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March 31, 2023

Dr. Marion Ross Fedrick, President  
Albany State University  
504 College Drive  
Albany, GA 31705

Re: Proposed Public and African American History Major

Dear President Fedrick:

On behalf of the National Council on Public History (NCPH) Board of Directors, we are writing to express support for the Public and African American History Major proposed by the History faculty at Albany State University (ASU). ASU is well positioned to train promising public historians and to do excellent public history by virtue of its powerful connections to African American history. As proposed, the major in Public and African American History promises to use resources distinct to the ASU campus to prepare students for work of significance to the larger field.

The first benefit of a Public History Major at ASU is its campus connection to the Albany Movement, an historic Civil Rights protest started by ASU students in 1961 that garnered national attention. By building on the historical roots of the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s, the Oral History component of the Public History track will focus on collecting, digitizing, and recording the voices of people involved in the Albany Movement. Time is of the essence for the preservation of this historic event, as many of the surviving participants are advancing in age. The Oral History component of the Public History track will allow modern-day students to learn about ASU students' past struggles for equality as well as provide support for engaging with new digital technologies that will make current ASU students competitive on a national, as well as global, job market.

The historic cemetery on ASU's campus, "Pone's Aiding Society Cemetery," is a second benefit to the proposed Public and African American History Major. Cemetery preservation is a very specialized skill desperately needed across the nation, especially with the unearthing of unofficial Black burial grounds and the confusion that comes into play with both local and federal responses. The History Faculty is in the process of establishing connections for resources and trainings with the Georgia



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State Historic Preservation Office and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training to offer students the most up-to-date scholarship and preservation technologies for cemetery preservation. Using the on-campus cemetery as a field school would provide ASU students with a foundation for success in cemetery preservation that no other HBCU (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) can offer. The potential to develop courses using multiple pedagogies, from headstone preservation techniques to archival research, will help prepare ASU students for personal and professional success in a very specialized field.

Finally, the most important benefit for both ASU and the Public History field will be the development of a new generation of Black Public History scholars. Diversity is a crucial element of preserving the past and it is important that Public History professionals reflect the cultures and identities of all Americans. The need for a more diverse workforce in the Public History field has been a topic of discussion for many years. The proposed Public and African American History major at ASU would provide Black students with new opportunities to engage with specialized education, to partner with Federal and Local agencies, and to fill the current racial gaps to create a more equitable Public History workforce.

We hope that our support for the proposed Public and African American History program at ASU exemplifies the specific need that this program would fill and how important it would be to the diversity, equity, and inclusion of Black scholars in the Public History field.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Stephanie Rowe'.

Stephanie Rowe  
Executive Director