 25% have submitted three or more.

The 257 awards represent 135 individual PIs (and 151 individual faculty overall). Faculty are not penalized by the internal review committees for multiple submissions (another urban myth); almost a quarter of PIs have received two awards, and 15% have received three or more.

The success of faculty in receiving RSG awards does not seem to be affected either way by the size of a department\(^7\) and its PhD program (or lack thereof).

\(^7\) For this portion of the analysis only, Blair and Divinity are listed as departments.
The top ten departments in number of awards and the top ten departments in number of PIs receiving awards are not exactly the same – but seven departments appear on both charts (Anthropology, Blair, English, French & Italian, History, History of Art, and Sociology).
Finally, in looking at faculty involvement and departmental metrics, it is interesting to consider the departments with the best success rates for 2003-2012 overall – i.e., those with the highest percentage of submissions that are awarded funding, which is independent of size of department, number of faculty, or graduate program offerings.

One caveat: This chart only lists those departments that submitted more than one proposal during this time period. Three units (Law, Owen, and Medicine, Health & Society) have 100% success rates but only submitted one proposal for this period.

**Support for the Penn Warren Center**
From its inception, the RSG program has been intended to support major lectures through the Penn Warren Center. During 2003-2012, the RSG program provided an award each year except
2012, totaling almost $100,000 in support to the center. The chart below shows the faculty PI, the series title, and the award. In each case, Mona Frederick, executive director of the Center, has served as co-PI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Year</th>
<th>Faculty PI</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Cecelia Tichi</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Journalism: Shaping Knowledge in the Information Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Edward Friedman</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; Portuguese</td>
<td>Don Quixote: An Anniversary Celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Jonathan Lamb</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Settlers, Creoles and the Re-Enactment of History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Helmut Smith</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Writing in the Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Helmut Smith</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Symposium marking the 20th anniversary of the Founding of the RPWC for the Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Edward Friedman</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; Portuguese</td>
<td>The Object of Study: Theory, Interdisciplinary, and the State of the Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Edward Friedman</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; Portuguese</td>
<td>Spanish Theater: Text and Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Review Process**
Both the DG and RSG programs depend on internal review committees made up of senior tenured faculty with general expertise in the disciplines represented. There are no standing review committees; the internal review committees are constituted each year, so that no one listed as a PI or co-PI serves as a reviewer for that submission, although it is possible that faculty may repeat as internal reviewers. As the program has grown, our office has required two and sometimes three internal review committees to deal with the increase in number of submissions. The committees are chaired by the vice provost and staffed by the assistant provost.

The overriding criterion for assessment is quality of research and scholarship. Reviewers are asked to rank-order the proposals based on that criterion, and the assistant provost then integrates all of the committees’ rankings into a single list. Awards are made until the funds available are exhausted. Unlike the DG program, the RSG program does not send proposals out for external review, but the internal review committee members often provide detailed feedback to be shared with PIs, in a spirit of collegiality and support. Those who serve on internal review committees routinely remark on the variety and high quality research being proposed by their colleagues.

**Survey: Completed Awards, 2003-2011**
In September 2012, PIs who received RSG awards from 2003 through 2011 were surveyed and asked to respond for each of the awards they received. During that period, 221 awards were

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8 These data are included in the Analysis and Faculty Involvement sections above.
made to 135 separate PIs. Of those 221 awards, 14 were for undergraduate research support (UGRSG) and three were for conferences in Math (1) and Physics (2). Since the UGRSG awards are non-competitive, and conference support for disciplines outside the humanities is no longer supported by the RSG program, those awards were excluded from the survey, leaving 204 competitive awards made in 2003-2011.

Those 204 grants were awarded to 135 individual PIs. Of the 135 PIs, 106 are still at Vanderbilt and active as of April 30, 2013. Four of the original 135 have retired, two have passed away, and 23 are no longer at Vanderbilt for a variety of reasons. Following three requests over September 2012 – January 2013, we received responses from 80 PIs, a 75% response rate. They account for 132 (83%) of the 160 awards made to the 106 active PIs and represent almost $2.2 million in RSG program funding.

One of the elements distinguishing the RSG program from the DG program is the expectation that “opportunities for extramural funding are limited”9 to support the work being proposed. Even with that expectation, faculty respondents reported receiving 16 grants connected to their RSG-funded work, including six ACLS fellowships and one Guggenheim. These grants totaled almost $8 million in external funding – a return of almost 270% over the initial $2.2 million. In addition to externally-supported fellowships, faculty also reported research grants from private foundations as well as NEH, NSF, and NIH.

The respondents reported 79 books or book chapters published as a result of RSG support. Presses represented included Cambridge, Columbia, Duke, Harvard, MIT, Oxford, and Stanford University Presses; University of California-Berkeley, University of Michigan, and University of Pennsylvania Presses; and several international presses. Over 140 other publications of some kind (articles or book reviews, e.g.) were also produced. Seventy conference presentations were reported, at least six documentaries were produced (or are in production), and several performances, with accompanying CDs, and art and museum exhibitions resulted from RSG support. In some cases, undergraduate and graduate students also benefited, either from new courses developed or thesis and research support.

These results underrepresent the impact of the program. In addition to supporting publications, presentations, and exhibitions, by requiring faculty who apply for Fellowships to also seek external funding, the RSG program encourages them to pursue prestigious fellowships such as the Guggenheim and ACLS. Faculty respondents did not always provide the amount of such fellowships, however; many faculty reported books under review or pending at the time of the survey, and conferences and presentations were often reported as “numerous.” And these results do not capture information from PIs who did not respond or are no longer at Vanderbilt.

Program Impact
In addition to quantifiable results, faculty were asked to provide a short, one- to two-paragraph statement with their assessment of the value of the Research Scholar Grant program, the impact it had on their research, and any additional accomplishments made possible by RSG support. As

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with the Discovery Grant program, everyone expressed appreciation for the support they received, the flexibility and freedom it provided them to pursue their work, and emphasized the value the program provided to them and the institution. The comments often extended far beyond the requested “short” statement and are universal in describing the benefits and impact of the program. The appendix beginning on page 15 provides representative responses.

**Changes to the Program**

In conjunction with this analysis and survey, those of us involved in administering the program felt it would benefit from some modifications. These modifications grew in part out of discussions with senior faculty who have served on the multiple internal review committees, and from discussions within our office. These changes were announced in September 2012 and implemented with the 2012-2013 competition:

- First-year progress reports are now required at the end of Year 1, and Year 2 funding may be contingent on submission of Year 1 reports.
- Budgets for all RSG proposals are now required to follow a budget template provided on the proposal cover page, and proposals requesting salary must include the appropriate fringe benefit calculation.
- Faculty currently serving as PI or participating co-PI on one or more active RSG award(s) are not eligible to submit another RSG proposal until their current award(s) have been completed and all reporting requirements met.
- It has now been made clear that awards are based partly on need. Each participating faculty member is required to disclose existing external funding for the most recent five years (which was always required), and institutional resources available in the form of start-up funds or other discretionary research funds. All institutional research-support funds must be included: endowed-chair funds, annual allocations, fixed-price contract surpluses, and other such sources.

These modifications did not appear to create a significant barrier for faculty, although we have not yet reached the deadline for Year 1 reporting. We will be in a better position to evaluate the impact of the changes, once we have received and reviewed those reports. There remains some confusion about budget preparation, however, which we plan to address in the fall workshop.

**Conclusion**

The Research Scholar Grant program and its companion, the Discovery Grant program, have had a tremendous impact on research and scholarship, student support, and faculty productivity and satisfaction since their beginnings. The RSG program has been of particular benefit to faculty engaged in humanistic research, where external funding is scarce. The returns far outweigh the relatively modest investment made each year and demonstrate the broad reach the RSG program has had and the boost it has provided to Vanderbilt’s reputation in the disciplines supported.
APPENDIX
SELECTED FACULTY RESPONSES

- The value of the RSGP is significant, affording as it does the opportunity for a faculty member to take a leave without taking the full financial hit that would otherwise be the case. In my estimation this is especially critical for those of us in mid-career or earlier when it is especially important to use a leave to advance major research projects as well as the time when the financial implications of a full-year leave at half-pay can be most significant. In my case I question whether I could have ever completed the book without the leave and associated RSG grant.

- Overall, the RSG program has been a tremendous boon. In the Humanities the opportunities for funding are very thin, and the RSG allows us humanists to take a full year of leave even if we don’t succeed in getting external funding for a given sabbatical. This has been crucial to me twice… This has allowed me to advance my publishing career at a much brisker and steadier pace than I would otherwise have been able to do. It really made a tremendous difference. The program is very well run, moreover. I sat twice on the committee that selects RSG fellows, and I was highly impressed both times.

- My overall assessment of the value of the grant is highly favorable. At the time I proposed the project it was simply a broad set of ideas and a general outline for research. Thanks to the extra semester made possible by the grant, I was able to assemble a core reading list and begin the extensive and meticulous reading required by the project’s ambitious goals. This in turn allowed me to significantly adjust and specify the nature of the project and determine its main components. The extent and quality of the research I was able to accomplish was greatly enhanced by the extra leave time afforded by the grant. I would say that the grant not only maximized the research possible during that specific period, but it has continued to be an impetus, since it allowed me to get up a good head of steam, so to speak, in the crucial early stages.

- I am a strong supporter of the RSGP, as I have observed its benefits for many colleagues as well as for myself. Having served on the selection committee myself… it is clear to me how many qualified projects are actively pursued on a yearly basis, and also how valuable this support is in light of limited external funding. This is a most valuable program and should be continued.

- RSG support came at a critically important time for my work. The enthusiasm of the RSG reviewers also was a great boost to my morale and helped me find great energy to work all day long on my book project during my sabbatical.

- The RSG program at Vanderbilt University is to my mind the single most important program the University offers its faculty. Many faculty, especially those in the humanities, have limited sources of outside funding (especially if they are unable to travel to residential fellowship programs due to family commitments). The RSG program allows faculty to supplement their leave-year funding to enable them to take a full year’s leave where often only a semester’s leave would be possible. Having recently taken a semester’s leave, I can
attest to the fact that a year’s leave is necessary to complete long projects like a book. Throughout my career at Vanderbilt, the RSG program has supported my research (especially at the junior faculty rank) and enabled me to proceed to completion on major projects.

- The RSG and Summer Stipend that I received… helped me to accomplish part of what I proposed in my application, but it also helped me to launch a project that I had not foreseen, and that I doubt I would have initiated if not for the time granted to me for open-ended reading and exploration… the grant helped me to figure out what I did not want to write about, in part by giving me the time to write about it!

- The RSGP has been immensely helpful to my research and professional development here at Vanderbilt. By this coming summer of 2013 I will have released 4 recordings made possible in great part by the RSGP. It has been an invaluable part of my growth as a scholar and artist over these past four years. While the program’s financial support clearly results in tangible finished documents (or in my case recordings), it also gives rise to less quantifiable results. The RSPG program offers support that results in professional and intellectual growth valuable beyond any single project or dollar amount and in turn helps to spur yet more ideas for investigation. I’m very grateful to have the opportunity to explore my intellectual and artistic interests to such a height, due largely to the unprecedented support offered by the RSPG.

- The RSGP is an invaluable resource to me as a working writer and academic. It has allowed me the time and resources to compose and publish two books and to draft two more that I hope to publish in the next year or two. As a faculty member who teaches in an MFA program that ranks in the top ten in the nation, my credibility in the graduate classroom rests on my publications, the evidence of my success as a fiction writer. The RSGP allows me to compose and publish my best fiction without stealing time from my teaching and service responsibilities, and producing inferior work as a consequence. Fiction writing takes significant time, and for me, writing a book-length work requires concentrated daily effort in order to produce a quality draft. I am ever-grateful that Vanderbilt University has provided me the means to produce my best work. The RSG has been critical to my success, and without a doubt, it should continue to be awarded to faculty members who are productive and who complete the projects for which they seek this vital support.

- The RSG has been of tremendous help to me in my scholarly development in Vanderbilt. I have found it to be especially valuable as a source of funding that bridges two important stages in the life of a big project: the pilot, beginning phase and the elaborate phase when bigger external funding becomes necessary. As any scholar knows, the resources available to you in the early phase and the work you are able to do with them can be the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful long-term project. RSG has been helpful to me during the crucial phases of project development when questions are being formulated and preliminary work is being done prior to applying for bigger funds for more extensive research. Without the RSG, this critical phase of project formulation and preliminary research would be impossible, making subsequent research and successful applications for bigger research funding unlikely. As one moves from one completed project to another, this
small internal research support lubricates the transition, ensuring that a new research project can take off and eventually become what one envisioned it to be.

- In sum, I consider the RSGP to have been essential to the progress of my research in a multiyear program. Without the summer stipend it would have been impossible for not only me but also the large research team under my direction to accomplish all the specific activities of data-analysis and interpretation that I outlined above. Although the grant did not immediately lead to a published product—and the administration is right not to restrict funding only to those projects that immediately produce scholarly text—it will in the longer term.

- I am grateful to Vanderbilt University and the Research Scholar Grant Program for providing me with a Research Scholar Fellowship (leave-extension) to support a full year of intensive research and writing in 2010-11. This grant supported me at a crucial juncture, and it provided me with the flexibility I needed to realize important goals and to meet pressing deadlines. I have been fortunate to have held several residential fellowships in graduate school and beyond; however, at this time in my career, it was most valuable to remain in my element rather than “setting up shop” elsewhere. I remained grounded at Vanderbilt; I buckled down; and I was very productive. This was most crucial in the physical production of my first book, which coincided with my leave year. The ability to handle queries as they came, and to participate fully in design decisions, surely improved the final product, and probably contributed to the book’s winning [a prize] from the Association of American Publishers. My success in placing four articles with premier peer-reviewed journals, as well as my completion of several other projects surely contributed to the favorable outcome of my tenure review. Finally, I am well positioned to maintain momentum on my new project, hopefully to complete it over my next research leave.

- I joined the Vanderbilt faculty fresh out of graduate school, and the support I have received from Vanderbilt’s RGS Program has been invaluable to my development as a scholar. Research funding in my fields… is generally scarce at best, and what funding there is tends to go to projects outside of my particular areas of concern. So the RSG Program has been extremely helpful in enabling me to undertake and complete my research projects. Also, I have found the RSG’s processes and procedures reasonable and manageable (application processes for external sources tend to be overly burdensome, in my view), and my interactions with those who administer the program have always been professional and courteous. I give the program high marks all around.

- To conclude, the RSG grant is an invaluable part of Vanderbilt’s research landscape in the humanities. In conversing with scholars at other institutions, I get a sense of how rare this research opportunity is. I can only marvel at how lucky I am to have this kind of strong research support from the highest levels of the university.

- The Research Scholars Grant Program was vital in many ways to my development as a junior faculty member: it fostered research and writing productivity, my visibility in the field through increased conference and invited talk participation (and the publications that resulted
from my writings), and equally importantly, it provided me with the time to be able to think deeply about my research questions, the theoretical frameworks that informed them, as well as to do in-depth scholarship on the topics that were central to my first book. While certain aspects of research and teaching are synergistic, there are absolute limits to one’s time and energies, and given the emphasis on teaching in addition to research at Vanderbilt, the RSGP was especially critical to enable me to stay at the forefront of the research and scholarship in my field. Because of this also, the RSGP provides a significant competitive advantage to our faculty (I would argue, especially junior faculty) vis-à-vis peer (and aspirational peer) institutions. It is consistently a selling point that I raise to job candidates here on campus, and one that I often mention as I sing the praises of Vanderbilt to my colleagues at other institutions. Because of the valuable productivity support it offers our faculty, I think the RSGP should be considered core to the mission of the College of Arts and Science.

- The RSG program has been invaluable to my research. We all work simultaneously on teaching, research, and service, and to extent that one works hard at all of them, it is often difficult to find the extended period of time necessary to complete a big project or even get it off the ground. I typically find myself entering a leave semester both tired and excited: exhausted from the series of wind sprints that compose the academic year, excited to be able to focus my energy more tightly in the coming semester or year. I typically return from leave both energized and excited: energized because I have been able to work over an extended period at a more livable and productive pace, excited to get back in the classroom and test out new ideas and materials. Without doubt, the work I have completed with the support of RSGs—the two books I mentioned above—have raised my profile in the profession considerably. Without such support, I would probably not have been able to win a prize for my research as well as for my teaching and service.

- In short, if my case is any indication of the value of the RGSP I think it must be considered a resounding success. I believe that I would have completed these projects without the program, but I doubt that I would have been able to complete them as thoroughly or quickly. Moreover, it is quite likely that the RSG grant made the Ryskamp possible. It helped me make the case that I was well on my way to writing an important book and simply needed another dose of financial support. I really do believe the program has helped me produce important contributions to [my field], and undoubtedly helped me establish my academic career.

- Without the RSG support, I would have had to make difficult trade-offs: either suspending work on those other projects (to the detriment of my research portfolio and my collaborative work with graduate students) or turning away important opportunities to extend my research... In brief, the RSGP was critical because it allowed me to accomplish the specific objectives that I had proposed and, as well, it allowed me the time to develop a successful new grant proposal; the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities to make new discoveries in the area related to my core project; and the additional time to continue to advance collaborative projects with graduate students on research subjects outside the scope of the RSG.