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What Is Lexington?

Video Challenge from the Gaines Center By Whitney Hale

Lexington is ... ? That's what University of Kentucky junior and Gaines Fellow James Chapman is asking his fellow Lexingtonians. As part of his jury project, Chapman has launched the Lexington Video Challenge, an online video contest that asks citizens of Lexington, or anyone with an interest in the community, to create a video that completes the statement, "Lexington is..." and post it on YouTube for public viewing and commentary.

The UK Gaines Fellow hopes this new video contest will organically create a brand for the city of Lexington. "Lexington Video Challenge is designed to help the city create a conversation about itself and to help Lexingtonians decide what it means to live here," said Chapman.

Lexington Video Challenge video submissions may come in any style or format the creator wants, from a monologue to a more creative explanation of what Lexington means, and should not go longer than three minutes in length. Videos must be in English or have English subtitles. When uploading the video, contestants should include the following information in the YouTube branding box: the contestant's YouTube account name; the contestant's real name; the name of the video; and a brief description of the video. Video submissions cannot contain profanity, explicit sexual material, graphic violence, appeals to violence, or commercial promotion. Additionally, submissions should not contain material that might be considered abusive, inflammatory or disrespectful to other groups or individuals. Once a video submission has been uploaded to YouTube, the video's creator should send an e-mail to notify the contest at lexingtonvideochallenge@gmail.com; the e-mail should include the applicant's YouTube user name, the name of your video and the video URL. Submissions for the Lexington Video Challenge will be accepted through 11:59:59 EST, Sunday, Jan. 31, 2010, to the contest's YouTube channel at youtube.com/lexvideochallenge.

Chapman, who is pursuing majors in political science and international studies at UK, came up with the idea for his jury project as a result of his summer internship in Washington, D.C., with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security in the U.S. Department of State. In the State Department's recent attempts to reach out and connect with peoples of all countries, they created a new pro-



Gaines Fellow James Chapman wants to "help the city create a conversation about itself and to help Lexingtonians decide what it means to live here."

gram called the Democracy Video Challenge (DVC), which summoned people everywhere throughout the world to create a video that completes the phrase, "Democracy is..." The goal of DVC was to create a global dialogue about the nature of democracy and to urge citizens of nations with limited freedom to begin the same conversation within their countries and potentially create a grassroots movement to demand democracy. The winners of the inaugural competition came from Zambia, Philippines, Poland, Nepal, United Arab Emirates and Brazil.

"Submissions came from literally all corners of the world, from Australia to Iran and from Russia to Chile," noted Chapman. "The first competition succeeded by all measures. At its most basic, my project takes these ideas and applies them to the city of Lexington. An open and honest assessment of Lexington's strengths and weaknesses is needed, and it needs to come from citizens."

An independent group will select the top 10 finalists' video submissions to the Lexington Video Challenge on Feb. 15, 2010. These videos will then be subjected to an online, public vote to choose the best response. Voting will run from Feb. 16 to 28,

2010. The Lexington Video Challenge winner will be announced March 2, 2010.

"I am excited to connect with Lexington's community outside of the immediate UK campus," says Chapman. "I am particularly keen to see the results of social media outreach to a community to allow its members to

connect with one another, exchange ideas, and create a dialogue that will lead to measurable and noticeable results."

Chapman's jury project is part of his John R. and Joan B. Gaines Fellowship in the Humanities. The focus of a Gaines Fellow's jury project is local and immediate: the conception and presentation of a project that might enhance the civic culture of Lexington or the Fellow's hometown. Junior Fellows work on their jury projects for several months, making final proposals in the middle of their spring semester. ■

To find Lexington Video Challenge online, visit the contest's Facebook page at facebook.com/pages/Lexington-Video-Challenge, the YouTube channel at youtube.com/lexvideochallenge and the Twitter account at twitter.com/lexvidchallenge. The official rules of the contest can be found on its Facebook page or email lexingtonvideochallenge@gmail.com.