

FY 2017 SFAC Request for Base Augmentation

Blaffer Art Museum requests an increase of \$25,000 in base funding from Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC), to support and help sustain collaborative, cross-disciplinary campus-wide programming designed to foster and strengthen communication across all academic units.

During a strategic planning effort in FY2010, Blaffer took a detailed look at the university's strategic initiatives as outlined by President Khator, and surveyed and benchmarked its own activities against the national landscape. The outcome was a determined effort to establish and solidify the museum and its programs within the broader academic context, recognizing the museum's unique potential to serve as an incubator for interdisciplinary dialogue and learning with contemporary art serving as a conduit to initiate and grow channels of communications between widely different academic disciplines.

As many studies by now have convincingly advocated, the complex problems in the world today are not going to be solved by single individuals working within the boundaries of a unique discipline. Rather, these problems will be solved by teams comprised of many people from many disciplines, coming together to leverage their combined skills and unique perspectives.

Blaffer Art Museum saw this as an opportunity to contribute to a campus wide solution and began crafting programs to meet this need. Over a three year period, Blaffer developed an annual cross-disciplinary lecture series which was attended by nearly 4,000 students, faculty, and staff. In its third year, the series had become so successful that a single lecture attracted nearly 1,000 students. Students surveyed after the event were overwhelming positive.

This response encouraged Blaffer to expand the series by establishing a steering committee to assist in program development. Twenty faculty, staff and community partners convened to guide the process. The outcome was a 10-part series of lectures presentations and performances in spring 2015, using the museum's Alzheimer's themed exhibition, *Janet Biggs: Echo of the Unknown*, as a catalyst for discussion.

The cross disciplinary programs, which came to be called the *Innovation Series*, represented 7 UH colleges, 9 faculty, 7 current and former UH students, 4 internationally recognized scientists and an academy awarding winning author. UH Student Programming Board, Human Resources Work/Life Program, UH Division of Research, Houston Methodist Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine, and the Houston Alzheimer's Association were also partners and collaborators. About 1,000 students, faculty, staff, and community members attend the events which took place over a 6 week period. A particular highlight was a collaboration between the UH

school of dance and the UH department of electrical and computer engineering where dance faculty member Becky Valls was outfitted with a cap which captured electrical impulses coming from her brain as she performed a work she had choreographed. The output of the cap was the graphic display of her brain activity on the walls of the room while she performed. The engineering faculty member used this performance as a corner stone in a successful \$1M proposal to the National Science Foundation to study art and neuroscience.

We are pleased to see this program take root and grow in scope and reach, and it appears we are just scratching the surface of the potential of this student focused initiative for which Blaffer is uniquely situated. The increase of base request is based on the actual costs incurred to produce the first installment of the Innovation Series which serves as a benchmark for its continuation moving forward.

We look forward to your increased support of our efforts.

Speaker honoraria	\$10,000
Travel	4,000
Food/Beverages for lunchtime talks	4,000
Printing, posters, facility/room rental	7,000
Total	\$25,000