

BLAFFER

ART MUSEUM

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

FY 2016 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.

Blaffer Art Museum's mission is to further the understanding of contemporary art through exhibitions, publications, and public programs of merit and distinction. It serves as a resource for the exploration of visual art and contemporary culture for the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Houston and beyond. As the gateway between the University of Houston and the City of Houston, Blaffer Art Museum is a catalyst for creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship. Its exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public, create community through dialogue and participation, and inspire an appreciation for the visual arts as a vital force in shaping contemporary culture.

The museum accomplishes this mission through many activities that involve UH students, including, but not limited to (not in priority order):

- The presentation and origination of exhibitions and publications of the highest aesthetic caliber, coordinated with participation from a corps of student employees/volunteers;
- Lectures through our Visiting Artist and Scholar series in which we bring world-renowned contemporary artists, scholars, and arts professionals to the university's campus which are free and open to students and the public
- Artist lead workshops and classroom visits for University of Houston students by visiting Blaffer artists
- Docent-lead tours of our exhibitions for various organizations on and off-campus
- Critically acclaimed and innovative film screenings through our On Screen @ Blaffer series and performances by visiting artists and scholars, free and open to students and the public;
- Collaborative programming for and by students via organizations like the Student Program Board and Council of Ethnic Organizations via our Blaffer Art Museum Student Association;
- 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** developed in collaboration with the School of Art.
- Cross-disciplinary lecture series presented through a collaboration of various colleges through the University of Houston.
- Student produced affordable design products in limited editions for sale online and on site as part of Blaffer Art & Design (BAD) in coordination with Industrial Design Department and the School of Art

Blaffer Art Museum reaches the larger population of university students through student outreach volunteers; paid and unpaid museum internships; curricular tie-ins through professor and curator guided tours in the museum in fields including Architecture, Philosophy, Education, Comparative Cultural Studies and English; hands-on teaching experience for educators-in-training; and more broadly through the opportunity to explore ideas and culture through visual art.

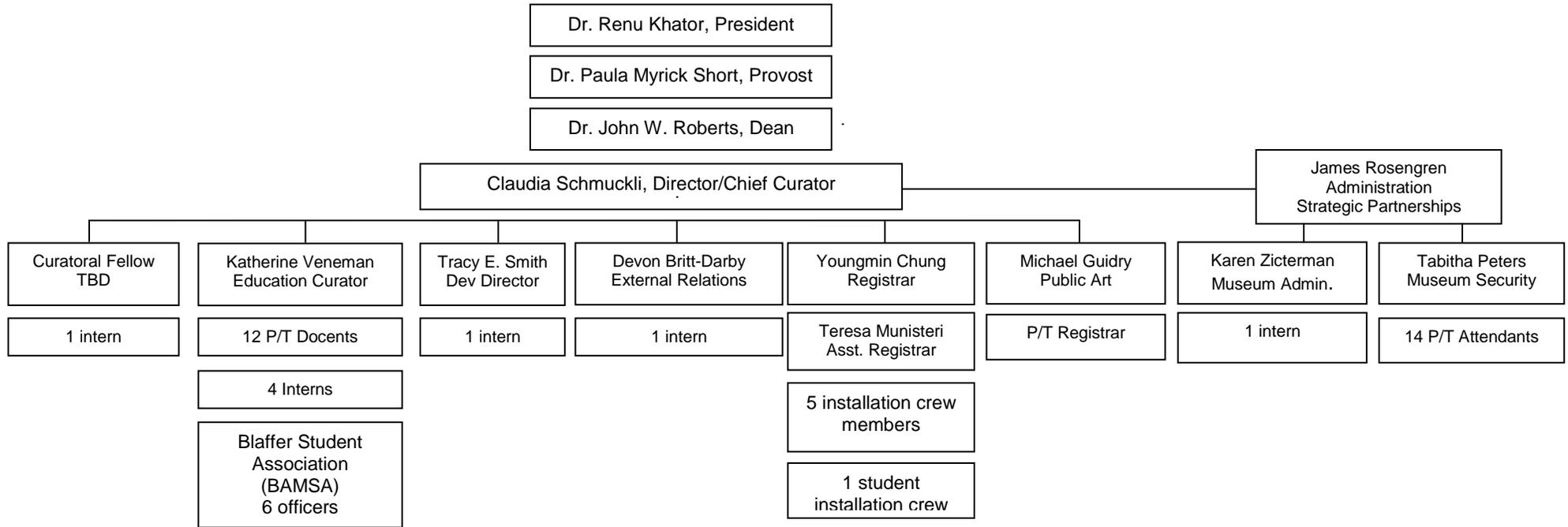
One significant aspect of the museum's service to University students is via the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and **School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition**. These exciting annual events bring in friends, family, and audiences interested in seeing the next generation of rising stars from 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 campus and greater Houston communities. Students in the School of Art benefit from working with Blaffer's professional museum staff to realize the students' projects.

Another way in which Blaffer serves the student population is through the **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)**. Founded in 2005, the student-led, all volunteer BAMSA exists to increase student participation in the museum community and promote the arts on campus. The organization provides opportunities for UH students to get involved in planning and promoting Blaffer educational programs such as Gallery Tours and Studio Saturdays, as well as the semi-annual Red Block Bash, a campus-wide celebration of arts on campus held in conjunction with UH Arts Family Day and Open Studio.

Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$20,000 in base support to fund the annual student exhibitions, cross-disciplinary lecture series, and efforts of the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association, including arts-in-residence, and other student-related programming. FY16 exhibition dates are to be determined, but will mostly likely occur during April 2016 for the **Masters Thesis Exhibition** and May 2016 for the **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition**.

2. Organizational Chart

Blaffer Art Museum currently employs 27 students per semester as docents, installation crew, curatorial, marketing, development and education assistants as well as museum gallery attendants. Student employees provide invaluable assistance and gain employment and/or professional development experience at Blaffer.



3. Strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2013-2014 academic year.



For academic year 2013-2014, Blaffer Art Museum set the objectives to present and promote the Student and Masters Thesis Exhibitions in order to provide a professional, experience for University of Houston's emerging artists and art students. Its reputation and high regard in the community and on campus helped to contribute to the over 800 guests that attended the opening reception, introducing an even larger audience to the burgeoning talent being fostered at the university through the graduate art department. Blaffer also co-presented the UH Annual Student Art Exhibition featuring over works by 40 undergraduate and graduate student artists from the School of Art. In addition to supporting these exhibitions, SFAC funds were used to promote these events on- and off- campus and hold

gallery talks by exhibiting student artists as well as our growing cross-disciplinary lecture series;

During the run of the exhibition, the MFA candidates spoke about their work at two brown bag gallery talks. Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow Amy Powell and Curator of Education Katherine Veneman each moderated panels of six exhibiting artists who shared information about their works and practice with an audience comprising both members of the campus population and the community at large. These gallery talks are geared towards the professional development of the students, providing them with an opportunity to practice their public speaking and presentation skills while at the same time bringing their work and the school's program to the attention of the art community in Houston.

In FY 13, KUHF 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 *Glasstire*. Continued marketing with outlets that have tremendous reach in the arts community and beyond such as KUHF and *Glasstire* ensures that our numbers will continue to grow as we're able to consistently promote our many lectures, screenings, and participatory projects accompanying our exhibitions and residencies.

SFAC funds were also used to provide operating funds for the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA), the student-run organization on campus that works to bring art into the lives of the student body. Formed in 2005, the BAMSA works 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. *BAMSA* strives to unite students by building a community that supports the arts and inspires creative enterprise, and *BAMSA* welcomes and encourages involvement from students in all disciplines.

The *BAMSA* began with a team of leaders who together outlined its mission, and put into practice a plan to create awareness of Blaffer on campus. Each officer of the *BAMSA* is responsible for specific duties and collaboratively maintaining the group's goals. Through the *BAMSA*, students promote Blaffer through participating in university events; distributing announcements and invitations to students; and brainstorming on ideas to attract and reach the campus population with evolving programs, workshops, and events. *BAMSA* regularly participates in campus events including opportunities for partnership with the Student Program Board and the *BAMSA*'s own *Red Block Bash*, a twice-annual welcome back event held in the courtyard of the Fine Arts Building.

On Screen @ Blaffer is a growing program in which curated critically-acclaimed and important films are brought to campus and presented in off-campus locations, many of which had never previously been shown on campus. Also, Blaffer Art & Design (BAD) is cultivated by faculty and staff of the Industrial Design Progra, the School of Art and Blaffer Art Museum in order to educate students in real life production process in order to capitalize upon hot market trends that impress consumers while adding value to their patronage. Student works were launched and presented at the annual Texas Contemporary Art Fair where patrons were able to purchase products. All proceeds feed back into the program in order to maintain. SFAC is crucial in helping to expand this program to a new level.

4. Discuss means for evaluating success in reaching objectives; their importance as compared to other objectives; data for number of persons served; any assessment measures used to evaluate program success.



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 presents each year. Attendance is tallied manually by a museum attendant stationed at the museum's reception desk, or in the case of outdoor events, at a check-in table. The 2014 Masters Thesis Exhibition drew 1,000 visitors, and the student open house welcomed an additional 1,000.

For 2015/16 presentations of these shows, Blaffer aims to draw in 3,000 people to these efforts. In order to achieve this result, the museum will continue to promote the Student and MFA exhibitions through a concerted marketing campaign that includes print and digital materials, signage and strategic

mailings and utilization of social media methods. We will collaborate further with the School of Art for the opening receptions and exhibition programming.

In addition to measuring attendance that enters the museum we are able to measure attendance at our various cross-disciplinary partner projects through the lecture series. Most recently, Blaffer partnered with University of Houston College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, The Honors College, Houston Methodist Center for Performing Arts Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Cullen College of Engineering, College of Technology, and Houston Public Media with additional support from UH Human Resources Work/Life Program, Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management, and the UH Student Program Board to present The Art of Observation a lecture by Dr. Wolf, full-time faculty of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas since 1974, rising to the rank of Professor and Chairman of the Department of Dermatology in 1984. He is also Chief of the Dermatology Services at The Methodist Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, and Ben Taub General Hospital. The lecture took place in The Cullen Performance Hall and informed over 900 guests according to ticket sales provided by Vendini. Upon conclusion of this special hosted event, we conducted a survey of the participants, which included a wide representation of University of Houston students. Some anecdotal information provided through the survey process included the following quotes:

"I now look at art is a whole new light. The fact that there is such a connection between medicine and art completely blows my mind. Dr. Wolf has so many priceless life experiences which just help make his lecture that much more interesting."

"It changed the way I think about art, there were meanings behind different art pieces that I would have never thought about before this lecture. Like the one piece of art about anatomy with red being the stand out color and the different things it represented."

"I feel that, no matter your major, it is important to use the art of observation. By "noticing what no one else notices" you allow yourself opportunities that other might not take advantage of. It gives you a better understanding of what you are doing and this is important in any field of study."

Qualitative measures are also taken into account in assessing the success of the programs SFAC funds. Each fall art students, faculty, and museum staff discuss the overall exhibitions presentations and work to establish tactics that accommodate both student and museum goals. We believe the variety of methods used to track attendance and student involvement has improved with the implantation of electronic methods and are looking to expand on those processes.

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

Blaffer's budget for FY14 reflects a return to normal operations after our renovation which impacted FY12 and FY13. We are aggressively pursuing an expansion of our cross-disciplinary programs. The single annual lecture will give way to five (5) presentations, three (3) lecturers of national prominence, and a capstone lecturer in the spring. Blaffer is also completing application to theme a floor in the residence halls beginning fall FY15, this in addition to our successful Student and Masters Thesis exhibitions from the School of Art. Finally, the installation and launch of an online/site store for Blaffer Art & Design (BAD) is another major focus of expansion.

Since the last request, Blaffer has turned-over several staff positions including Curatorial Fellow (pending), Public Affairs Director, and Director of Development & Membership). The recent renovation of the museum has provided the opportunity to operate with a slightly increased budget (\$1.6 million) to account for the expanded programming afforded by the new space. As in the past, **Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$20,000 in base support to fund the annual student exhibitions, cross-disciplinary lecture series, and efforts of the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association, including arts-in-residence, and other student-related programming.** In FY 16, Blaffer again anticipates spending roughly \$15,000 on the two student exhibitions, nearly \$3,000 for *BAMSA* programming, and an additional \$2,000 on other student-related programming, such as film screenings in the media gallery and Fine Arts Courtyard and workshops in the art studio, among many other exciting things.

Advertising continues to play a crucial role in the success of both the student shows and student programming at the museum. While the museum is able to raise and expend promotional dollars from public agencies and foundations with specific funding interests (e.g., tourism), these dollars are often restricted, making SFAC funds crucial to the student shows' success. 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. Public Relations Director, Devon Britt-Darby, has developed a comprehensive marketing plan that allows the museum to take a complete view of promoting its exhibitions and programs, including the SFAC funded student exhibitions and *BAMSA* events, in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

Furthermore, adjunct training programs such as docenting, student internships, and participation on the exhibition installation crew also provide professional experience for many students in art-related fields of study. During next academic year, students can look forward to working side-by-side with renowned artists such as Henning Bohl and Zina Saro-Wiwa. And, of course, MFA students participating in the thesis show will once again benefit from having a professional exhibition on record, as well as beautiful presentation materials for their portfolio. Blaffer also expects its operating budget to continue to grow over the next few years as it capitalizes on its new capacities for programming. Blaffer Art & Design (BAD) our successful cross-disciplinary lecture series

6. Please list your 2015-2016 strategic initiatives and action steps.

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. In the fall of 2010, the management and Advisory Board of Blaffer worked through our five-year strategic plan where we identified three major goals:

1. Continued development of targeted and proactive relationships with Admissions, Orientation and University of Houston colleges, schools and centers in order to increase the cross-functional collaboration with staff and faculty so that the Blaffer Art Museum is an important creative partner in academic curricula and public programs.
2. Lead an initiative to create an engaging experiential social venue in the arts courtyard to enhance the quality of student life on campus.
3. Increase and expand public programs for the Houston visual arts community.

We are currently halfway through our five-year strategic plan. We continue to work through those three major goals and have already begun a review process as new issues of location, accessibility and involvement remain on the forefront of our minds.



The **School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** and the **Masters Thesis Exhibition**, as well as the **BAMSA** and other student-related programming, speak to all three of these goals. The student shows 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. The **Blaffer Student Association** and student-oriented events complement and round out their academic experience, providing rich social experiences and means of deepening their ties to and connections with other student and the university. It is imperative to also continue our collaborative **cross-disciplinary lecture series** to engage student audiences

that may not think to enter Blaffer Art Museum. Finally, strengthen our relationship with the Industrial Design Department and the School of Art in the production of **Blaffer Art & Design (BAD)**.

To that end, in 2015/16, Blaffer Art Museum offers the following action steps to present and promote both the Student and MFA exhibitions on campus and in the community, and to support the BAMSA and other student programming.

- Presentation of the Masters Thesis Exhibition and the School of Art Annual Student Exhibition) in a way that meets the highest standards for professional excellence;
- Professional production of exhibition announcements and fliers, distributed widely throughout campus and the community, to alert students and constituents about events and programs;
- An appropriate advertising schedule, to include the *Daily Cougar*, KUHF radio spots, signage around campus, and other print/electronic mechanisms as funding permits;
- Deeper collaboration with the School of Art on all student exhibitions and related programming as graduate programs in Art History and Arts Leadership expand.
- Continued collaboration with the Industrial Design Department and the School of Art for student produced affordable design products in limited editions for sale online and on site as part of Blaffer Art & Design (BAD).
- Artist Talks 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.
- Outreach tactics as designed and implemented by the *Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)*, including, but not limited to the twice-annual *Red Block Bash*;
- Generation and promotion of more collaborative programming with University of Houston entities, such as the upcoming Janet Biggs lecture occurring on/off campus and foster collaborations with the colleges of Pharmacy, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Engineering, Honors, Business, Architecture, and Liberal Arts.
- Direct communications and correspondence with student organizations such as the Council of Ethnic Organizations and the Student Program Board.

Ultimately, SFAC funds allow for increased visibility and marketing of Blaffer Art Museum student exhibitions and activities. In turn, these 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.

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 throughout the year. 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. In addition, 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 Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA).

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

Blaffer Art Museum is the only 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.

Blaffer regularly collaborates with other campus departments to create stimulating programs that maximize our impact on campus and the community. In the past, Blaffer Art Museum has collaborated with the School of Art; the School of Theatre and Dance; the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts; the College of Education; the College of Law; the Bauer College of Business; Honors College; the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; the Honors College; the Hilton College; Student Program Board; Office of Human Resources Work/Life Program, among many other departments. In the upcoming months, Blaffer will be pleased to add the colleges of Pharmacy and Natural Sciences and Mathematics to the list.

The museum also reaches the university community through 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 through collaborative programs and curriculum enhancement. The *CoVC* meets once a 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 is excited about the continued growth of campus interest in the visual arts via the Tier One message of student success.

