

APPLICATION CHECKLIST
Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant

Deadline February 12th

Please print and complete this checklist and attach it as the cover page of your grant application.

Faculty information

Name: Don Scheese

Dept: English

Email: dscheese@gac.edu

Rank: Professor

Checklist

☒ **Description of previous projects (and outcomes) funded by RSC grants**

☒ **Complete project description, including separate statements of:**

1. **Purpose.** What are the intellectual, conceptual, or artistic issues? How does your work fit into other endeavors being done in this field?
2. **Feasibility.** What qualifications do you bring to this project? What have you done/will you do to prepare for this project? What is the time period, i.e. summer, summer and academic year, academic year only? Is the work's scope commensurate with the time period of the project?
3. **Project Design.** This should include a specific description of the project design and activities, including location, staff, schedules or itineraries, and desired outcomes.

☒ **RSC Budget Proposal Form attached as last page of application**

☒ **Nine (9) copies of completed application and budget (including this checklist) to be submitted to the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning (SSC 119)**

If successful, my proposal can be used as an example to assist future faculty applications. This decision will not in any way influence the evaluation of my application.

Yes No (please circle one)

12 February 2010

To: Faculty Development Committee
From: Don Scheese, Professor of English
Re: Research, Scholarship & Creativity Grant Proposal for 2010-11

Proposed Project

I request \$2000 to fund my expenses in support of my sabbatical project for 2010-11, to write a memoir based on my cross-country bicycle trip in the spring of 2011.

Background

- I last received an RSC grant in 2006-7.
- I have received a total of 7 RSC grants from GAC with the following outcomes:
 1. 2006, \$2000, to fund the cost of reproducing and reprinting photographs and paintings of Anasazi ruins in my book-length manuscript *The Allure of the Anasazi: Representations of Ancestral Puebloans in Art & Literature*. This money was returned to the college when my original publisher, after initially accepting my ms. for publication, reneged on the agreement (in part b/c of balking over reproduction costs). I subsequently substantially revised my ms. under the new title *The Inhabited Wilderness: Exploring Prehistoric Ruins in the Southwest* and my book is now being considered for publication by Oregon State University Press in its "Culture & Environment" series. Since 2005 I have presented several versions of book chapters at conferences sponsored by the Western Literature Association: "The Presence of the Prehistoric in the Art & Literature of Bandelier National Monument" (2006), "Pursuing the Prehistoric Past: The Anasazi in Recent Works by Craig Childs & David Roberts" (2007), "The (Once) Inhabited Wilderness: Ruminations on Visiting an Anasazi Ruin" (2008), & "The Chacoan Outliers: A Still-Inhabited Wilderness" (2009). I have also published a version of a chapter of my forthcoming book as a piece of creative nonfiction, "The Inhabited Wilderness," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature & Environment* 16.2 (Spring 2009):347-52.
 1. 2003, \$2100, to do further fieldwork and archival research on Anasazi sites in the Southwest as part of my continued work on a book-length manuscript, "The Allure of the Anasazi: Representations of Ancestral Puebloans in Art & Literature." Several presentations resulted from this research: "The Picturesque Amidst the Sublime: Anasazi Ruins in the Grand Canyon," Association for the Study of Literature & Environment conference, Eugene, OR, June 2005; "The Allure of the Anasazi," Faculty Forum, GAC, Nov. 2004; "The Allure of the Anasazi," Western Literature Association conference, Big Sky, MT, Oct. 2004; "The Allure of the Anasazi," Anasazi Heritage Center, Dolores, CO, April 2004; "Why Visit Anasazi Ruins?" Aztec Ruins National Monument, Aztec, NM, August 2003. The research and fieldwork I completed in 2003-04 (my sabbatical year) led directly into the completion of a first draft of my book manuscript (300 pages).
 2. 2001, \$2100, to do fieldwork and archival research in the Four Corners region of the Southwest for select chapters in my third book, tentatively titled "The Allure

- of the Anasazi: Representations of Southwestern Prehistoric Cultures in Art & Literature." The immediate outcome as a result of my RSC work in 2001 was a presentation in October 2002 at the Western Literature Association conference, "The Masculine Self in the Anasazi Country of David Roberts."
3. 1999, \$2100, to do fieldwork in Idaho to finish my sabbatical project of 1996-97, a book-length memoir entitled *Mountains of Memory: A Fire Lookout's Life in the River of No Return Wilderness*. This book was published in September 2001 by the University of Iowa Press as part of its "American Land & Life" series.
 4. 1995, \$2100, to do fieldwork and archival research on Ernest Oberholtzer, a Minnesota conservationist instrumental in the preservation of the Quetico-Superior region. I gave two presentations on Oberholtzer (one at GAC, the other at the 7th Interdisciplinary Wilderness Conference in Reno, NV, in March 1996), and co-authored an article (with Claude Brew in the English Department), "North Woods Writers," focusing in part on Oberholtzer, in *The Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998).
 5. 1994, \$2100, to do fieldwork and archival research on Aldo Leopold, nature writer and leading conservationist, which led to a chapter on Leopold in my book *Nature Writing: The Pastoral Impulse in America* (New York: Twayne, 1996).
 6. 1993, \$2100, to do fieldwork and archival research on Henry David Thoreau, which led to a chapter on Thoreau in *Nature Writing: The Pastoral Impulse in America*.

Description of Proposed Project

During my sabbatical 2010-11, I plan to write a memoir based on a cross-country journey by bicycle (tentatively titled "Cross Country: Nature & Nation on Two Wheels"). I intend to undertake the solo two-month-long journey in the spring of 2011, from March to May, and spend the remainder of my leave transforming my journal account of the experience into presentations at various conferences, publishable essays, and, ultimately, a book.

This project melds three of my most significant professional and personal passions:

The relationship between nature & culture, environment & self

In my two previous books (*Nature Writing: The Pastoral Impulse in America* [1996] & *Mountains of Memory: A Fire Lookout's Life in the River of No Return Wilderness* [2001]) and in my current book project on the Anasazi, the central concern has been the interplay between nature and culture, how the physical environment has shaped and been shaped by humans. Traditionally, nature writing and ecocriticism (the study of literature and environment) have focused on wilderness, sparsely populated or depopulated landscapes where people go to "escape" civilization and recreate and restore themselves spiritually—what has been called the pastoral impulse. More recently nature writing and ecocriticism have expanded their focus to include rural, suburban, and urban places.

Few if any writers have explored the idea of bicycling as the basis for an account of nature writing, i.e., a way to reflect on informed participation in the natural world while riding through the landscape on two wheels in non-motorized fashion. In part this is

because cycling obviously requires a machine, and technology (at least of the industrial kind) has always been something that nature writers inherently desire to leave behind when they enter the wilderness (Thoreau's *Walden* being the classic example). Cycling also requires roads and pavement (at least the kind of cycling I prefer), other elements traditionally considered anathema by nature writers—indeed, the very legal definition of wilderness requires an area absent of roads.

Yet I maintain that cycling can result in an intimate connection with the physical environment—the kind of Emersonian “one-ness” nature writers always seek out when venturing into nature. Alone while riding on an undulating country road, feeling the sun and wind on my face, listening to meadowlarks and dickcissels sing from the fields, watching the blades of a wind turbine spinning on the near horizon, I, like Emerson in *Nature*, have enjoyed a “perfect exhilaration.” And even though cycling involves a machine, it still requires another essential element of the pastoral experience, namely, physical exertion and propulsion out-of-doors. As Lance Armstrong (or his ghost writer) says in *Every Second Counts*, “A bicycle, no matter how elaborate the technology or how advanced the composite that it’s made of, remains driven by the body. There is something fundamental about a bike: a frame with a crank, a chain and two wheels, powered by nothing more than my own legs. On a bike, you are under your own power, directed by your own hand. Your motor is yourself.”

Autobiography/Memoir, especially in the form of travel literature

Autobiography addresses perhaps the most fundamental eschatological question: Who am I? As someone who chose American literature as his professional specialization, and as someone whose previous books include (to varying degrees) autobiographical scholarship, I am deeply interested in this question of self-examination (so you will allow this brief autobiographical passage). I fell in love with cycling while in college some thirty years ago, then fell out of it when relocating to the West and replacing it with backpacking and mountain climbing. But around five years ago, after a year of tramping across the southwest in search of Anasazi ruins, I returned to Minnesota with aching knees and the realization that I needed to find a new form of physical and spiritual recreation in the out-of-doors. So I returned to cycling, thinking it would involve an occasional ride on local bike paths around home. But more and more it became part of my daily life, a ritual and discipline I have come to need and carry out no matter the time of year or weather. In six years I have gone through six different bikes (I now own three) and have gradually increased my mileage over the years: in 2006 I rode over 3000 miles; in 2007, over 4700 miles; in 2008, over 6100 miles, and in 2009 over 6500 miles, averaging 30 miles/ride. I now religiously read bicycling magazines and memoirs, and, come July, watch every second of the Tour de France, and other major cycling races when I can.

So I feel the need to ask myself: Why this newly rediscovered passion at this time in my life? The various answers to this question I will explore at length in my cycling memoir. First, it satisfies my need for a physical challenge, a craving I have felt my entire life. At fifty-five years of age, I still require that daily rush of adrenaline and endorphins (yes, cycling is about suffering to some extent). Second, it fulfills my need for an out-of-doors

experience. For as long as I can recall I have made it my goal to spend at least one hour each day outside, whether walking, snowshoeing, skiing, or (as now) cycling: it has become my religion, fulfilling me spiritually as well as physically. As Mircea Eliade writes in *The Sacred and the Profane*, "Even the most habitual gesture can signify a spiritual act. The road and walking [or cycling] can be transfigured into religious values, for every road can symbolize the 'road of life,' and every walk [or ride] a 'pilgrimage,' a peregrination to the Center of the World." Third, as someone who has always tried to connect one's professional interests with one's "outside" passions, I have long been enamored of the oldest form of literature, namely, that of the journey. Homer's *Odyssey*, the journals of Columbus, *Moby-Dick*, William Least Heat Moon's *Blue Highways*—these have been some of my favorite texts, spiritual and artistic touchstones at various times in my life, for their twin explorations of the terra incognita of the world and the self. William Wordsworth's biographer Juliet Barker writes of him that "In *The Prelude*, he explained his preference, 'I love a public road,' ...because the sight of it disappearing over the horizon had seemed to him, since childhood, like a guide into eternity, or at least to things unknown." I firmly believe that every so often everyone ought to undertake an epic journey, a feeling perhaps dating back to a television show from 1970, *Then Came Bronson*; though it lasted only a year, it inspired a cult following, based on its weekly plot of a shy, laconic, thoughtful young man who leaves the city behind for a peripatetic life on a motorcycle across the American West, carrying all his belongings on a Harley Davidson Sportster. I never fulfilled by wish to emulate Bronson's example, but twenty years ago I did undertake an epic trek of my own, spending a month hiking the 220-mile John Muir Trail along the spine of the Sierra Nevada in California (which I wrote about in a chapter on Muir in my book on nature writing). Now I wish to go on another odyssey, this time by bicycle (and perhaps fulfilling my Bronson fantasy after all). Finally, as a more intimate form of travel than by car, cycling will put me in closer touch with the diverse landscapes and cultures of America. Like in *Blue Highways*, I will travel the backroads, the paths less frequently taken, and by passing through farms, towns, national parks, Indian reservations, stopping to eat and camp and meet new people along the way, I know I will have the opportunity to be able to write about memorable encounters with all kinds of interesting characters from various regions of the country. And, as well, there will be plenty of time and space for solitude and reflection, so as to come to know myself better.

Realization of one's vocation

For me, realizing one's vocation involves the combining of one's professional interests with one's passions in life. More personally, it entails the melding of physical, intellectual, and spiritual elements. If I can write about and teach the things that I love to do, and if these things are important to the world at large, then I have come to realize my calling. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a professor of psychology, has identified the union of these elements in his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. He proposes that human experience is fullest when action and awareness converge, whether it is through play, sport, ritual, pageantry or anything else. He writes that "flow helps to integrate the self because in that state of deep concentration, consciousness is unusually well ordered. Thoughts, intentions, feelings and all the senses are focused on the same goal. Experience is in harmony." I wish to experience and write about this state of flow

during my experience of cycling cross-country, when my interests in geography, literature and history, converge as I pedal over mountain passes, across deserts, and through towns and cities. I know that there will be times during the journey when things will not be in flow, when I will be distracted by pain, the elements, other people, the cares and concerns of everyday life. But I also know and believe that there will be those moments of transcendence, when everything—body and mind and bike and road—are in harmony, when I will have achieved one-ness. That expectation alone makes attempting the journey worthwhile.

Preparation leading up to the proposed project

I have been preparing, and will continue to prepare, in various ways for this project in a number of ways. **Intellectually**, I have been reading voraciously in cycling literature, everything from the several “autobiographies” of Lance Armstrong and other famous racers current and past, to histories of the sport, to memoirs by “ordinary” riders (two very good recent examples of the latter are *Conquering the Borderlands: A Southern Tier Journal* by Lorraine Veisz, and *Bicycling Beyond the Divide* by Daryl Farmer). An excellent work of autobiographical ecocritical scholarship I read recently is Ian Marshall’s *Peak Experiences: Walking Meditations on Literature, Nature, and Need*, in which the author applies the theories of psychologist Abraham Maslow to his experience of hiking the 2000-mile long Appalachian Trail while reflecting on the literature of the region and his own life. I have also continued to read and teach new works of nature writing/memoir (e.g., *Song of the Fluteplayer* by Sharman Apt Russell, an account of her homesteading experiment in southwestern New Mexico). And I continue to learn new things about the craft of memoir writing while regularly teaching ENG 256: Creative Nonfiction. And of course the Internet now has literally hundreds of sites about bicycle touring containing all kinds of useful information, from tips about gear to accounts of traveling around the world by bike.

My reading of these various kinds will of course continue into the fall of 2010. One new strain of thought I have been thinking about of late has been the link between recreational riding and environmental sustainability: that is, how riding for fun and exercise can be combined with commuting to work and making cities and roads more bicycle friendly. Three recent works in this regard that I intend to read once my sabbatical begins are: *Pedaling Revolution: How Cyclists are Changing American Cities* by Jeff Mapes, *The Cyclist’s Manifesto: The Case for Riding on Two Wheels Instead of Four* by Robert Hurst, and *Pedal Power: The Quiet Rise of the Bicycle in American Public Life* by J. Harry Wray.

Physically, I will continue to ride religiously, cycling in virtually every month of the year (and riding on an indoor trainer when I cannot ride outside). My goal for 2010 is to exceed last year’s total of 6500 miles. I also plan to enter a dozen or so organized rides around Minnesota, including at least one several-day ride and several century rides. and embark on several weeklong, self-supported rides across Minnesota.

Relation of proposed project to previous research & work by self & others

As mentioned above, both of my previously published books as well as my current book project on the Anasazi have focused on the relationship between nature and culture, the environment and the self. This new project will explore the same subject, but in new and pathbreaking ways. My previous books have also been examples of autobiographical scholarship—writing in which the subject of study and one's personal relationship with it are intimately linked and expressed. This is an example of personal and professional integration, of "flow." And it is a growing trend in the academy, at least in my fields of literary/cultural criticism and ecocriticism. Another fine recent example is Scott Slovic's *Going Away To Think: Engagement, Retreat, and Ecocritical Responsibility* (2008), in which the author both advocates and relates experiences involving the benefits of the pastoral impulse, for the self, the community, and the natural environment.

Expected outcomes & future activities related to project

My goal is to produce a publishable book-length memoir. As an obsessive journal keeper, I will have no trouble writing up daily entries during my cross-country odyssey. I will then transform those journal entries into a rough draft during the remainder of the spring and summer, and produce a rough draft by Sept. 2011. I will then go through the normal stages of revision by presenting various chapters of the book at academic conferences (including ones sponsored by the associations of the Western Literature and Environment and Literature groups) and publishing portions of the memoir as articles in various magazines and journals that feature creative nonfiction. Through making contacts with book editors at conferences I will then hope to attract a publisher with a compelling book proposal.

There is definitely a market for such a work, given the enormous (and growing) popularity of cycling; it is estimated that currently over 60 million Americans ride a bicycle. Cycling memoirs continue to fill the shelves of local bookstores (especially around mid-July, when the Tour de France occurs and interest in cycling is renewed annually). Minnesota has long enjoyed a reputation as a bike-friendly state (Minneapolis is second in the country when it comes to commuting by bicycle to work). That the prestigious Viking Press recently saw fit to publish *Bicycling Diaries* by David Byrne, the famous musician, is another indication of the growing popularity of this kind of literature.

Project Budget

The projected expenses for my project are simple and straightforward. I will need funding for lodging (camping & motels), food (cooking for myself and restaurant meals), and airfare to my destination city of San Diego, CA and back to MN from my termination point of Jacksonville, Florida.

The total distance to be traveled via the Southern Tier route is 3100 miles; over 60 days this averages out @ 52 miles/day, a very reasonable figure for a fully loaded touring cyclist of my age.

Lodging

I will camp out on average 6 days of the week and stay at a motel once a week.

- 8 motel stays over two months @ \$70/night = \$560
- 52 nights of camping @ \$15/night = \$780
- Total lodging costs = \$1340

Food

I will eat one meal a day at a restaurant, cooking for myself for the other meals.

- 1 restaurant meal/day @ \$15 x 60 days = \$900
- \$10/day for my own cooked meals x 60 days = \$600
- Total food costs = \$1500

Airfare

- From MN to San Diego, CA: \$500
- From Jacksonville, FL back to MN: \$500
- Total airfare costs = \$1000

Total estimated expenses thus come to \$3840. I wish to combine stipend and expenses, and request \$2000 as a full professor.

Thank you for considering my proposal. Please let me know if there are any questions.

Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant **BUDGET INFORMATION**

Faculty Stipend

(\$500 professor; \$600 associate professor; \$700 assistant professor)

Expenses

Faculty may apply for up to **\$1500** to pay for the cost of equipment, materials, personnel, and travel associated with the project to be funded by the RSC Grant. All expenses must be necessitated by the project to be funded by the RSC Grant.

ITEM		AMOUNT
Equipment (e.g., transcription machine, camera, cassette recorder— but not to include computer hardware)		\$
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
Materials (e.g., books, printing, software, lab supplies)		\$
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
Personnel (e.g., typist, transcriptionist, student assistant)		\$
1:		
2:		
Travel Costs (cannot include conference travel, see http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php for allowable travel expenses)		\$
Airfare: \$1000		\$1000
Mileage: Number of miles @ \$0.55/mile		
Lodging: \$1340		\$1340
Meals: \$1500		1500
Other Expenses		\$
1:	Cost:	
2:	Cost:	
3:	Cost:	
		\$
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$3840
AMOUNT REQUESTED (not to exceed \$1500 + stipend commensurate with rank)		\$2000

Have you applied for, or received funding from, another source to help support this project? **NO**

Funding Source:

Amount:

Please explain how the RSC will be used in addition to the other funding.