Request for Proposals: Urban Studies Faculty Position

In order to implement our Strategic Plan, Occidental College seeks to hire a full-time, tenure-track faculty member in the field of urban studies. Position proposals emphasizing scholarly expertise in the cultural, social, natural and historical complexity of Los Angeles are especially welcome. The position proposal process will be open to all departments and disciplines. Departments should submit proposals using revised position proposal guidelines (see attachment) to the Dean by October 15, 2014. Proposals crafted by more than one department are encouraged in order to emphasize a transdisciplinary and/or intercultural approach to teaching and research in urban studies. Occidental’s Strategic Plan states:

Our location in Southern California provides Occidental College with unmatched cultural and natural resources. The city of Los Angeles is one of the most dynamic metropolitan environments in the world and is an unparalleled place to study the intersection of the natural and cultural spheres. A nexus of immense creativity, diversity, and complexity, Los Angeles is also a place where the world’s opportunities and problems are played out on a daily basis. We will significantly increase the advantage of our location by creating additional partnerships and connections with various Los Angeles institutions and organizations, as well as by providing our students with internships that lead to successful careers, and by providing access to leading artists, activists, scientists, and political and business leaders who live and work here.

As a liberal arts college, we want our students to view cities – and most especially Los Angeles – from a broad range of scholarly perspectives. Scholar-teachers from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences will offer our students new ways of thinking about Los Angeles as one of a number of global centers that are increasingly porous, heterogeneous, and transcultural. We envision this position as one drawing a faculty pool from a wide range of disciplines, including architectural history, literary and cultural studies, history, cultural anthropology, economics, sociology, environmental science, geography, and urban planning. We are particularly interested in proposals that would frame a position in urban studies as one that links the history and present of Los Angeles to older cities in the US and Europe, while at the same time considering the reality of Los Angeles’ position on the Pacific Rim, and its proximity to Latin America.

This new faculty position in Urban Studies will strengthen and enhance the College’s curricular focus on cities like Los Angeles, and its emerging investment in scholarship and teaching about local and global urban environments and historical contexts. The new faculty member might conduct research and teach courses that address a wide range of topics and issues, including but not limited to the following:

- Cities as contested social, political, and symbolic spaces.
- Cities and demographic, cultural, and linguistic diversity.
- Cities as cultural organisms, that shape and are shaped by creative practices, including the visual arts, architecture, music, theater, fiction, film and other communicative media.
- Cities as networks of nature, culture, and the built environment.
Cities as sites of institutional complexity and contestation, whether in terms of urban labor markets, immigration policy, municipal politics, or city planning.

Cities as places that shape and are shaped by a wide range of institutions and organizations, including those in the fields of education, criminal justice, business, law, transportation, and public health.

Cities as nodes within a broad array of global cultural, political and environmental innovations and practices.

Using the city-form as a focal point for teaching and research, we want our students to engage with the myriad ways that society may provide for a more humane, equitable, nuanced, and historically sensitive urban future. With Occidental’s demonstrated commitment to community-based teaching and research, we hope that this new faculty member will be able to help students find ways to connect to the city we live in, and to other urban sites across the Pacific Rim and/or Latin America. Through faculty mentorship, and the possibility of broader campus leadership around the theory and practice of urban studies broadly defined, we envision this new faculty hire as helping to connect our students to the incredible complexity, diversity, and vibrancy of Los Angeles and/or other urban centers across the globe.