

FA 21 Anti-Racism Faculty Hiring Initiative Round 2 - Successful Proposal Excerpt

Advancing Anti-Racism through Arts-Based Social Work Practice, Arts Leadership, and Community Engagement

A Proposal for U-M's Anti-Racism Faculty Hiring Initiative
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Rationale:

The School of Music, Theatre, and Dance (SMTD) and the School of Social Work (SSW) are collaborating to request the hiring of two Associate Professors and two open-rank positions. This proposal's authors collectively lead research and teaching focused on racial and social justice. Our efforts have been acknowledged within U-M's campus-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and anti-racism ecosystem. Dr. Pinto received the Harold R. Johnson Diversity Service Award (2021) and the Carol Hollenshead Award for Excellence in Promoting Equity from the Center for the Education of Women (2020). Funded by the U-M Office of Research (and nine other centers/institutes), Dr. Pinto is producing an installation performance (September 30 to October 17, 2021), *Realm of the Dead*, focused on issues of minoritized gender identities, immigration status and social stigma. More than five hundred faculty, staff, and students from across campus have registered for the event. SSW has created a social justice fund and a curriculum for its faculty, acknowledged across campus as exemplary outcomes of the DEI initiative. In SMTD, the artistry and activism of Dr. Piper has been recognized with the Paul Robeson Scholar Award, two Gerda Lissner Foundation Awards, and an appointment as Arts Ambassador for the Los Cabos Children's Foundation. Most recently, he co-created (with SMTD colleagues Drs. Louise Toppin and Anita Gonzalez) [*Black Performance as Social Protest*](#), an open-access MOOC launched by Michigan Online in July 2021, which has already attracted more than four hundred public learners. The other co-leads and supporters on this proposal play active roles on the SMTD Faculty DEI

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Action Team and advance a broad portfolio of pedagogy and research at the nexus of arts and social impact. Support for this proposal is broad and deep across both units.

Leveraging resources to achieve two specific outcomes:

This proposal addresses the urgent public health problems of COVID-19, anti-Black racism, police brutality, mass incarceration, and the persecution of immigrants of color—we need colleagues whose work will deepen and expand our capacity to dismantle the oppressive forces that threaten our world. Specifically, we must develop the capacity to research and to teach how **the arts can be robust platforms to address racism and advance justice**. We need four scholars, two in social work and two in the performing arts, to galvanize colleagues to achieve these aims:

1. **Develop a collaboration-oriented laboratory, “collaboratory,” reflecting the mission of the National Center for Institutional Diversity’s Anti-Racism Collaborative**, created to facilitate community engagement around racial inequality, racial justice, and anti-racist praxis. The proposed collaboratory will include the new hires and existing faculty in both schools. Led by top faculty, including this application’s leads, the collaboratory will (1a) develop theory to ground art-based research and (1b) art-based methods to advance social justice and anti-racism interventions at the individual, institutional, and structural levels.
2. **Develop curricula and offer courses to prepare students to become anti-racism agents in their distinct practices**—social workers and performing artists—by embodying the anti-racism values and missions of both professions.

How we will pursue these aims:

The World Health Organization’s report, “[What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?](#)” (WHO, 2020), suggests that the best interventions to address racism and white supremacy (both barriers to well-being) are those whose foundations involve collaborations across the arts and disciplines like social work, whose main objective is to advance social justice. Furthermore, BIPOC social work scholars, artists, audiences, and activists (e.g., [We See You White American Theatre](#) and [#OscarsSoWhite](#)) are calling for systemic changes. Over the past year, we have seen activists from across the political spectrum leverage performance in their protests, ranging from the indigenous women and two-spirit activists of the [Waawiiyaatanong Resurgence](#) (Detroit); [Black cowgirls and cowboys](#) (Oakland, Houston) and the “[Wall of Moms](#)” (Portland), who spectacularized their bodies in defense of Black Lives; to [elaborately costumed rioters](#) streaming defiantly into the US Capitol building on January 6, 2021.

We will use the power of the proposed collaboratory to develop theories and interventions addressing racism at the individual level (e.g., mentoring junior faculty on how to conduct art-based research); institutional level (e.g., courses to prepare students to become change agents); and structural

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level (e.g., together, social work and the performing arts deploy change agents in their respective fields of practice). Faculty, staff, learners, and audiences will be empowered to structurally challenge policies that perpetuate white supremacy and racism.

The timeliness of this proposal:

There is an urgent need to understand how performance as a public practice can be effectively used to express, debate, and celebrate social justice. Such practices are seldom evaluated as social interventions. This is because the arts and social work, particularly at U-M, have not yet come together to develop, test, and evaluate empirical interventions targeting structural changes. **We will be able to accomplish this when we have more colleagues with the needed expertise in our schools.**

President Schlissel said, about the multi-year Arts Initiative, "... we will have the opportunity to create new dimensions of U-M excellence through the arts—ones that are perhaps unknown to us today." One "new dimension" ought to be a direct connection to social work—a discipline whose core scholarship, values, and practices are meant to advance anti-racism. The SSW is commemorating its centennial in 2021–22, and both social justice and the arts serve as pillars of its celebrations and intended outcomes. A cluster hire involving individuals with theoretical and empirical knowledge from both social work and the performing arts **will render the U-M uniquely positioned to lead and advance social justice, with a focus on anti-racism.**

As the #1 ranked school of social work in the country, the U-M SSW is currently behind peer schools, such as the University of New England or Boston College, which offer certificate programs on applied arts and social justice. The teacher-scholars we aim to hire will set us apart from the field—situating U-M at the forefront of combining theory and practice to articulate how the arts reflect, shape, and archive cultural ideologies and how, in turn, communities and individuals can advance social justice.

Sustainability and Impact

The SSW continues to be ranked #1 by *U.S. News and World Report*. The capacity to work together with the SMTD (one of the top performing arts schools in the United States) to establish a stronger connection with the arts will solidify SSW's national leadership. The new hires will be supported by key existing programs devoted to community engagement, arts leadership, and arts-based social work practice, most notably the three listed below. These foundational pillars have each proven sustainable, and will support the long-term curriculum and collaboratory catalyzed by this proposal.

(1) [The Prison Creative Arts Project \(PCAP\)](#)—engaging faculty, staff, and students in SMTD, SSW, and LSA's Residential College—provides arts programming to incarcerated youth and adults throughout the state of Michigan. The proposed hires will make invaluable contributions to PCAP's programming and activities. Our new colleagues' research and pedagogy would naturally augment curricular connectivity to the program. Additionally, PCAP serves as a flagship model for replicating

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integrative arts-based social justice learning through these new hires' integrative research and pedagogy. Our students are demanding that this work become more central to our units' shared educational missions— **these new faculty are essential to expanding the potential of a proven model for delivering culturally-embedded, intentionally-designed, art-based social justice education.** The groundwork has already been laid. Faculty and graduate students in departments across the university (Theatre & Drama, Residential College, English, Art & Design, Conducting, Voice) offer courses that train students to facilitate weekly arts workshops in carceral facilities. SSW also recently partnered with PCAP on a grant to support the PCAP Brazil Exchange Program, where faculty and students working in prison theatre from U-M and two universities in Brazil (UniRio and UDESC) visit one another's campuses and prisons annually.

- (2) **SMTD's Department of Entrepreneurship & Leadership** supports a rich array of courses and co-curricular programming through their embedded [EXCEL Lab](#), which already centers social impact as a core value, and actively engages with many units across campus to advance university-wide DEI priorities. The department is unique: it does not host a degree program, but nevertheless supports nearly one thousand SMTD students (from every department) as well as units across campus through field-leading funding programs, collaborative relationships with premier performing arts companies, an undergraduate minor, and a graduate certificate. It thus already provides a template for integrating experiential learning within curricular contexts, another integral piece to the collaboratory model. Entrepreneurship & Leadership's two full-time faculty members, Profs. Aaron Dworkin and Jonathan Kuuskoski, advance interdisciplinary social and racial justice work. Prof. Dworkin is the founder of the nation's leading non-profit (the [Sphinx Organization](#)) promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the performing arts, while Prof. Kuuskoski has a background in community arts education and related social entrepreneurship methodologies. EXCEL is thus already poised to deliver training that can center social work theory and practice. Such work is also core to SMTD's Bachelor of Theatre Arts (BTA) program, yet many others remain underserved across the school. EXCEL's capacity to support an institutionalized curriculum centering social and racial justice for all is limited only by human capital. The candidates in this cluster would allow us to make that leap. **These new hires will immediately position U- M as the national leader in integrative, social justice-centered arts leadership education.** Examples of expanded curricular programming likely include new courses that deepen sequential learning (in collaboration with SSW), a database of BIPOC-led arts organizations tied to our internship funding program, and experiential research projects leveraging existing SMTD connections with arts-based social-impact organizations. Past examples include a teaching artistry training and practicum mini-course sequence, in partnership with University Musical Society and the New York Philharmonic (2019-20). The EXCEL Lab has also awarded upwards of

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\$500,000 to-date to support hundreds of U-M student-led projects, more than three dozen ventures (50% of which are still in operation), and countless internships across the nation and beyond. These unmatched levels of activity demonstrate our potential to amplify the work of these new hires throughout the broader arts economies, as SSW-informed methodologies influence our co-curricular programming's design and execution. The total economic and cultural impact of recruiting these additional faculty to U-M, not just for our current students but for the field itself, is seismic.

- (3) These appointments will also advance initiatives underway in the **SSW: the Arts-Based Social Justice Collective** and a new certificate program in Arts-Based Social Justice Practice. In 2014, the U-M SSW held the *Personal and Societal Transformation through Social Work and the Arts* Conference. Faculty, students, and other participants worked to further the role of the arts in achieving social justice and personal and social transformation. In the summers of 2017–2019, the University of Southern California's School of Social Work convened an interdisciplinary group of social work scholars and practitioners for an Arts Roundtable on social work and the arts, during which Dr. Pinto represented U-M. Dr. Pinto established the SSW Arts-Based Social Justice Collective to research how art can be used as a means to achieve social justice. The professors appointed in SSW will collaborate with Dr. Pinto to expand the collective, formalizing stronger connectivity with SMTD. SSW Postdoctoral Research Fellow [Dr. Marc Arthur](#), who steers the collective with Dr. Pinto, teaches a popular EXCEL-based minicourse, "Art as Social Action," and both have mentored SMTD student projects with social justice orientations. Working with the SMTD-based members of this cluster, the SSW professors will develop a curriculum for a new Arts-Based Social Justice Certificate, which will include courses designed and taught by faculty in both schools. **This collective fulfills the third, transformative component of our integrated arts-based, social justice collaboratory and curriculum.** The project has already been funded by the U-M Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) Gilbert Whitaker Fund for the Improvement of Teaching grant.

Support:

The SSW and the SMTD will support the members of this cluster in a number of ways, offering funding and mentoring opportunities and connecting them with potential collaborators. The new hires will join a cohort of colleagues at both schools whose scholarship, teaching, and/or practice focuses on multiculturalism, anti-racism, LGBTQ+ and gender justice, and community engagement (see cover sheet).

The SMTD will assemble LAUNCH committees for its proposed hires. Because both will be faculty associates in a second department, the chairs will work closely to ensure their teaching, leadership, and service duties are meaningful, manageable, and sustainable.¹ To facilitate collaboration across schools, Theatre & Drama will formalize "dry appointments" in the department for Dr. Pinto and the new

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professors of social work in this cluster. SMTD's EXCEL Lab, which has significant funding resources available for experiential learning opportunities, is eager to leverage the infrastructure in place to develop and launch experimental courses with cross-campus partners to advance social justice agendas. The proposed new hires' co-appointments within Entrepreneurship & Leadership (which is integrated within the larger Innovation & Entrepreneurship network at Michigan) will facilitate their ability to co-develop research, teaching, and experiential learning opportunities related to work being done across campus, especially in the SSW.

In the SSW, these new colleagues will find multiple forms of support designed to advance their scholarship, practice, and teaching in arts-based social work, community engagement, and cultural policy. The SSW is committed to sustaining the impact of arts-based research and scholarship by teaching its students about arts-based interventions targeting personal and community-level well-being and advocacy for anti-racism policy. Several SSW faculty members have used arts-based methods in their research (e.g., photovoice, painting, and performance, interactive theater, improvisation) and their community-engaged approaches have disseminated research findings in creative ways.² Over the past two years, the SSW has sponsored performance events (e.g., Julianna Huxtable) and tours of the SSW art collection, which includes nearly one hundred pieces. As mentioned in the introduction, this fall Dr. Pinto is presenting his art installation, *The Realm of the Dead*, funded by several U-M centers and institutes and the U-M Office of Research. The SSW Office of Research has sponsored pilot studies (up to \$15,000) supporting faculty whose research explicitly advances social justice.

These are but a few examples of the types of projects that could be developed and supported by our new colleagues. The SSW also offers a mentoring program that includes a comprehensive orientation session for all newly hired faculty. Early-stage faculty meet monthly with senior faculty mentor(s) to discuss career development plans, to facilitate connections with other faculty members and research centers to advance their independent research agendas, and to discuss teaching assignments and challenges. SSW also holds monthly lunch sessions and an annual offsite writing retreat to facilitate scholarly productivity and community-building. These new colleagues will thrive at U-M, and are poised to catalyze a formidable impact at the very heart of this Anti-Racism Cluster Hire Initiative.

¹ Specifically, they will follow the best practices provided in the [Provost's Guideline for Joint Faculty Appointments](#).

² For examples of intersectional and community-engaged research in social work, refer to its [AHEAD, Research Magazine](#), whose edit-in-chief is Dr. Pinto, one of the leads in this proposal.