

FORD FOUNDATION

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FORD FOUNDATION SELECTS EMORY UNIVERSITY FOR \$100,000 GRANT

University participates in national initiative to promote academic freedom and constructive dialogue

New York, NY – December 12, 2005. After a national competition in undergraduate education that drew more than 675 proposals, the Ford Foundation has selected Emory University as one of 27 higher education institutions to receive \$100,000 grants for projects that promote academic freedom and constructive dialogue on campus.

The grants are part of Ford's *Difficult Dialogues* initiative, created in response to reports of growing intolerance and efforts to curb academic freedom at colleges and universities. The goal is to help institutions address this challenge through academic and campus programs that enrich learning, encourage new scholarship and engage students and faculty in constructive dialogue about contentious political, religious, racial and cultural issues.

“Emory University has proposed an innovative plan to explore issues of race by engaging students and faculty in a collective examination of the University’s own history,” said Jorge Balán, a Senior Program Officer at the Ford Foundation. “This has the potential to promote frank and informed discussions about race throughout campus.”

The project will use research and community deliberation to unearth narratives about the complex history of race at Emory. The goal is to give this generation of Emory community members, as well as future generations, shared knowledge of its traditions.

Over the course of the two year initiative, the *Difficult Dialogues* grantees will be invited to share their experiences and ideas at regional conferences coordinated by the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Center will also host a Web-based forum for project directors to share ideas online.

Examples of other projects that will receive funding include: at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, new courses, faculty seminars and campus roundtables on religion and religious conflict; at Queens College in New York, the development of an expanded curriculum for promoting understanding and informed discussion about the conflict in the Middle East; at Mars Hill College in North Carolina, training for faculty and student leaders to foster productive discussions of race, sexual orientation and religion; and a project at Yale University that will examine whether courses about controversial issues increase tolerance and respect for different viewpoints among students.

“Colleges and universities are uniquely suited to expand knowledge, understanding and discussion of controversial issues that affect us all,” said Susan V. Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation. “The selected projects illustrate the thoughtful and creative ways institutions are promoting intellectually rigorous scholarship and open debate that is essential to higher education.”

The Ford Foundation launched *Difficult Dialogues* in April 2005 by inviting proposals from all accredited, degree granting, non-profit institutions with general undergraduate programs. A panel of external higher education experts reviewed the preliminary proposals and selected 136 institutions to submit final proposals.

Difficult Dialogues is part of a broader, \$12 million effort by the Ford Foundation to understand and combat anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of bigotry in the United States and Europe. It builds on the foundation’s history of supporting efforts by colleges and universities to foster more inclusive campus environments and to engage effectively with the growing racial, religious and ethnic diversity of their student bodies.

For more information on the Difficult Dialogues initiative and a complete list of awardees, visit: <http://www.fordfound.org/news/more/dialogues/index.cfm>

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than half a century it has been a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide, guided by its goals of strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty and injustice, promoting international cooperation and advancing human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Russia.

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