Fondren Fellows

Project Title Computing Cultural Heritage: Processing Physical and Born-digital Data in the White House Scientists Archive

Brief Summary:

This project will organize and preserve tens of thousands of records related to the history of U.S. presidential advisors and civil servants. Fondren Fellows will curate, digitize, and make accessible records, oral histories, and audio and visual materials into the White House Scientists Archive, an online collection housed at Rice University's Woodson Research Center in Fondren Library.

Project Description:

This project will significantly expand the White House Scientists Archive and facilitate the use of the collection by the research community. The project has three primary goals: 1.) build on 2024-25 Fondren Fellows work to employ the developed workflow to process collected born-digital records; 2.) organize newly donated materials and oral histories from Neal Lane and other presidential science advisors; and 3.) facilitate complementary research projects studying the history of U.S. federal science policy.

The White House Scientists Archive's is the nation's singular resource for understanding the history of scientists serving as policy advisors and policy practitioners inside the federal government. As the importance of civil service related to science and engineering is increasingly

questioned and jeopardized through recent executive actions, documenting the role of scientists in public policymaking has never been more important. The project's scope of work is feasible within the 2025-26 academic year, given prior work of previous Fondren Fellow mentors and mentees and the support of Fondren Liaisons Ying Jin and Sean Smith.

Outline the key tasks that the Fondren Fellow(s) would work on.
Fellow will be responsible for curating and digitizing papers and audio and visual materials donated by Neal Lane over the past calendar year, currently stored at the Baker Institute.

What qualifications would you expect from students working on this project?
No experience required

What would students learn through their participation in this project?
- Develop an advanced familiarity with the history of US science policy and experience in the library and information sciences.
- Develop critical communication skills through presentations and writing projects associated with the project.