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Xavier University of Louisiana Professor Dr. Kim Vaz-Deville Selected for Harvard Radcliffe Institute Fellowship

New Orleans, La – Xavier University of Louisiana, approaching 100 years of excellently educating the next generation of change-makers, has a long history of elevating its faculty through fervent support and encouragement. Bestowed with a mission to create a more just and humane society by St. Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Xavier has long been blessed with dedicated faculty who use their research and expertise to improve the world. Now, in recognition of her outstanding academic contributions, Xavier Professor of Education Dr. Kim Vaz-Deville has been named a member of the prestigious Harvard Radcliffe Institute’s 2023–2024 fellowship class. Dr. Vaz-Deville’s contributions exemplify Xavier’s mission, recognized by the fellowship as an exceptional professional whose work impacts her field and society.

“This year’s cohort promises, once again, to accomplish incredible things. We have outstanding fellows with expertise in a wide range of fields and many are grappling with some of the most urgent challenges facing humanity,” said Tomiko Brown-Nagin, dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Daniel P.S. Paul Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard Law School, and professor of history in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The Radcliffe fellowship offers scholars in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, arts, and other distinguished professions a rare chance to pursue ambitious projects in a vibrant interdisciplinary setting amid Harvard’s resources.

During her Radcliffe fellowship, Dr. Vaz-Deville will prepare a book titled, “The Art of Resistance: Sacred Visual Creations of New Orleans’ African American Mardi Gras Maskers.” The book chronicles the story of maskers informed by spiritual practices outside mainstream Christianity who expand traditional Black masking subject matter. It will draw on a decade of ethnographic and participant observation, chronicling expansions to traditional Black masking

subject matter designed to produce awareness among revelers of their community's African and Afro-Caribbean heritage and shared global struggles.

"Being a Harvard Radcliffe Institute fellow offers an unmatched opportunity to read, reflect, and write in an intellectually rich atmosphere," said Dr. Vaz Deville. "This environment is conducive to writing a book on Black masking traditions as the visual and performative practices are those that engage in an extensive dialogue with the systems of slavery, segregation, urban renewal, carceral and extraction economies, disaster capitalism in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the COVID-19 pandemic, and contemporary systemic racism, classism, and sexism."

The fellowship supports Dr. Vaz-Deville's work at Xavier, allowing her to return with fresh perspectives, alternative interpretations, and novel insights to apply to humanities projects with Xavier's students, faculty, staff, and the community.

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.

Established in 1925, by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African American and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (2,749 undergraduates and 849 graduates) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.xula.edu or contact Regi Reyes at (504) 520-5425 or rreyes@xula.edu.

About Harvard Radcliffe Institute

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University—also known as Harvard Radcliffe Institute—is one of the world's leading centers for interdisciplinary exploration. We bring students, scholars, artists, and practitioners together to pursue curiosity-driven research, expand human understanding, and grapple with questions that demand insight from across disciplines. For more information, visit www.radcliffe.harvard.edu.