

Q0.

UW-GREEN BAY RESEARCH COUNCIL

SUMMER RESEARCH SCHOLAR 2025 APPLICATION

Q1. First Name

Kelly

Q2. Last Name

León

Q3. Personal pronouns (she/her, he/him, they/them - More info: <https://www.mypronouns.org/>)

☒ she/her

☐ he/him

☐ they/them

☐ she/they

☐ he/they

☐ Other

Q4. Project Title

Racially Literate Curriculum Making: Teaching and Learning Truthfulness in Challenging Political Times

Q5. This proposal is requesting funds for:

☐ Travel to conference for scholarly presentation

☐ Purchase/rental of equipment

☐ Copying costs

☐ Travel associated with research and data collection

☐ Human subject payments

- ☒ Data collection, analysis, fabrication, etc.

Q6. Campus Address (Office location, building, department)

Green Bay Campus (A310, MAC, Education)

Q7. Email Address

leonk@uwgb.edu

Q8. Project timeline dates (month/day/year-month/day/year)

May 26th, 2025-August 22nd, 2025

Q9. Faculty Status

- ☐ Full Professor
- ☐ Associate Professor
- ☒ Assistant Professor (tenure-track)

Q10. Budgetary Unit Department Name (e.g. Business, Human Biology, Theatre and Dance, etc)

Education

Q11. Budgetary Unit Chair & Email address

Tim Kaufman (kaufmant@uwgb.edu)

Q12. Budgetary Administrative Department Associate Name and Email Address

Brenda Beck (beckb@uwgb.edu)

Q14. Please upload your Project description (page limit: 5) in PDF format

[Summer research scholar 2025 Project Description \(1\).pdf](#)

202.7KB

application/pdf

Q15. Please upload an Exceeding Scholarly Expectations narrative (page limit: 1) in PDF format

[Exceeding Scholarly Expectations \(1\)\(1\).pdf](#)

59.8KB

application/pdf

Q16. Please upload your Timeline document (page limit 1) in PDF format.

[Timeline \(3\).pdf](#)

36.3KB

application/pdf

Q17. Please upload your Curriculum Vitae or Resume in PDF format

[K. León CV 3-15-25 2 page relevant research.docx \(1\)\(1\).pdf](#)

182.3KB

application/pdf

Q18. Please upload proof of approval from unit chair in PDF format

[Leon Approval Memo \(1\).pdf](#)

28KB

application/pdf

Location Data

Location: ([44.4965](#), [-87.9266](#))

Source: GeoIP Estimation



Exceeding Scholarly Expectations Narrative

According to recent guidance for UWGB Education faculty, when applying for tenure, candidates need four “scholarly products.” One of these must be a peer-reviewed journal article, but the remaining could be generated from other scholarly activities such as peer-reviewed conference presentations, grant-writing, professional development for educators, or even K-12 curriculum development. These expectations are in line with the extensive amount of teaching and service obligations held by faculty in the department. Given these obligations, what I am proposing for the summer, far exceeds what is expected of me in any one academic year.

I have a proven track record of securing funding and working within collaborative research designs with PK-12 educators. My experience working with collectives, both in San Diego and Green Bay, illustrates an approach which gives consequential validity to my research. Built on “critical friendship” (e.g. Baker & Bitto, 2022) and “critical collaborative professional inquiry” (Priestley & Drew, 2019), my role is not just one of researcher, but collaborator. This builds expertise for all involved and provides meaningful opportunities for melding research and practice. As a result, I am able to make meaningful contributions to the field of educational scholarship, but also to the local region. While time-intensive and relational, collaborative research designs are well aligned with our university’s core values of “embracing community-based partnerships” and “collaborative faculty scholarship and innovation.”

In summary, working within funded projects, particularly those stemming from prestigious organizations like the Spencer Foundation are rarely part of the normal expected activity for our unit. Publications stemming from the current project and the chance at securing additional funding via the new application cycle would have a significant impact on my record as I work toward promotion and tenure. Moreover, this grant award would impact not only my scholarship but also contribute to teaching and service because of the nature of the research design.

Racially Literate Curriculum Making: Teaching and Learning *Truthfulness* in Challenging Political Times

Overview

This application seeks to secure funding to support the preparation and proposal writing of a \$75,000 Spencer Foundation Racial Equity Research Grant. As the lead researcher on an existing and in-progress Spencer-funded grant, the aim is to utilize time this summer to analyze findings from the current project, write-up a preliminary report, submit a journal manuscript, and most importantly, apply to the Spencer Foundation through a new application cycle. Building from the current project's insights, the new application will focus on how to broaden and improve racially literate K-12 social studies teaching and learning within the current political climate. The current Spencer project, *Racial Literacy, Capabilities and Curriculum Making (RaLiCaM)* (Spencer Ref No: 202400079) was awarded funds partly for its "ambitious but doable" collaborative research design. It has been exciting to lead this project with local teachers in collaboration with an international education scholar (from the UK). This is part of a research journey which has immense future potential.

Description of Process and Product

The Spencer Foundation's (2025) Racial Equity Research Grants Program supports research projects that "contribute to understanding and disrupting racial inequality in education and work to reimagine generative possibilities to advance educational equity." The current 18-month Spencer project, *RaLiCaM*, was originally granted while I was a PhD candidate in San Diego. Upon my appointment and subsequent decision to begin my tenure track career at UW-Green Bay in the fall of 2024, I convinced the small team of associated researchers to conduct the inquiry here in Green Bay with local educators. Over the course of the 2024-25 academic year, I identified, recruited, and eventually began working with 14 secondary social studies teachers from the Green Bay metro area with the goal of enhancing racially-literate curriculum making. The initial results of the work are promising and for this reason I have

decided to utilize findings from the current project to lay the foundation for an additional project, which aligns with the Spencer Foundation's new call for proposals. Although details remain to be worked out, I anticipate presenting as co-PI on the new project.

This application for UW-Green Bay research funds will enable a number of research-related products. During the first week of the summer, I will be doing a formal analysis of the RaLiCaM data to date, identifying findings which will be the basis for the forthcoming Spencer Foundation proposal. One theme that seems to have emerged from the RaLiCaM project thus far is that of *truthfulness*. The teachers and researchers have collaborated around its significance in relation to racially-literate social studies and have found it to be a powerful concept around which they are able to teach social studies curricula deemed “controversial” (by some). It is hoped that by re-examining interviews, meeting transcripts, and lessons created by the teachers, deeper insight can be developed around themes/concepts, including truthfulness, which can serve as starting points for the new proposal. It seems pertinent, to say the least, that in the context of what is being called *post-truth politics* the educational power of the truthfulness of knowledge - and how this has to be judged - could be a highly significant concept in social studies education. It may also be a concept that has special significance in the achievement of racially literate social studies education in the U.S. more broadly.

Writing grant proposals is time-consuming, but with the financial support of the university, the writing process can be completed in time for the late June deadline. Upon submission of the proposal, the rest of the summer will be spent on drafting the final report of the current RaLiCaM project and writing a high quality journal article for publication.

Connecting my work as a scholar to the local educational ecosystem is important to me. Fortunately, the Spencer Foundation invites projects which “work closely with practitioners or community members” and are encouraging applications which address “current political challenges in k-12 and higher education around diversity, equity, and inclusion.” In the next section, I turn to situating the grant proposal within the field.

Situating the Project within the Field

The aim is for the Spencer Foundation to support the proposed research project, which seeks to build a better understanding of the role of teachers as agentic curriculum makers in the enactment of emancipatory teaching in social studies. Central to the research is the layered concept of *racial literacy* which informs teachers' *knowledge work* in what is called *Future 3* curriculum making (Morgan & Lambert, 2023). Young and Muller's (2010) fundamental distinction between Future 1 and Future 2 curriculum scenarios- neither of which can be considered adequate for serving the needs of high quality, culturally responsive educational encounters- resulted in their call for Future 3 alternatives. The concept was initially developed in Young and Lambert's (2014) collaboration, but it has taken a decade to begin to see its greater potential (See Béneker, Bladh, & Lambert, 2023; McPhail, Pountney, & Wheelahan, 2024).

Front and centre of Future 3 scenarios is enabling knowledge and powerful ways of knowing. The radical implications, not least in relation to how teachers are prepared (actually, how teaching itself is understood) is captured by the following list. Future 3 scenarios in the RaLiCaM project

- ask “who are we teaching?” This is to acknowledge and respect students' lived experiences, aspirations and drive.
- seek to show the “power” of different ways of seeing and thinking (thinking geographically, historically, mathematically etc).
- acknowledge epistemological diversity – that there are different ways of “knowing” the world. For example: recognising that although learning through experience is legitimate, it is different from being taught to see the world as an object of study.
- seek to achieve high levels of epistemic quality, notably by demonstrating the dynamic nature of knowledge development (“how do we know what we claim to know?”).

Teachers involved in the project have embraced the Future 3 concept as a shorthand for high quality teaching - *and* as a way to organize their thinking about how to create lesson sequences with enhanced racial literacy.

The research is participatory, involving the voices of early career teachers, experienced teachers and teacher leaders. The supposition under investigation is that raised levels of racial literacy will enhance teacher agency *and* students' capabilities "to be and to do" - or more simply to find their voices more effectively. According to the "nation's report card" (Schwartz, 2023), deep concerns exist about the health of the social studies in schools and yet "What we've learned in these subjects is part of the fabric of who we are as Americans. They are essential subjects. They are a critical part of a well-rounded education" (ibid, n.p.). In politically charged, post-truth and divisive times, the significance of this iteration of the research is its focus on better understanding how teachers' knowledge work in social studies may engage young people more intelligently and productively with "who we are as Americans."

Building teachers and students' racial literacy involves a body of knowledge about how race and racisms *work* in shaping society, and for social studies teachers this has implications for their curriculum making – specifically their content and pedagogic selections. If we take it as read that a curriculum goal in social studies is to furnish young people with "better explanations," then the task that falls to teachers is to help them make sense of *ways of the world* that result both in racial injustices and forms of resistance to oppression. Better explanations require enhanced racial literacy.

The current Spencer project is almost two-thirds complete and as such, themes have begun to emerge. Complicated by a difficult political landscape for teaching about race/ism, the educators have questioned what it means to teach a truthful version of social studies in today's times. To address this challenge, the next iteration of the project proposes enhanced focus on teachers' engagement with the knowledge dimensions of Future 3 curriculum making.

Contribution to the Professional Development and Research of Applicant

As a new tenure-track faculty member, I am excited at the prospect of building a future-oriented research agenda. Fortunately, the work with which I have been engaged to date coalesces around a set of ideas and research practices that align nicely with the Spencer Foundation's vision for their racial equity grants. My research commitments: a) advance educational and social justice, b) position teachers as agentic professionals, c) focus on marginalized/minoritized students and the quality of education they receive, and d) aim to contribute to the local educational ecosystem *and* the broader field.

My PhD dissertation work examined the curriculum thinking and knowledge work of a working collective, who collaborated to produce locally-relevant Ethnic Studies curricula. I did not just study the collective, but co-facilitated it alongside an Ethnic Studies professor. At the heart of the conceptual framework which guided my inquiry were *Future 3* curriculum scenarios (Lambert, 2024). Future 3 orientations to curriculum restore the responsibilities of teachers as *curriculum makers*, whereby they understand knowledge as contested, dynamic and subject to argument. Future 3 teachers encourage students to judge knowledge claims based on their reliability/dependability and they engage them in *knowledge work*.

Future 3 curriculum scenarios, teachers' knowledge work, curriculum thinking, and a commitment to racial literacy and Ethnic Studies in the social studies are at the core of much of my scholarship to date. Applying for additional funds to support an expansion of this work will no doubt impact on the teachers and communities of NE Wisconsin, aligning to my commitment to collaborative and reciprocal scholarship. Furthermore, an opportunity to engage in another Spencer-funded project will provide an opportunity to expand the empirical base for Future 3 curricula specific to race/ism and the incorporation of different ways of knowing. I am thrilled this research is not happening in some far off place, but right here in the Green Bay metropolitan area.

References

- Béneker, T., Bladh, G., & Lambert, D. (2024). Exploring 'Future three' curriculum scenarios in practice: Learning from the GeoCapabilities project. *The Curriculum Journal*, 35(3), 396-411.
- Lambert, D. (2024, August 22). The potential of knowledge-rich teaching. *Geography Education Research Collective / UK Commission on Geographical Education of the International Geographical Union*. <https://www.gereco.org/tag/david-lambert/>
- McPhail, G., Pountney, R., & Wheelahan, L. (2024). Introduction: Knowledge and the curriculum: new perspectives from social realism. In *Emerging Perspectives from Social Realism on Knowledge and Education* (pp. 3-19). Routledge.
- Morgan, J., & Lambert, D. (2023). *Race, racism and the geography curriculum*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Nussbaum, M., & Sen, A. (Eds.). (1993). *The quality of life*. Clarendon press.
- Schwartz, S. (2023). Reading and math achievement is getting worse, Nation's report card shows. *Education Week*.
- Young, M., Lambert, D., (2014). *Knowledge and the future school: Curriculum and social justice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Young, M., & Muller, J. (2010). Three educational scenarios for the future: Lessons from the sociology of knowledge. *European journal of education*, 45(1), 11-27.

Racially Literate Curriculum Making: Teaching and Learning *Truthfulness* in Challenging Political Times **(Timeline)**

The below timeline includes one-month of intense scholarly activity, followed by report writing and journal article construction, which will occur throughout the remaining summer months.

Time Period	Description of Activity	Marker of Progress (To be completed by the end of the week)
May 26th-May 30th	Analyze data generated throughout the 2024-25 Spencer-funded racial equity research grant to produce initial findings.	Outlined final report with initial findings summarized (Completed final report due October 2025)
June 2nd-June 6th	Begin drafting the new Spencer proposal, identify project personnel for the new application and decide on PI status. Reach out to Research & Grants to ensure compliance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the project • Central Research Question(s) • Project significance • Rationale for the project (summary of relevant literature and conceptual framework which will guide the project) • Description of the proposed research methods
June 9th-June 13 th	Continue drafting the proposal narrative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of participants • Description of data collection instruments and modes of analysis • Description of the research design and context of the study • Descriptions of key constructs and data sources • Procedures for data collection and analysis
June 16th- 20th	Finalize additional components of the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget and budget justification • Project summary and timeline • Appendix on the innovative approach to equity in the research design, project team document
June 23rd-27th	Finalize and proofread the application. Work with Research & Grants.	Racial Equity Research Grant Completed and Submitted to the Spencer Foundation (Due June 30, 2025).
July 7th-31st	Begin drafting a journal article and continue working on final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified journal • Written Introduction • Written Lit Review/ framework • Updated final report
August 1st-22nd	Finalize and submit a journal article.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed journal article submitted

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TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

Social studies education, Geography education, Educational justice, Teacher education/preparation, Curriculum enactment, Ethnic Studies education, Global education

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

4. **León, K.**, Rogers, P., Quezada, R., & Velázquez, S. (2024) A justice-oriented examination of teacher education through the lens of deans' innovations and leadership in schools of education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*. 50(2), 233–249.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2023.2296446>
3. Rogers, P., Quezada, R., **León, K.**, & Velázquez, S (2022). Learning and adaptation during the Covid-19 pandemic: Colleges of education as hubs for leadership and innovation. *Educatio Siglo*, 40 (3).
2. **León, K.** (2021). Cultivating global scholars: The case for geography in California's schools. *Social Studies Review*, 59.
1. Solem, M., Dony, C., Herman, T., **León, K.**, Magdy, A., Nara, A. Ray, W., Rey, S., & Russell, R. (2021). Building educational capacity for inclusive geocomputation: A research-practice partnership in southern California. *Journal of Geography*, 1-8.

INVITED PUBLICATIONS

1. **León, K.** (2023). Beliefs and the Possibility of Agency in Teaching: A Response to the Fall 2023 Issue of Teacher Education Quarterly. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 50 (4), 97-106.

BOOK CHAPTERS

2. **León, K.** (2024). Asset-based geography education: Teaching for and about justice, equity, and inclusion. In S. Bednarz & J. Mitchell (Eds.), *Handbook of geography education*. Springer.
1. Lambert, D. & **León, K.** (2023). The value of geography to an individual's education. In L. Hammond, J. McKendrick, S. Catling, & M. Biddulph (Eds.), *Children, education, and geography: Rethinking intersections*. Routledge.

FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

Lead Researcher, "Racial literacy, Capabilities and Curriculum-making," Spencer Foundation Racial Equity Special Research Grants Program

May 2024- October 2025

Project Description: Under PI, Dr. Edward Olivos, University of Oregon, this co-constructed research project seeks to better understand the role of teachers as curriculum makers in the enactment of emancipatory teaching in social studies with a focus on developing teachers and students' individual and collective capabilities through enhanced racial literacy. \$75,000.

Project Director, University of San Diego, “Ethnic Studies Oral History Editorial Collective and Community Responsive Curriculum Development,” California Subject Matter Project Ethnic Studies Initiative Professional Development Funding

Feb 2023-present

Project Description: With the goal of furthering ethnic studies educators’ abilities to enact community responsive curriculum/pedagogy, this project capitalizes on an existing community partnership which operates in the form of a working Ethnic Studies Oral History Editorial Collective in the San Diego region to develop ES teachers’ ability to develop and enact curriculum. I co-lead its facilitation with Ethnic Studies professor Dr. Jesse Mills. (Year1: \$166,000, Year 2: \$70,000)

FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS UNDER REVIEW

Principal Investigator, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, “Educate AI: Encoding Geography - Scaling Access to GeoAI,” National Science Foundation, Computer Science for All Funding

Sept 2025-2028

Project Description: Four institution-collaboration on a ‘medium’-size, NSF CSforALL project with the aim of scaling up an educational Researcher-Practitioner Partnership (RPP) to improve teachers and students’ capabilities, bridging knowledge of and concepts in computer science and geography through continued development of a culturally-responsive curriculum pathway for geocomputation. \$1,000,000.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Assistant Editor, Teacher Education Quarterly, under Dr. Reyes Quezada (Editor)

2023-present

Responsibilities: Read and select submitted manuscripts for review, shepherd peer review process, provide reviewer/own feedback to authors, conduct post-copyediting final reviews, other work as determined by Editor.

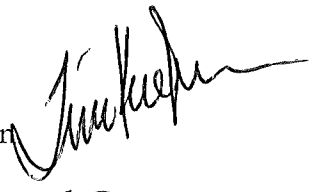
Research Assistant, under Dr. Reyes Quezada, University of San Diego

2020-2024

Responsibilities: Validation and transcription of interviews, qualitative data coding and analysis, review of literature, manuscript preparation and co-authorship, conference preparation and presentation, NVIVO.



To: UW-Green Bay Research Council

From: Tim Kaufman, Director, Professional Program in Education 

Re: Memo of Approval for Summer Work on Racial Equity Research Grant

Date: 13 March 2025

I wish to wholeheartedly support and approve Professor Leon's important work in securing funding for her Spencer Foundation Grant Proposal: *Racially Literate Curriculum Making: Teaching and Learning "Truthfulness" in Challenging Political Times*.

This award of a \$75,000 Spencer Foundation Racial Equity Research Grant would be great for our entire program and University. I can't think of a more important focus than to improve racially literate K-12 social studies teaching within the current political climate. Her focus on the concept of "truthfulness" will have great impact on our students as we strive to prepare the teachers of tomorrow.

She has our full support without reservation.