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UAH Art: The Early Stories of the Art Department

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Project Title: UAH Art: The Early Stories of the Art Department  
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Project Description
In 2016, I was fortunate to speak to a photographer friend in town about an old UAH photograph I was researching. Roy Simmons is his name and he graduated from our program in 1971, one of the first four graduates from a newly designed major in Art. Roy was in that photograph. Our Art department began with the hiring of Jack Dempsey in 1966, and the first classes were taught in what is now Morton Hall. All this was part of an initiative to form a more balanced Humanities curriculum to an already established scientific research institute. In 1970, everything came together and our first president was hired to lead the University of Alabama in Huntsville. This documentary project corresponds to an exhibit I curated this past August that reunited 33 former art students from our program. The exhibit was called UAH Art: the first 10 years- 1966-1976. The stories they told me are an important first person testament on how the Art department started and how it evolved to what it is today. The exhibit included their modern artwork produced by the first art students, but it was missing the stories they told me. I recorded some audio of the oral history for a future project. This is the documentary I want to produce to tell these stories. It will be in the form of photographic stills and a short documentary video. The historical information from this research is not only valuable to our department and the university, but also to the community. The photograph that first caught my eye pictured the Union Grove Gallery on campus. This 19th century church was also the Huntsville Art Museum for a short time. This brings in local history and gives the community information that has been waiting to be told since 1974, when the structure was move to campus from Hazel Green. The UAH Art Department was an integral part of the development of Huntsville’s vibrant visual arts community.
**Student Duties, Contributions, and Outcomes**

The duties and contributions of the student will include:
- Lighting set-ups
- Camera set up and operation
- Sound recording and editing
- Video recording and editing
- Assist, Coordinate and Schedule On-location travel

I require a student with experience in video and photography, with priority to ARS355, my class in documentary studies. The student would experience a more creative long-term project. This will give them a collaborative experience where they can learn the organizational skills it takes to produce a short documentary. The student will be able to assist in an invaluable way, as much of the work is very tedious and detail oriented. Practical experience with equipment is also necessary for this work. They will be able to use cameras and lighting techniques that may only be possible while shooting on location. Most of this is introduced in the classroom but the real-world experience will expedite this training. Experience in Video Production classes and Photography classes are the most important requirements.

This project will help the student with professional practices that will help upon graduation. I also anticipate they will be inspired to work on meaningful personal projects that will enable them to use their artistic and creative talents.

**Mentorship**

The mentoring process begins with organizational outlines to facilitate project goals within a span of time. Most of the project will be in production from late spring to early fall 2019. The project undergraduate researcher will need to be guided through the process of coordinating photo shoots and interviews, and also every technical aspect of the project. Mentorship will also be required to using new equipment, mainly lights and cameras. Interviews will be of different lengths and a work day could take between 4-8 hours a day. Most of the time will be taken up during post-production, which includes editing. There will be long hours of editing and I suspect in excess of 40 hours a week after initial shooting/recording is completed.

I, Jose Betancourt, will be the primary mentor for this project and I would like to use Dr. Joe Watson, from Communications, as an adjunct mentor in cases when I am not available. Dr. Watson can bring years of filmmaking experience to this project.

**Requirements**

- Ability to evaluate equipment necessary for each segment of the project.
- Ability to work unsupervised at certain points throughout the project.
- Knowledge about the documentary style of photography and ethics.
- Knowledge of sound, image and video software.
- Self-motivating and high level work ethic.

**Preferences**

- Classes: ARS250,350,355. CM260
- Digital Imaging, Video Production, and Sound.