

BLAFFER

FY 2012 SFAC Request

1. Executive Summary

Mission and means of accomplishing goals; justification of Blaffer Art Museum's student fees allocation in terms of student benefits.

As the Art Museum of the University of Houston, Blaffer's mission is to serve as a resource for the exploration of visual art and contemporary culture for the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Houston and the community at large; to extend the University's educational and scholarly programs to the people of Houston; to develop future artists, arts professionals, and arts audiences; to sponsor a spirit of investigation, collaboration, and dialogue that broadens art interest in the University and the region; and to provide daring exhibitions and unique educational programs that nurture creativity, inspire independent thinking, and change lives. The museum accomplishes this mission through many activities that involve UH students, including, but not limited to:

- The presentation and origination of exhibitions and publications of the highest aesthetic caliber, coordinated with participation from a corps of student employees;
- Lectures, tours, and performances by visiting artists and scholars, free and open to the public;
- Educational outreach programs for predominantly high-school aged youth and up, guided by some highly trained, paid UH students from various backgrounds, such as Art/Art History and Education;
- Formal internship program where students can receive credit hours for their work;
- **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and **Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition.**

Blaffer Art Museum reaches the larger population of university students through student outreach volunteers; paid and unpaid internships to learn museum practices; curricular connections guided by their professors within the museum in such areas as Architecture, Philosophy, Education, and English; hands-on teaching experience for educators-in-training; and through the opportunity to explore ideas through visual art.

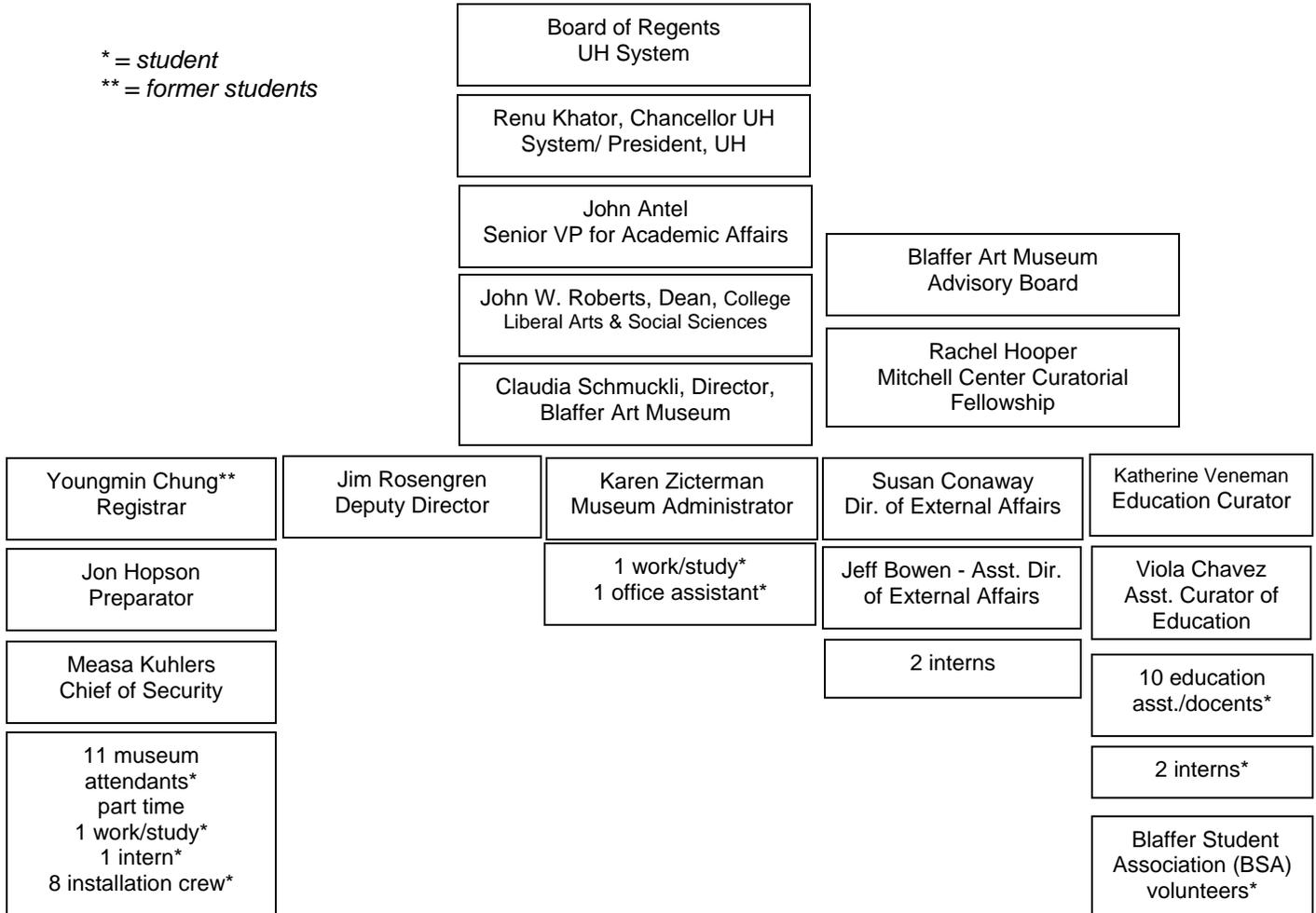
One significant aspect of the museum's service to University students is via the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and **Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition**. These exciting annual events bring in friends, family, and audiences especially interested in seeing the next generation of rising stars from the UH program. The reputation of UH Fine Arts graduates is local, national, and international in scope; and therefore these debut exhibitions have great popular appeal to both the UH community of students, faculty, and staff, as well as to the greater Houston community. Students in the School of Art benefit from Blaffer's professional museum staff in that they work as a team to realize their projects.

Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$17,800 in base support and a \$2,200 one-time allocation in support of additional efforts of the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)* and other student-related programming. This is the same base amount that was given to the museum last fiscal year. Tentative upcoming exhibition dates are December 3-17, 2011 for the **2011 School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and April 23-May 14, 2012 for the **2012 Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition**. These dates are tentative because the museum is undergoing much-needed renovations during the summer and fall of 2011.

2. Organization Chart

Blaffer Art Museum currently employs 37 students as docents; installation crew; curatorial, marketing, development, and education work-study assistants/interns; as well as museum attendants. The student employees provide invaluable assistance and gain employment experience and/or professional development at Blaffer.

* = student
 ** = former students



3. Objectives provided with SFAC 2010 request: success, changes in objectives, new objectives, and rationale.



2010 MFA graduate student Geoff Hippenstiel's work on view at Blaffer.

For FY10, Blaffer Art Museum set objectives to present and promote the Student and Masters of Fine Arts Thesis exhibitions to help provide a professional, high caliber experience for UH emerging artists and art students. In addition to an attractive, professional presentation, SFAC funds supported promotion on campus via production of invitations, flyers and advertisements; signage on campus; *Brown Bag Tour* lunchtime presentations, which are free and open to the public; and a quality brochure on the artists and works featured in the MFA Exhibition, which is provided to the

graduates as they begin their professional careers, as well as distributed to the general public. The School of Art's "Open Studios" event coincided with the Student show opening, as well.

For the fourth year, Blaffer Art Museum staff collaborated with the junior graphic design spring semester class and Professor Cheryl Beckett, to produce exhibition promotional materials and a 4-color brochure for the MFA exhibition, which resulted in an attractive graphic package that included invitations, posters, banners, advertisements, and much more. Each student was asked to create a promotional package as part of a competition. Blaffer staff and Professor Beckett then selected the "winning" student to complete the project, although all students received credit for their work. Blaffer plans to continue this collaboration as a regular part of the MFA program in the future, with the hope of incorporating the annual student exhibition materials as part of each fall semester as well.

During the run of the exhibition, the MFA candidates also spoke about their work at the *Brown Bag Tours* to share information with an audience comprised of both members of the campus population and the community at large, providing graduates with the opportunity to practice their public speaking and presentation skills.

In FY10 KUH 88.7 FM was again secured for media sponsorship, reaching 250,000+ listeners per week. Advertisements were also placed in the *Daily Cougar*, *Houston Press*, and *Gallery Guide*. We are pleased to report that the most recent MFA and Student Exhibitions drew a combined 3,770 visitors, about 100 more than last season. And we believe that with the help of our student outreach committee, the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)* will help to increase that number to nearly 4,000 in the season ahead.

The *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)* was formed in late 2005 to create awareness of Blaffer exhibitions, events, and educational outreach programs while creating and implementing new endeavors in collaboration with its members and the Blaffer staff. *BSA* strives to unite students by building a community that supports the arts and inspires creative enterprise, and *BSA* welcomes and encourages involvement from students in all disciplines.

The *BSA* began with a team of leaders who together created a logo, outlined its mission, and put into practice a plan to create awareness of Blaffer on campus. Each officer of the



Participants in the fall 2010 *Red Block Bash*.

BSA is responsible for specific duties and collaboratively maintaining the group's goals. Through the *BSA*, students promote Blaffer through participating in campus events; distributing announcements and invitations to students; and brainstorming on ideas to attract and reach the campus population with evolving programs, workshops, and events. *BSA* regularly participates in campus events including Leadership Luncheons; Frontier Fiesta, Cougar Preview, UH Football tailgating booths, and the *BSA's* own *Red*

Block Bash, a twice-annual welcome back event held in the courtyard of the Fine Arts Building.

The *Red Block Bash* is the largest, most significant event on the *BSA's* calendar, a half day-long celebration that welcomes students to campus during each semester. The Bash is held in the Fine Arts courtyard adjacent to the museum where visitors are invited to view the current exhibition and to take part in a series of activities both inside and outside of the museum. At the spring 2010 bash 184 students participated in activities including a collaborative student dance performance, jazz music performances, and museum tours. The bash was held in conjunction with the **2010 School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition**, and was a collaboration between UH students from various disciplines in regards to event promotion, flier posting, prize collection, courtyard décor, and event organization. The fall 2010 *Red Block Bash* event was held on September 30 during the run of **Gabriel Kuri** and **Amy Patton**, and was attended by 501 students. This installment was also a collaboration with the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, and is the most successful Bash to date.



4. Discuss means for evaluating success in reaching aforementioned objectives and their importance as compared to other objectives you might pursue. Where data exists, discuss the number of persons served by programs and their satisfaction.

Exhibition/event attendance is the most quantifiable measure of Blaffer's success in presenting the Student and MFA exhibitions, as well as with other exhibitions and events it mounts each year. Attendance is tallied manually by a museum attendant stationed at the entrance to the museum. The 2010 MFA Exhibition drew 2,376 visitors and the Student Exhibition attracted 1,394 visitors. The museum sees an average of 15,000 visitors/year.

For 2011/12 presentations, Blaffer will continue to promote the exhibition via print media and signage, and will collaborate further with the Art Department for the opening receptions on both events. Simultaneous and much-anticipated "Open Studio" events in the Fine Arts building continue to create a festive atmosphere for visitors and provide students with a vehicle to show works in progress. Satisfaction levels are factors that continue to shape these two exhibitions. Each fall art students, faculty, and museum staff discuss the overall presentations and work to establish tactics that accommodate both

student and museum goals. New this year, due primarily to potential exhibition re-scheduling because of museum renovations, the **2011 School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** will be tentatively held in December 2011. The goal is to eventually move the undergraduate student exhibition to the beginning of the academic year, starting August 2012 after renovations are complete. The **2012 Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** will be held in April, just after spring break, to give the graduating students plenty of time to prepare their work before May graduation.

5. Please discuss any budget changes from your last SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them.

There are no formal budget changes for the exhibitions and programs with which we are again requesting funds. The costs will remain pretty much the same due to the weak economy which requires the museum be economical in its spending habits. Blaffer Art Museum would like to once more request \$15,000 for the coming fiscal year towards the promotion and presentation of the 2011/12 Student and MFA Exhibitions, \$2,800 towards the efforts of the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*, along with an additional one-time allocation of \$2,200 for the BSA and other student-related programming, coming to a total of \$20,000.

Blaffer spent \$2,934 on supplies, materials, and promotion for the Student and MFA Exhibitions in FY 2009/10; \$2,749 on exhibition graphics and printed materials, plus \$5,040 on student installation and museum attendant manpower; and an estimated \$4,000 on staff time. Blaffer anticipates spending around \$15,000 in FY 2011/12 in these areas. In FY 09/10 the *BSA* spent \$2,834 on supplies, materials, food, entertainment, and promotion of both *Red Block Bash* events and other *BSA*-related programming. Blaffer again anticipates spending nearly \$2,800 for *BSA* programming in FY 2011/12, and hopefully an additional \$2,200 on other student-related programming such as monthly lunchtime student music performances in the Fine Arts courtyard, among many other exciting things.

The need for advertising and promotional spending is evidenced by the attendance figures we see for other Blaffer Art Museum exhibitions, for which the museum is able to raise and expend promotional dollars from public agencies and foundations with specific funding interests. With our keen focus on student participation strategies and outreach volunteerism, the potential for growth via these student exhibition audiences is an exciting opportunity for the museum, the students, and the University. Student exhibitions are eagerly anticipated by the campus population and the community, and provide students a professional venue for their work.

Adjunct training programs such as thru docenting and participation on the exhibition installation crew also provide professional experience for many students in art-related fields of study. During this past cycle, particular major highlights for student workers at Blaffer were opportunities to work side-by-side with renowned artists Tomàs Saraceno, Jon Pylypchuk, and Josephine Meckseper. Another important end result is the fact that Master of Fine Arts graduates begin their careers as artists with a professional exhibition on record, as well as beautiful presentation materials for their portfolio.

The museum's overall expenditures and income continue to grow each year at a healthy and sustainable pace, due in large part to increasingly high profile Blaffer-originated exhibitions and publications. The museum is gaining increased recognition on a national and international level for primary research in contemporary art, such as with recent exhibitions **Tomàs Saraceno: Lighter Than Air** and **Jon Pylypchuk**.

6. Please list your FY 2011/12 objectives in priority order.

As the Art Museum of the University of Houston, Blaffer serves both campus and community audiences with exhibitions and programs that are relevant to the concerns of our time. The **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and the **Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** are often the first professional presentations of UH art students' work. They are important first steps in a professional artist's career. Ultimately, the exhibitions serve to introduce the community to the caliber of work being created in the School of Art.

In 2011/12, Blaffer Art Museum's objectives are to present and promote the Student and MFA exhibitions on campus and in the community, as well as all *BSA* and student-related programming, through:

- Excellent, professional museum exhibitions;
- Professional production of color exhibition announcements and fliers, distributed widely throughout campus and the community, to alert students and constituents about the events;
- An outstanding quality exhibition brochure produced by UH Graphic Design student(s) that promotes the MFA candidates and works on view, available to the general public;
- Grassroots outreach tactics as designed and implemented by the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*, including, but not limited to the twice-annual *Red Block Bash*;
- Direct communications and correspondence with student organizations and the Student Program Board;
- An appropriate advertising schedule, to include the *Daily Cougar*, KUHF radio spots, signage around campus, and other print mechanisms as funding permits;
- *Brown Bag Tours* and other special lectures/events led by knowledgeable and engaging speakers, which are free and open to the community, giving museum-goers greater insights into the works on view and giving students a forum in which they may share their creativity with an audience;
- and the generation and promotion of more collaborative programming via the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts and the School of Art, such as March 2009's educational symposium *Systems of Sustainability: Art, Innovation, Action (S.O.S.)* and September 2010's collaborative Red Block Bash, among many other things.

Ultimately, SFAC funds allow for increased visibility and marketing of Blaffer Art Museum student exhibitions. SFAC funds also allow the museum to give appropriate recognition to the scholarship of UH Art students, as well as promote and educate the community through Blaffer's many exhibitions and educational outreach programs with the assistance of the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*.

7. What are other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them?

Blaffer Art Museum raises 100% of funds required to cover exhibitions, publications, education, and programming costs, with University support limited to indirect facility and partial salary support. Grants from public agencies, corporations, foundations, and individuals are solicited and received for specific programs and exhibitions on an as-needed basis. These funding sources are often earmarked as restricted use funds, unavailable for student exhibitions. SFAC funding is the only resource available to fund programs and activities devoted specifically to the UH student population. The School of Art has no direct fundraising staff and is unable to contribute any financial support for its student-related projects. Blaffer recognizes the importance of the student exhibitions and

dedicates significant time and effort to achieve an excellent presentation, and the museum is greatly appreciative of support from the Student Fees Advisory Committee, which is vital in ensuring the success of these two exhibitions, as well as to the success of the *Blaffer Student Association (BSA)*.

8. List any overlap between the Blaffer Art Museum and other units providing services to students.

Blaffer Art Museum is the sole professional art museum on the main campus of the University of Houston and the only public university museum in the region. Blaffer presents programs and exhibitions that are relevant and intellectually stimulating to the university community. Blaffer works diligently to provide cultural programs of the highest quality for all the student body, and our exhibitions and programs are not merely attended by students, but they are often integrated into their curriculum. These year-round offerings are unique to Blaffer in that no other unit has the professional staff, fundraising ability, or secured facility to present professional art exhibitions of this sort on campus.

The museum regularly collaborates with other campus departments to create stimulating programs for the campus and the community. In the past twelve months Blaffer Art Museum has collaborated with the School of Theatre and Dance; School of Art; the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts; the College of Education; guided tours for ESL students; among many other departments.



Jessica Flores accepting the award from Michelle Obama on November, 4, 2009.

Blaffer Art Museum also reaches the neighboring community through its award-winning *Young Artist Apprenticeship Program (YAAP)*. **YAAP was a 2009 *Coming Up Taller* award recipient, and was honored by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House on November 4th.** Each year YAAP reaches at-risk high school juniors and seniors by matching 8-12 teens with two Artist Mentors, who are accomplished professional artists and teachers, and in some cases former UH students. Led by these mentors, YAAP students work together to make art informed by a current Blaffer exhibition. In addition, YAAP students collaborate with

university students, visit with Blaffer staff and advisory board members, and take field trips to other museums—a shining example of the most essential component of the museum's educational program—*mentorship*.

The museum reaches the university community thru the *Committee on Visual Culture (CoVC)*; a volunteer group of university faculty and staff from various departments who work together to promote the museum and educate students thru collaborative programs and curriculum enhancement. The CoVC meets once/semester to talk about upcoming exhibitions and discuss opportunities to encourage further university involvement using the museum as an “educational resource”.

Blaffer Art Museum is proud of its success in fulfilling its mission of serving as an educational resource for all UH students, and particularly art students, and is excited about the continued growth of campus interest in the visual arts via the Tier One message.