

## Cuyahoga Community College

### Project Title

*The Gilgamesh Project*

### Applicant Organization and Contact Information

Tri-C Presents

Cuyahoga Community College

Dr. Brian Bethune, Dean of Creative Arts Division

For more information, contact:

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### Project Overview

The ancient epic of Gilgamesh will form the basis of a multi-year college-wide collaboration, including faculty and non-faculty artists, leading to both classroom explorations and the creation of a new performance piece.

### Key Outcomes

- Enhanced curriculum through an engaging academic and extracurricular experience that will inspire student and faculty commitment to academic success and excellence
- New community bridges by strengthening ties with local artists and arts organizations
- A position for Tri-C as an innovative leader in arts education
- Development of data on the efficacy of an arts integrated curriculum

### Project Partners (Campus and Community)

Great Lakes Theater Festival

Cleveland Museum of Art

Cuyahoga Community College:

Creative Arts Media Arts Program

Office of Academic and Student Affairs

Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

### Artists (Visiting Artists, Faculty Artists, Student Artists, Community Artists)

To create a new performance piece inspired by the Gilgamesh story and based on artist/student/faculty collaboration, Tri-C will work with the following non-faculty and faculty artists

Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR), composer and musician (CENTRAL ARTIST)

Michael Medcalf, dancer and choreographer

Stephen Chipps, puppet and mask maker

Q-Nice, spoken word poet

Edwin Figueroa, film and video, Tri-C Adjunct Faculty

Jimmie Woody, actor and director, Tri-C Adjunct Faculty

Dr. Brian Bethune, production director

Inda Blatch-Geib, production design  
Margaret Lynch, dramaturg

### Project Summary Narrative

The purpose of *The Gilgamesh Project* mirrors the goals of the Creative Campus program, which are to develop relationships with artists in order to use the arts as an instructional tool, enhance the curriculum, and build bridges with the community. The Epic of Gilgamesh, the oldest surviving written piece of world literature, will spark multifaceted interactions among artists, Tri-C faculty and students and partnering organizations. Guest artists will work with Tri-C faculty and students to create a performance inspired by the story of Gilgamesh and to use their artistic process as a way of engaging students in different disciplines. In collaboration with partnering institutions, resource materials will be developed to enhance the curriculum. These partnerships will cement ongoing relationships between the campus, the classroom, and the surrounding community. The final performance piece for *The Gilgamesh Project* will be presented, rent-free, in one of the professional theaters operated in downtown Cleveland by Playhouse Square.

The College is also able to offer Special Topics courses in conjunction with *The Gilgamesh Project*. Recognizing the challenges of developing an all campus production at a non-residential commuter college that spans three campuses, these courses will enable student participants to work on the final performance piece as part of a class. The Dean of Creative Arts, who will direct the final performance piece, can approve Special Topics classes.

On-campus partners have already emerged. About 20 faculty members in Developmental Education, English, History, Anthropology, Art Therapy, and the Fine and Performing Arts have attended a project orientation and will serve as a core group of project champions within their respective departments. External partners, The Cleveland Museum of Art and Great Lakes Theater Festival, will assist, along with selected Tri-C faculty, in the development of resource materials and activities that will enable Tri-C faculty members to incorporate instruction relating to the Epic of Gilgamesh in their courses.

At the center of *The Gilgamesh Project* will be a visiting artist, violinist and composer DBR. Music will provide a through-line to the new work that will be developed, with the Epic of Gilgamesh as a starting point. The Tri-C proposal provides for 30 residency days for DBR in Cleveland, including a 10-day residency during the production's rehearsal period in spring 2012. Other Cleveland-based faculty and non-faculty artists will fill out the project's creative team. The artists met at Tri-C in February to begin discussing their collaboration. All are interested in building the adaptation out of student responses to the Gilgamesh story through student-generated writing, visual imagery, music, and movement. The creative team will work with Tri-C students and additional faculty both inside and outside the Tri-C course structure to gather and shape the material for the adaptation.

Our faculty project champions will outline curriculum and make presentations at department faculty meetings to recruit more participants. Invitations to the project's faculty workshops will also go out broadly across the Tri-C campuses. Faculty and students will participate at three levels: presentation of and response to a profound classic of world literature in a variety of courses, extensive interaction with artists and partnering organizations in selected courses, and participation in the production itself, through special topics classes and as an extracurricular option.

The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) will research and produce a video, background essays, live video conferences, gallery tours and faculty workshops that will illuminate the culture that produced the Epic of Gilgamesh. These instructional tools will also provide our students with an in-depth introduction to one of Cleveland's finest cultural resources. Great Lakes Theater Festival (GLTF), a classical theater company, will provide faculty workshops that focus on connecting today's students to this ancient text and provide a customized residency program in selected Tri-C classes.

Tri-C will also look to extend the impact of the project beyond campus boundaries. We will reach out to pre-collegiate students in the Tri-C ArtsPrep programs and also in summer arts programs sponsored by other local arts and education organizations such as the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Young Audiences. We will also work with area libraries to provide venues and audiences for sharing student work in progress. These efforts will highlight Tri-C as a center for excellence and innovation in arts-integrated education.

#### Expected Outcomes and Evaluation

Outcomes of *The Gilgamesh Project* are:

- To offer Tri-C students an engaging academic and extracurricular experience that will inspire demonstrable commitment to academic success and excellence
- To build community bridges by strengthening ties with local artists and arts organizations that will also promote the growth of students as informed and engaged citizens
- To provide data concerning the efficacy of an arts integrated curriculum

We have developed a working draft for a Logic Model for evaluation purposes; Dr. Jennifer Spielvogel, Tri-C's Vice President for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, will help to create an evaluation plan to measure progress on the project and to determine its impact. Her proposed work plan is also attached.

Evaluation tools will start with tracking numbers of faculty and students participating in any aspect of the project. Other measures will evaluate the types of projects created around the topics and themes related to the Epic of Gilgamesh, the grades students receive on their work, any subsequent enrollment in Creative Arts classes, and student attendance and retention rates and increase in GPA. The largest group of students and their instructors will study one or more aspects of the Gilgamesh story as part of a larger course syllabus. The second, somewhat smaller group will study directly with one or more of the artists. The smallest group of students and faculty will be directly involved with the project production. A set of parallel evaluation tools will be developed for each group, tailored to the intended outcomes at each level. To assess progress and make adjustments as the project takes place, we will measure what happens differently, for either the students or the instructor, when an artist(s) from the project interacts in a classroom.

We want to add to the small body of evidence that has been produced to measure the impact of the arts at the college level, similar to that already demonstrated at the pre-collegiate level. We intend to ask such questions as: How can exposure to the arts change students' lives? Does introduction to arts spur students' interests or actions? Are students more engaged in their education while engaging in creative activities or processes? Will students take additional arts

classes? Will their attendance, quality of work and grades improve? Will they attend arts performances, including the final performance of this project?

We also intend to assess the impact of *The Gilgamesh Project* on faculty by asking: Will you change the way you teach because of the project? Will you adapt into other classes any teaching methods learned from the artist(s) interacting with your classes? We will also measure the influence of the project on our community by surveying audience members for presentations of work-in-progress and the final performance.

Tri-C is also involved in the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE)) and will share evaluative information about the project with those institutions.