Baltimore Field School 2.0: Undoing & Doing Anew in Public Humanities
Evaluation Report

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Submitted to:
The American Council of Learned Societies
The Public Humanities Minor Program, UMBC
The Orser Center for the Study of Place, Community, and Culture in American Studies, UMBC
The Dresher Center for the Humanities, UMBC

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Executive Summary

As part of UMBC's Public Humanities program, **Baltimore Field School 2.0** creates a framework for UMBC graduate students, staff, and faculty to collaborate with community partners in building ethical and sustainable research and teaching projects focused on public humanities.

The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) has awarded a public engagement grant of over $150,000 to support **Baltimore Field School (BFS) 2.0: Undoing & Doing Anew in Public Humanities.** The award further develops a planning intensive that moves away from extractive research models and helps build ongoing Baltimore-based humanities projects. The grant funds collaborative projects developed with community fellows and will focus on food and land justice, racial equity, and journalism/public information.

-www.BaltimoreFieldSchool.org

Purpose. This report details the preliminary evaluation of the Baltimore Field School 2.0 at the outset of the program's collaborative projects. A strong qualitative application is utilized to provide insight into community fellows' expectations, goals, attitudes, and concerns at the outset of their work with their University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) partners. The findings herein are intended to provide valuable information for shared understanding between BFS participants, future BFS programming, and contributions to ethical community-based work. Conclusions also speak to the principal investigators' success in implementing recommendations from the Baltimore Field School Pilot Program Evaluation (2022).

Initial goals. The Baltimore Field School was created and funded in 2019 to:

1) understand core challenges facing neighborhoods in Baltimore from a variety of humanities-centered methods;

2) cultivate a national model of effective, ethical humanities research, teaching, and learning on Baltimore and cities like it;

3) expand UMBC's infrastructure of engagement for public humanities research and teaching based in Baltimore.

The ACLS award broadens the reach of the **Baltimore Field School (BFS)**, launched through a $125,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2020.

Baltimore Field School 2.0.

Community Building and Support. BFS 2.0 includes opportunities for gathering, networking, and celebrating one another's work. Fall 2022 presented several opportunities for Baltimore Field School gatherings (below). BFS Community Fellows also invite one another (and the public) to events held by their organizations.

August 2022: Community Fellows Orientation
          Baltimore Field School Social
September 2022: Peabody Heights Event and Project Launch
November 2022: Stories of Mera Kitchen Collective & BFS Showcase Event

Participants/Collaborations.

Focus	Community Fellow	Organization	UMBC Partner
Racial Equity	Betty Bland-Thomas	South Baltimore Partnership	Courtney Hobson, Staff
Racial Equity	Curtis M. Eaddy II	Presidential Brand	Bill Shrewbridge, Faculty
Racial Equity	Yesenia Mejia-Herrera	Creative Alliance	Tania Lizarazo, Faculty
Food and Land Justice	Aishah Alfadhalah	Mera Kitchen Collective	Sarah Fouts, Faculty
Food and Land Justice	Tisha Guthrie	Baltimore Renters United/Poppleton Now	Nicole King, Faculty
Food and Land Justice	Eric Jackson	The VAULT: A Digital Archive in Cherry Hill	Charlotte Keniston, Staff, Student
Journalism/Public Information	Cameron Granadino and Eddie Conway	Real News Network	Beth Saunders, Staff
Journalism/Public Information	Lisa Snowden-McCray	Baltimore Beat	Jasmine Braswell, Student/Staff

Evaluation Method. This preliminary evaluation comprises data from focus groups conducted in September 2022 with BSF 2.0 Community Fellows and UMBC Partners. In the interest of confidentiality and amplifying Community Fellows' perspectives, focus

groups were separated by roles, i.e., comprised exclusively of Community Fellows or of UMBC personnel. There were four focus groups in total.

Summary of Conclusions.

- Baltimore Field School 2.0 Community Fellows and UMBC Partners have confidence in the values and mission of the Baltimore Field School.
- BFS 2.0 has, thus far, successfully addressed conclusions and recommendations presented in the evaluation of the Baltimore Field School Pilot Program (2022).
- UMBC Partners want more opportunities to "troubleshoot," share skills, and offer support to one another.
- UMBC Partners respect and trust Community Fellows' expertise, leadership, and control of their projects.
- Community Fellows demonstrate more confidence than UMBC Partners in the shift of power from the university to the community, while UMBC Partners conveyed more concern over bureaucracy and details that may represent a power imbalance in these partnerships.

"How do we how do we utilize the interdisciplinary focus on humanities as a tool for popular political education? I've really got to give credit to the organizers of this. And I do think it's pretty much steeped in the projects that all of the organizations in the cohort have talked about." – Community Fellow

"I think that [our project] is the perfect kind of project to exemplify the humanities." – Community Fellow

Summary of Findings.

Community Fellows and UMBC Partners:

- expect the Baltimore Field School to provide Community Fellows with not only funding, but resources.
- believe the Baltimore Field School can be transformative in shifting power to the community.
- view UMBC as "an institution." Community Fellows were more likely to separate the institution from the specific people with whom they work. UMBC Partners were more likely to reference "bureaucracy" as a barrier to their work.

- communicated feelings of isolation due to the nature of their work, along with the hope that the Baltimore Field School could reduce this isolation by building this BFS community.
- look forward to deeper relationship building, and have confidence that strengthened relationships between organizations, Community Fellows, and UMBC Partners will be a powerful, transformative force.
- believe in the importance of knowledge and expertise generated by people who do not work within universities.

Community Fellows expect:

- publicity and amplification for their organizations.
- specific benefits to working with UMBC
    - professional/academic expertise
    - instrumental assistance with tasks
    - use of campus facilities
- to build organizational stability.
- to attract more organizational participation from young people.
- to build relationships with and learn from one another.

"The field school is a perfect example of how a university can really think holistically about the humanities." – UMBC Partner

"The thing that's appealing about the field school is that it's an expanded notion of the humanities" – UMBC Partner

UMBC Partners intend to:

- connect Community Fellows to resources, funding, and other Community Fellows.
- learn from Community Fellows.
- support members of the communities with whom they are working and amplify their voices.
- provide community engagement opportunities for students.
- share stories without being extractive; commit to mutual benefit for these partnerships.
- build a community of UMBC scholars doing community-engaged work.

Summary of Recommendations.

1. Plan a monthly or bi-monthly virtual meeting for Baltimore Field School Fellows and UMBC Partners. Include Project Evaluator for process documentation and reflection.

2. Plan several BFS meetings on UMBC's campus.
3. Lead meetings on campus for the Field School's UMBC Partners to discuss their roles and work. Invite Community Fellows with no pressure to attend.
4. Schedule a Baltimore Field School newsletter that all participants can expect at the same time every month.

Baltimore Field School (BFS) 2.0 Principal Project Team.

Sarah Fouts**, Principal Investigator,** Assistant Professor, Department of American Studies; Public Humanities, UMBC

Nicole King, **Co-Investigator,** Associate Professor, Department of American Studies; Public Humanities, UMBC

Tahira Mahdi, **Evaluator,** Adjunct Professor, Department of Psychology, UMBC

Jasmine Braswell, **Program Coordinator,** UMBC

Evaluation, Reflection, Action with BFS 2.0.

Following the evaluation of the Baltimore Field School Pilot Program, principal investigators structured BFS 2.0 to foster deeper learning and relationship building. This new iteration includes:

- An extended timeline for the cohort
- UMBC personnel providing direct, instrumental work with Community Fellows on projects led by Community Fellows
- Focused areas: food and land justice, racial equity, and journalism/public information.
- The continued participation of several people from the pilot program, including community leaders and UMBC personnel.
- More focus on informal events for participants.
- Increased access to UMBC's campus for Community Fellows (providing campus card for access to campus shuttle and other campus amenities).

Baltimore Field School 2.0 Preliminary Evaluation Report

Community Building and Support

The Baltimore Field School provides opportunities for community building through meetings, socials, and publicizing the events of participating community organizations. The following events were sponsored by the Baltimore Field School between August 2022 and January 2023 when this report was completed.

Events.

Orientation plus Backyard Social.
The first formal meeting or orientation with the Baltimore Field School Community fellows and the Baltimore Field School project team was held at the Lion Brother's Building in Southwest Baltimore on August 4th, 2022 from 3pm to 5pm. This meeting offered more insight towards community work and was a great way for fellows to interact and get a grasp of the logistics of the fellowship. They discussed upcoming events of the semester and had a social sponsored event at Back Yard, which is a restaurant in the neighborhood, afterwards.

Peabody Heights.
The Peabody Heights Event on September 20th from 5pm to 8pm was to celebrate the launch of this new project. Baltimore Field School Fellows were able to connect with former and current collaborators with UMBC faculty and staff. This event involved networking and discussion around community work. Each fellow introduced themselves and their current projects.

Stories of Mera + BFS Showcase Event.
Stories of Mera featured Baltimore Field School fellows who presented their ongoing work. This event took place on November 29, 2022 from 6:30pm to 9pm at Mera Kitchen Collective in Baltimore. BFS Fellow, Yesenia Mejia, presented her work within the Latinx community which is part of the CIELO program and in collaboration with the Creative Alliance. Cameron Granadino, from The Real News Network, presented his work on the "Say their Own Word" series which is a prison archives project with Eddie Conway. This night also provided a platform for Aisha Alfadhalah and Mera Kitchen Collective

members to showcase their stories from around the world. The storytelling project was produced in collaboration with students in Sarah Fouts's Introduction to Public Humanities course. Nicole King's Humanities scholars students and Fouts's public humanities students took a shuttle from UMBC to participate in the event.

Gathering.

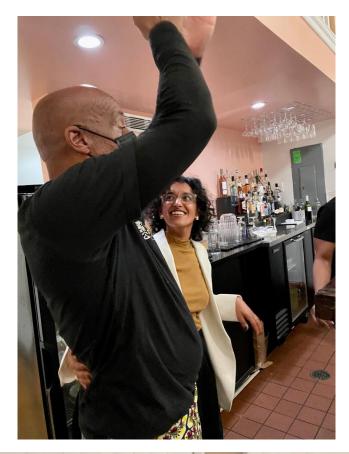The BFS Community Fellows and project team take a photo after the orientation meeting in August 2022.

BFS Community Fellow Betty Bland-Thomas and BFS Program Coordinator, Jasmine Braswell, speak at the social after orientation in August 2022.

BFS event at Peabody Heights Brewery led a gathering of current and past community fellows, UMBC faculty, and staff to discuss their recent work in September 2022.

BFS Community Fellow, Aishah Alfadhah and a fellow Mera coworker watch the Stories of Mera showcase on November 29, 2022.

BFS Community Fellow Yesenia Meija presented at the Stories of Mera + BFS showcase on November 29, 2022.

Findings

Community Fellows' Perspectives

Community Fellows' responses were, overall, specific to their organizations and projects. The following themes reflect shared, general ideas, and quotes have been edited to respect individual confidentiality.

Expectations, Goals, Needs

Community Fellows need one another. This theme is prioritized based on the expressed hope and enthusiasm Community Fellows had for learning more about and more from one another. Fellows provided insight into the very personal, sometimes isolating nature of their work.

> *"I would really just want more opportunities and I don't know what you guys have planned, but just more opportunities to really talk to other fellows, because all of us are doing this thing that's kind of very singular. I think because all of us are doing work that is grassroots, we are kind of our organizations. So, it gets very easy to get very kind of lonely almost, or just kind of stuck in your own thing. So, really just making it more accessible to really talk to other people in this group will help me."*

> *"Whether that looks like cultivating space for us to do that or we just do it ourselves but yeah. I think from there, you know, we'll find the right questions to ask each other."*

Building relationships and community across organizations.

> *"It's another way of just pushing me outside of the walls of my office and into Baltimore to actually be of service to people in Baltimore."*

> *"Probably most important, just relationship across organizations ... I think we could do it on our own, but I know that these types of projects and processes make it easier for us to go deeper in the relationships that we have ... finding new ways of being in community with each other, modeling that, exploring what it looks like."*

"Connect with other people, see what they're doing and how can we collaborate on and understand ourselves better…"

Learning from other Fellows.

"Help to maybe offer up some perspective and directly or indirectly share expertise."

"For me, it's to learn about other people's organizing, grassroots organizing, you know, to connect with y'all and see where these things line up and support in any way…"

Excited about publicity and amplification for their organizations' work. They believe that as the public learns more about what they are doing, the communities they serve will have more opportunities to communicate their needs. In turn, the organizations expect to better serve the needs of their communities.

"I'm really excited about us having like public events so that people can know that [our organization] exists and also let us know what they want [from the organization] …"

Engaging more people with their organizations' work.

"I'm looking to really be as much of a of a place for the community to have a voice as possible."

"I think really to just utilize some of the things that I've learned to really help engage others in the community, because there's so much energy and so much power and treasure in in our community, and I don't think a lot of people even recognize how much they have to give. So personally, I see myself benefitting from that."

Possibility to increase the stability and foundation of their organizations. Included in this theme is how Fellows spoke about the time and space being made for them to better understand their organizations.

"Certainly, giving some space to kind of ponder and think through our next steps with the project…"

"With my projects, working on the micro, meso, and macro dynamics of rebuilding the connections in communities to hopefully … stabilize that foundation, to prepare the community for [organization goal] and the possibilities that that brings."

"It's already been showing an effect … it's helping us to understand each other, the dynamics within each other and helping us [with] storytelling and understanding the community we're situated in."

Specific benefits to working with UMBC.

- professional/academic expertise
- instrumental assistance with tasks
- use of campus facilities

"Just channeling and partnering so that the community has access to those hard resources, kind of like balancing the power dynamics…"

"Help to maybe offer up some perspective and directly or indirectly share expertise that might help and move forward the [project] that we're looking to do and possibly even amplify it as a way to connect with folks … And then also, I think even helping us leverage other funding and … I guess beyond expertise, also other laborers that might be able to help, students, or otherwise … Then that could just be access to the facilities, connecting us to folks."

Perception of UMBC and its work with communities in Baltimore.

Institution = negative or neutral. Community Fellows perceive UMBC much in the same way they perceive other state institutions (negatively or neutrally). Fellows are either unsure of UMBC's work and reputation or expecting the institution to conduct the usual business of community exploitation.

"Prior to meeting [UMBC Partner], I really haven't had much involvement with UMBC, so I'm really just getting acquainted with the level of involvement and engagement that the university is having with the community."

"I'm not sure about the UMBC sort of relation to [people from specific community] … So, I would have to look into it, but I would be curious if anybody, if people [from this community] are graduating from UMBC."

"I think UMBC is trying to do, just like other liberal white institutions, to be in relationship with community. And I think from that perspective, I guess my perception is just that they're just trying … These projects are important though, in shifting perceptions and perspectives on the institution at large. But I don't want to be too hasty to make the connection between what people do, what tenured or untenured folks do, or consultants do in relationship to UMBC with 'This is what the institution is.' So, I'm in that, I have that kind of tension right now."

BFS 2.0 = positive. As seen in the quote above, UMBC, the institution, can be regarded separately from the Baltimore Field School or individuals with whom Fellows are working or have established relationships.

Community Fellows feel confident in their work thus far and empowered in their collaborations. They made the distinction between this positive perception of BFS 2.0 and their UMBC Partners and their past experiences with institutions and programs.

"We worked with [UMBC Partner] specifically before, so I loved that we had a relationship. It wasn't like disruptive, but like, okay, we're going to start a project together."

"I was like, 'This is research? … Is this just the grant money or is it the research?' They said it's in between community and research. And I'd never been approached by any other university who kind of saw that way."

Understanding of power in this university-community partnership.

BFS 2.0 Community Fellows spoke about power in different ways, simultaneously.

- **Power building with one another and their organizations.**
- **Power generated within the communities with whom they work.**
- **Power that has shifted toward them in this university-community partnership.**
- **The power of the institution, UMBC, to end the project.**
- **BFS 2.0's respect for knowledge generated outside the university and the BFS commitment to mutual benefit.**

"That makes me think of two different things. Number one is the power that we have, this kind of cohort has, in organizing … The institution of UMBC means that they have power … I feel like they could, if they wanted to, they could end this, they could kind of like hobble it. So, there's power in that way too. We can work together and make these bonds and help our education as long as UMBC kind of allows that to happen."

"I feel like we have the power. I don't know, but since it's our own project that we created, it feels the power has shifted from the institution to us. That's been my individual experience. So, I don't feel—there's some guidance and support—but I don't feel like there is a power dynamic where it's uncomfortable or anything like that."

"It feels genuine … It feels like there's an acknowledgment that the … real power comes from the community, and the institutions … have a legacy of the financial and material and resource power, as far as that goes. And with acknowledging that the community is where the authentic power is, just channeling and partnering so that the community has access to those hard resources, kind of like balancing the power dynamics."

"So often, I feel like you go to university to learn that the true knowledge comes from the community, and so like there's clearly an understanding of that … The whole part of the university that is embracing this [is] being cut and underfunded a lot. So, this sort of partnership is showing an understanding that we need to embrace the knowledge that is generated in the community…"

"I think power in general is the ability to influence outcomes by withholding or adding to … I think that there has been, or at least alluded to, there has been some considerable efforts to have the dynamics of power be as … mutually beneficial to all of those who are in the process, but I think that that has more to do with those who are at the helm … I think that the higher ups could decide … if we did too much, if we start stirring up stuff too much, I think it could shift. But also, with the first point about us having the collective power within the cohort, we can say we can shake some shit up too. So, I think the pendulum swings based on where the momentum is."

Understanding of the humanities and how the Baltimore Field School is centering the humanities.

In discussing the humanities, Community Fellows were likely to discuss the importance of Baltimore Field School's focus on the humanities with these projects. They also discussed the fact that the humanities are often underfunded and discounted.

"Humanities is really just about expression of human experience, through various mediums … And I think from that perspective, or at least from my understanding there, then public humanities is about how do we make that available to the people? … My goal would be, and which I think this project does, [is] how do we how do we utilize the interdisciplinary kind of focus on humanities as a tool for popular political education? … I've really got to give credit to the organizers of this for that. And I do think it's pretty much steeped in the projects that all of the organizations in the cohort have talked about."

"It seems that society at large is really beginning to devalue the humanities and focusing so much more on technology and the sciences, and the humanities seen as kind of soft and not as relevant and for UMBC, which is an institution that is … nationally and world-recognized for its relevance in science and especially with promoting and producing, Africans of the extraction who are proficient and experts in the sciences. For that same university to be centering the humanities and recognizing its importance in elevating and improving communities, I think is really laudable."

"This project actually comes out of the humanities … Frank Wilderson says that some of the deepest thinkers are in the humanities and I'm referencing him here because it's not often that we think about [this community of

> *people] as intellectuals. I think that this is the perfect kind of project to exemplify the humanities."*

UMBC Partners' Perspectives

Goals and Expectations

Connect Community Fellows with resources and funding. UMBC Partners have previously established relationships with Community Fellows and are excited about:

- Connecting them to resources and funding.
- Connecting them to other Community Fellows.
- Learning from their expertise.

> *"I didn't necessarily have all the tools needed to help [Community Fellow] just on my own, and so I was hopeful that the Field School would come back again, and then that would be a good opportunity for [Community Fellow] particularly to work in fellowship with other folks who are doing that kind of work around the city. And also, money. Money is also very helpful for folks like [Community Fellow]. My main goal was just to connect [Community Fellow] with UMBC and the resources available."*

> *"Another opportunity for [Community Partner] to connect and share [Community Fellow's] great expertise and also get to learn from others in the group. And then the funding is a huge piece to be able to be able to funnel some of the resources of this great university into real good community work."*

Support people of the community.

> *"For me one of the motivations is to support members of [this] community who do a lot of work but sometimes are not necessarily included in community engaged projects, or specifically not as partners, more as subjects ... It's just part of a practice of reciprocity and also making sure that the people more visible in [this] community are not necessarily people like me who are privileged ..."*

Amplify community voices.

"I see this is just another point of interface with the community that we were able to make and, you know, sort of strengthen that relationship that has been ongoing for a while prior to the field school … Just continuing that and enriching that and being able to help our community partners amplify their voices."

"I see this as a way to build on those sort of models of shared stewardship, to build a [project] where the [project] comes out of the needs and desires of the community rather than necessarily my [project] agenda or whatever. So, we're supporting … amplifying the voices in the [project] … making it more open for everyone."

Provide opportunities for students to be involved in community engagement.

"I think that programing which will include students is going to be very beneficial …"

"Providing opportunities for our students, obviously, you know, to get them involved in the community."

Understanding of the humanities and how the Baltimore Field School is centering the humanities.

The sharing of stories without being extractive.

"I think at its core, the Baltimore Field School wants to share stories and not have it be extractive, have it so that we empower the people … empower them with the opportunity to share their own stories, as opposed to us coming in and sharing it for them."

"Obviously 'the humanities' is a set of disciplines, but it's like a way of looking at the world that centers the stories of individual people and groups of people rather than outside interpretations of those people."

"Using this as a way of sharing human experiences, which I think basically is what humanities is about …"

Respecting that people outside of universities help to build knowledge.

"It's like the university inviting really vital people in to be a part of building knowledge that's human centered."

"The Baltimore Field School is a good way to promote that kind of work, to promote a different kind of humanities that is centering another type of research project and specifically thinking about knowledge production as a collaborative process instead of as an individual one that is only benefiting specific people."

Perception of UMBC and its work with communities in Baltimore.

UMBC is a place where people do community-engaged work.

"That's one of the reasons why I was attracted to UMBC and probably one of the reasons why I got the job, and because I think that there's this interest in community-based research. And it's been good to have a community of people who are doing work that is not necessarily what it's in our job description."

"The institution wants us to be doing community-based work … There's so many different folks UMBC who are engaged in different types of community-based work, that it feels like sort of a patchwork, you know … I'm sort of constantly discovering people who already have relationships, who have programs that they've been running…"

Community-engaged work at UMBC is both siloed and isolating.

"It just seems like there's a huge variety… It's not very centralized, which is probably for the better, honestly. But I appreciate, with the Field School, being able to hear and learn about these very specific projects and initiatives that are going on … So, I like that the Field School sort of enables the

patchwork of projects to happen, but also has an apparatus for sharing experiences and just getting to discover and learn what other people are doing, which ... generates additional connections."

UMBC is doing well with community-engaged work, but many things need improvement.

UMBC Partners see UMBC as a place that is "progressing" or "evolving" in its community-engaged work.

"Over the time that I've been here ... I've seen that focus really change to really thinking about justice and thinking about power dynamics and [campus department] is working really hard to build really mutual relationships that have mutual benefit so that our students are learning really important things from the communities that they're working with and they're providing a real service."

"I would say it's evolving, you know? ... In probably in the last couple of decades, we're seeing some progress in this area ... UMBC is kind of unique physically in that it's really kind of isolated, over there in this pocket. So, it really does require effort to bring the community in and go out into the community in ways that a lot of other institutions aren't challenged by that."

UMBC Partners named several areas of improvement for UMBC to realize its goal of truly supporting community-engaged work.

Increase UMBC's financial investment in Baltimore City.

"There's so much more investment that the university could do into the city that they could put money towards ... While sometimes it gets publicized by the university, outside of just publicizing it, I don't know if there's any interest in any additional investment ... they can say that the work's really good, but I know that they don't put money behind certain things."

Bring more people from Baltimore City to campus—as enrolled students and as experts.

> *"I get that their focus is they want to reach more than just this region. But I feel at least, at least from my perspective of being privy to recruitment efforts … the university doesn't really focus on Baltimore City that much."*
>
> *"We can pour all we want … money into Baltimore City. But if we're not bringing Baltimore City students into the university, that's like a pretty big blind spot."*
>
> *"I think there's more interest in inviting other academics on campus … like us, as experts, and not necessarily in inviting community members, which in a way doesn't necessarily promote … a collaboration that is not extractive. And if we are only seeing community members as people who can support other people's projects and research instead of recognizing their expertise … then I don't think that we're doing a good job."*

Bureaucracy presents barriers to collaboration.

UMBC Partners spoke about university bureaucracy as a barrier to community-engaged work. Comments on bureaucracy are included in the discussion of **power**, below.

Understanding of power in this university-community partnership.

UMBC Partners expressed respect for the Community Fellows' expertise and leadership in their respective projects. They spoke of their own roles as providing support and occasional ideas.

Community Fellows are the experts.

> *"The Field School gives that opportunity of treating our fellows with the respect that they deserve as experts in their given field or projects. And I think having a university take that approach with a community … is really powerful…"*
>
> *"This is [Community Partner's] project and we just want to make sure that [Community Partner] can realize out of it what [Community Partner] wants."*

Bureaucracy is unavoidable.

"This type of work can often be extractive, and the power resides with, in this case, the university who got the grant funding, and the University's infrastructure and processes end up directing how people get paid and the timeframe in which the work is accomplished. But I think just the nature of this type of grant-making process and UMBC as a state institution, which we know is incredibly bureaucratic, there's just a kind of built-in power dynamic that I think is impossible to completely get rid of."

"We are [inaudible] this bureaucracy, which is necessary, you know, to be this conduit. I think especially the folks that are involved with the Field School really seem to be committed to making that as transparent and not as much of a barrier for having this direct partnership with the community."

UMBC Partners are committed to mutual benefit in these projects.

"I am very committed to making sure that there is a reciprocal benefit to our partners in the community, and if that is not there, then I don't think we should be there. You know, I think they really need to be benefiting. It needs to be a two-way street."

Power shows up in everything; thinking about power is unavoidable.

"I think about like where we have our meetings, like are they places that are easy for people to get to? Are they places that feel comfortable for someone for whom Higher Ed is not a home?"

"I think that even though most of us like have previous relationships with the people we're working, even this relationship when there's money involved. Even if we're not managing it directly creates some kind of sense that they need to report to us. And I think that that's, like, unavoidable. I feel that my relationship [with the Community Fellow] previous to this has been mediated by other things. And then you can see how bringing some kind of institution or program, even if it's trying to do the opposite, I think that there's going to be some tension there that might need to be just addressed

… I think that like power is kind of like an endless haunting presence when we are doing this kind of like work, and it needs to be addressed."

How this Baltimore Field School experience will benefit UMBC.

As noted above, UMBC partners referred to their work as "siloed" and "isolating," but they believe that BFS is helping to build a community of scholars who support community-engaged work.

Building community.

"I've been doing community work for a long time, and it often felt like lonely and isolating and really hard sometimes that I didn't have people to talk to about that. And then, all of a sudden, there was this community of people who were talking about these things and being connected to each other. So, I think it is helping to build this momentum for really good, ethically grounded, community-engaged work and building a community of people, of scholars, of staff who know how to support that, of engaging students in that work…"

"One of the benefits of that, beyond a force normalizing reciprocity in community-engaged research, and also making visible like this type of work as not the work of one department or one researcher, but it's really just like a network of people who are making this type of work possible. And that, of course, includes community members."

BFS projects are beneficial for students and their education.

"I think that programing which will include students is going to be very beneficial … The model of which was bringing in intellectual lecturers, people who often are only in a university setting or thought of in this sort of more rarefied world to come in and have really robust discussions with people in [this community] … Having students just know more about the project [Community Partner] did and then all of the sort of ideas and questions that come after that will be really beneficial for just thinking about how their education isn't just restricted to the university classroom and that there is like real community impact and political engagement involved that can affect everyday lives …"

"This is a great opportunity for my students. I actually embed this project in my syllabus and the students are working … on this and will actually be going out into the community."

One UMBC partner hopes believes the BFS experience will support the recruitment and retention of students from communities that are not well-represented at UMBC.

"I think that what came to mind when you asked the question was about the issue of recruitment and retention, specifically of students [from this community] and faculty and staff at UMBC … Part of what I'm interested in doing is [to] create a community."

What UMBC Partners need.

Opportunities to talk, troubleshoot, share skills, and offer support.

"I think particularly having these dyads of community university people coming together, those relationships are really challenging … We're used to [a] very strict agenda … like staying on task and what we need to do, and that can cause a rub when you're working with a community partner that's used to hustling for every dollar that they bring in and having to try 15 different things out to see like what gets funding … Using this group as a way to talk about how we make it work and how we make it work really well for the university people, for the partners, how we come out of these projects feeling and being successful and also still friends at the end of it."

"More opportunities for the group to kind of come together and share our skills and discuss how we can be in service to each other, as well."

"Sharing resources and knowledge … we need to, to find ways of reimagining research and collaboration with communities in a way that understands the challenges that we're having … All those things that are happening really need to inform the way we do research and how we can adopt our tools and methods … I think that we have a responsibility and as an institution, we need also to update maybe what it means to actually support and collaborate with communities, which in some cases I think that it means showing up before like we even like think about projects."

UMBC Partners need support from the UMBC, not just from Baltimore Field School.

"The Field School's only happening because we have outside funding. The funding for this isn't coming from the university. So, it's really hard to imagine that without that support that this type of work would go on."

"The pressure of finding the new shiny thing. And I think that it's across the university, and it's either a building or a new project. There's like a lot of pressure of moving fast, and that goes like against this slow pace of what these type of projects require."

"I feel like that's the story of our lives, you know? It's easier to get the resources together and muster the force for the initial project. And then once that's over with, like, how do you keep that going while you have all the other wheels spinning is really difficult. So, if the question is what ways could be supported, I think, just from a very practical level, it's the ongoing money, the ongoing staffing, the ongoing support from the university that this work is valuable…"

"I think that if UMBC is going to be vital and relevant in the long term, that work needs to be really central to what we're putting money into."

UMBC Partners emphasized "continuing to show up."

"They kind of focused on [Baltimore City] a bit when the Uprising happened, as you know, everyone did. That was the new trendy thing. And I was like, okay, who's still going to be here? You know, however many years later?"

"It's also a case of continuing to show up. I think as we build these relationships, how we sustain them over time beyond the initial projects that we put together … It presents challenges after a while because you have so many things going on that are sustaining. It's a challenge sometimes to stay focused on these long-term partnerships."

Is there anything about yourself, your work, Baltimore, or other relevant information that you would like to be included for reflection in this report?

This was the final question in every focus group, and answers ranged from very broad to very specific. Specifics are included at the evaluator's discretion, as in one case, a Community Fellow wanted to take this opportunity to honor and credit their co-Fellow, who was unable to participate in a focus group.

"I believe that the only way we're going to get any modicum of liberation, freedom, sovereignty, whatever we're striving for, it's going to be through the deep relationships and the transformative power of those relationships. And so, because that's a bedrock for [our organization], I think it's important to acknowledge that, that this process at least is attempting to do that. I think if there's a role for white institutions to help us in our struggles toward liberation, that's one of the ways that we can do that … I want to have a good time. Well, I think we're going to have a good time." –
Community Fellow

"I've been in conversation with several people around the unique nature of Baltimore and where we are now, and I know Baltimore has so many, so many issues, and it's felt for a while that there's been this denial on the level of the electeds, this denial of what's really happening in our city. And I think we're at a point now where people are really starting to acknowledge that there is—for us to move forward—there has to be a holistic healing. We've been talking about 'trauma-informed' … and it's been a very limited sense that it's discussed … We grab on to these trendy words. And trauma is real. And I believe in trauma-informed care, but we also have to speak the language of the people too. And people understand what 'healing' means. People understand what 'spiritual warfare' is, you know, and when you start speaking the language of the people, then you include them, and you give them reason to listen and start engaging … I wish our city could just be a little bit more candid and a lot more transparent and start speaking the language of the people so that we can start moving forward, because our city is really is dying in a lot of ways, while at the same time, there's still so much potential and room for revitalization." – Community Fellow

"I got involved in this when I was in an Ethnic Studies course at UC Riverside and Eddie Conway called in from Jessup Prison, and he called in to Riverside and lectured there for an hour in front of 300 students. And he had 20-minute increments to call, and he did it. And he was released in 2014 after serving 45 years in prison. He was a political prisoner. And he organized throughout the majority of that time, and he was released under the Unger case that released 200 people that should have been released 32 years prior. And he's the one who organized this [project] ... And so, not only did he spend that amount of time in prison organizing, but when he was released, he went into the community and started organizing in Gilmor Homes, which has the highest incarceration rate in in Maryland. And also, where Freddie Gray was arrested. And so, he was there and organizing even after. He could have done other things, you know, many other things. And he provided me with a job, my dream job to do this. So, this this project is really about how political prisoners inspired people to organize in the community. And there's many people in there right now exactly like him talking about how we need to come together and deal with climate change, how they're talking about black masculinity, having these conversations, you know? Because so many so much of the time, people who are incarcerated are represented in a certain way and they're not represented as feminists ... in certain circles, there is a lot of discussion around that. So yeah, so I would sum it up in that way--how political prisoners inspire people to organize in community. And I'm just humbled to be part of this and sharing space with everybody else." – Community Fellow

"And obviously at a university there's a bit more flexibility in terms of funding and ... I'm at a place where I want to use what I have access to, use my privilege for good. And that's kind of something I've been craving is, I always think about, does my job matter? What I do every day, does it matter? And doing stuff like that and being able to connect [Community Fellow] to UMBC I think is something I'm very proud of." – UMBC Partner

"For me, it'd be interesting to think about research practices during two ongoing pandemics. I think that'd be a good conversation. And I think there's pressure to stop talking about that ... It's related to accessibility because everyone—not only because of the pandemic but for different reasons—can have any type of like health issue at any time. And if it's not them, it's their families. And I know that that causes a lot of anxiety, especially for

community members, especially related like to specific things like specific events or specific timelines ... I would like to see a more explicit conversation, because I think that while I really appreciate that the Baltimore Field School has never been about output, or about hard deadlines, or about showing off what we do, the question of power is, it's always there. So not everyone feels comfortable bringing up that they're sick or they don't feel comfortable participating in things in person. So, I think that the more we normalize productivity or showing up over community care, then we are actually not necessarily practicing the values that we say we are." – UMBC Partner

"Speaking for myself and my staff, everyone is at a level of burnout that makes it very hard to just do your everyday work. And I'm sure that the communities that we're working with are facing the same, you know, trauma and burnout that we are. So maybe just as a pre-evaluation going into it with the sort of grace and knowledge that everybody has been struggling." – UMBC Partner

Conclusions

- Baltimore Field School 2.0 Community Fellows and UMBC Partners expressed confidence in the values and mission of the Baltimore Field School. While the relationship in each university-community dyad was established before their participation in BFS 2.0, participants expect that BFS 2.0 will strengthen these connections.
- BFS 2.0 has addressed conclusions and recommendations presented in the evaluation of the Baltimore Field School Pilot Program (2022) by increasing informal gathering opportunities. This has been accomplished mainly by publicizing and supporting Community Fellows' events as ways to celebrate one another's work.
- In this preliminary evaluation of BFS 2.0, UMBC Partners did not use the terms "informal" or "formal" to describe meeting options but stated that they want more opportunities to "troubleshoot," share skills, and offer support.
- UMBC Partners demonstrated respect and trust in Community Fellows' expertise, leadership, and control of their projects. They perceive their own roles to be

supportive for the Fellows, organizations, and respective communities while they learn from the work.

▪ Community Fellows demonstrated more confidence in how the Baltimore Field School could support their organizations in serving their communities, and they demonstrated more confidence in the shift of power from the university to the community. UMBC Partners conveyed more concern over bureaucracy and details such as meeting locations that may represent a power imbalance in these university-community partnerships.

Recommendations

1. **Plan a monthly or bi-monthly virtual meeting for Baltimore Field School Fellows and Partners.** Participants in BFS 2.0 look forward to establishing deeper relationships and learning from others' expertise. Using an optional, drop-in format with a loosely planned agenda can offer space for Fellows and Partners to talk through issues, offer support, and get to know one another. Include the Project Evaluator to document concerns and successes for process evaluation.
2. **Plan several BFS meetings on campus.** UMBC Partners were more likely to express concern that meetings on campus would violate a balance of power in these partnerships. However, Community Fellows expressed interest in campus resources. Inviting Community Fellows to campus for BFS meetings or tours of facilities and resources may help them to further visualize and articulate the specifics of how the Baltimore Field School can be of service.
3. **Lead meetings on campus for UMBC Partners to discuss their roles and work.** As BFS 2.0 is encouraging informal gathering at community events, this cohort of UMBC Partners also craves opportunities to troubleshoot and share skills. These meetings can offer both in-person and virtual options.
4. **Schedule a Baltimore Field School newsletter that all participants can expect at the same time every month.** A "newsletter" can be a straightforward email of updates, with an invitation for participants to contribute community events, project successes, and calls for support.

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Reference

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Mahdi, T. C. (2022). *The Baltimore Field School Pilot Evaluation Report*. University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Appendix A

Focus Group and Interview Questions

Questions asked in focus groups with Baltimore Field School Community Fellows:

1. How do you expect your experience with the Baltimore Field School to serve the needs of your organization?
2. What are your personal, individual goals for working with the Baltimore Field School?
3. What is your perception of UMBC and its work with communities in Baltimore?
4. What is your understanding of the humanities and how the Baltimore Field School is centering the humanities in its work?
5. What is your understanding of power in this university-community partnership?
6. What type of support would you like to see or receive from other fellows?
7. The pre-evaluation report is one way to get community fellows and their UMBC partners on the same page as they begin their work together. Is there anything about yourself, your organization, Baltimore, or other relevant information that you would like to be included for reflection in this report?

Questions asked in focus groups with UMBC Partners:

1. What are your personal, individual goals for working with the Baltimore Field School?
2. What is your understanding of the humanities and how the Baltimore Field School is centering the humanities in its work?
3. What is your perception of UMBC and its work with communities in Baltimore?
4. How do you expect your experience with the Baltimore Field School to benefit UMBC?
5. What is your understanding of power in this university-community partnership?
6. What type of support would you like to see or receive from other fellows?
7. The pre-evaluation report is one way to get community fellows and their UMBC partners on the same page as they begin their work together. Is there anything about yourself, your work, Baltimore, or other relevant information that you would like to be included for reflection in this report?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Document Sent to Program Participants

Informed Consent – Project Evaluation

Project: Baltimore Field School (BFS) 2.0: Undoing & Doing Anew in Public Humanities at UMBC

Thank you for your willingness to contribute to the evaluation of the Baltimore Field School 2.0 project. By completing the evaluation survey and participating in a focus group, you give your consent to have the information you provide utilized for the evaluation of the Baltimore Field School (BFS) 2.0 project. The information you share will be used only for the purposes of evaluating this project.

Purpose:
As a member of the Baltimore Field School 2.0 Cohort 2022-2023, you are invited to contribute to the evaluation of this program by completing a survey and participating in a focus group. The purpose of this evaluation is to collect information on how participants experience this program, how well this project meets its stated goals, and how aspects of the program may be further tailored to meet the needs of future participants. The results of this evaluation will be provided in a report to the project funders, American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS); Baltimore Field School principal investigators, community partners, program manager, and participants; and utilized for teaching and informational purposes.

Procedures:
For this evaluation, you are invited to complete a survey and to participate in a focus group. The survey is provided through Google Forms. Focus groups will be conducted and recorded through the Zoom.us internet application and will last approximately one hour. Audio and video will be recorded; participants are not required to be on camera during the focus groups.

Risks:
Your participation in a survey and a focus group for this evaluation may cause minimal stress of finding and making the required time to do so. However, this is expected to be the extent of your discomfort in participation.

Benefits:
Your participation in this evaluation provides you the chance to reflect upon and evaluate your experience with the Baltimore Field School. Your participation in a focus group will allow you to talk about your experience with other participants. Providing your opinions and ideas for this evaluation will facilitate community building and information sharing among current and future

participants of Baltimore Field School and contribute toward the project goal of developing ethical humanities research and teaching in Baltimore and cities like it.

<u>Confidentiality:</u>
Your name, identifying information, your survey responses, and information you provide during the focus group will be kept confidential. Only the program evaluator, Tahira Mahdi, will have access to survey and focus group data, including your opinions and identifying information. The evaluation report will serve the purpose of providing the opinions and ideas of the Baltimore Field School 2.0 Community Fellows and their UMBC partners as groups. Any quotes taken from written survey responses or recorded focus group responses will be labeled only by role, i.e., whether the respondent is a community fellow or UMBC partner, and in those instances, only when relevant to the results and recommendations of the evaluation report.

The audio-visual recording of the focus groups and the data from the Google form survey will be kept on the password-protected device of the program evaluator, Tahira Mahdi. The files will be deleted after the final evaluation report has been submitted to and accepted by Baltimore Field School principal investigators and funder, ACLS.

<u>Voluntary Participation:</u>
Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the focus group at any time or decide not to discuss certain topics. Your withdrawal from this evaluation will not negatively impact your status with the Baltimore Field School, partner organizations, or institutions related to the project.

<u>Contact:</u>
If you have any questions or concerns regarding the evaluation of the Baltimore Field School, please email Tahira Mahdi, Ph.D., program evaluator, at tahira.mahdi@gmail.com or call 240-416-6622.