

FY 2018 SFAC Request

1. **Executive Summary: Please outline Blaffer's mission, how we accomplish this and our justification for our unit's student fee allocation in terms of student benefits.**

Blaffer Art Museum is a catalyst for creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship. It creates experiences with contemporary art and artists that ignite wonder and curiosity, challenge pre-conceptions and expands ways of thinking and seeing in order to nourish the human spirit and drive empathy, understanding, and engagement with today's world. Serving as a resource for the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Houston and beyond, Blaffer is a place for exploration of the arts and contemporary culture through its exhibitions, publications, and public programs of merit and distinction. Blaffer's 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 these goals and reaches the larger population of university students through many activities that involve the 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;
- *School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and *Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* developed in collaboration with the School of Art;
- Collaborative programming for and led by student driven organizations such as *COTA Connects* and *Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)*;
- Academic internship program where students can receive credit hours for their time and learn from museum professionals;
- Artist-led workshops and classroom visits for University of Houston students by visiting Blaffer exhibitors;
- A yearlong calendar of free public lectures and presentations bringing world-renowned contemporary artists, scholars, and arts professionals to the campus and university classrooms.
- Free docent-led tours of our exhibitions for university classes and groups, K-12 school classes, and members of the public that are often led by our undergraduate and graduate student experts in art, art history, and arts education;
- 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.

One of the longest running relationships and services the museum provides to the UH student population is via the *School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and the *School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition*. Each spring Blaffer hosts these exciting exhibitions and accompanying events to connect students, friends, family, and our community interested in seeing the next generation of rising stars from the UH program. Since the reputation of UH Fine Arts graduates is not only local but national and international in scope, these student debuts have great popular appeal and bring in some of Blaffer's largest audiences during the year. The exhibition is accompanied by a printed catalogue designed by a student of the graphic design program. Additionally, working with Blaffer's professional museum staff to help realize their projects and as host introduces students

into the formal arts world. Last year (FY16) a student left opening night with a painting sold as well as an offer to showcase their work in a gallery.

Another significant aspect of the museum's service to University student population is through the *Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)*. Founded in 2005, the student-led, volunteer BAMSA exists to benefit students by increasing opportunities for students to participate in and make vital contributions to the museum community. BAMSA fosters opportunities for student collaboration across the arts and beyond. The most far-reaching program and central program of the BAMSA is the semi-annual *Red Block Bash*, a campus-wide celebration of UH arts held in the Fine Arts Courtyard and the museum. Produced, executed and marketed by the students this is hosted at Blaffer with other units participating to showcase their work in the visual and performing arts. Regular participants include the UH Dance Ensemble, Glass Mountain literary journal, and the UH Photo/Digital Association. This fall the Bash will feature several collaborating student organizations that are new, launching a springboard to celebrate student's accomplishments in the arts on campus. Events will include a musical performance, dance performance, and several participatory art-making activities as well as a slide show featuring student artwork. In addition to holding the Bash, BAMSA provides opportunities to get involved in other Blaffer educational programs such as Studio Saturdays, an art-making family day, free and open to the public. Moreover, the BAMSA provides a forum for like-minded peers interested in the arts to connect and then to expand their knowledge of the arts field. Beginning this year, BAMSA's new goal (which will be continued in FY 17-18), is to focus upon mentorship, professional development, and an expanded knowledge of the Houston arts community. Because the museum's internship program and BAMSA are established, the museum will draw from our community to organized field trips and discussions with arts professionals, graduates of UH and former Blaffer Art Museum interns or BAMSA officers are planned for the coming year, increasing student's knowledge of the arts to benefit them academically and professionally. This new aspect of the program will allow BAMSA to expand its reach outside the campus as well as create new opportunities for students.

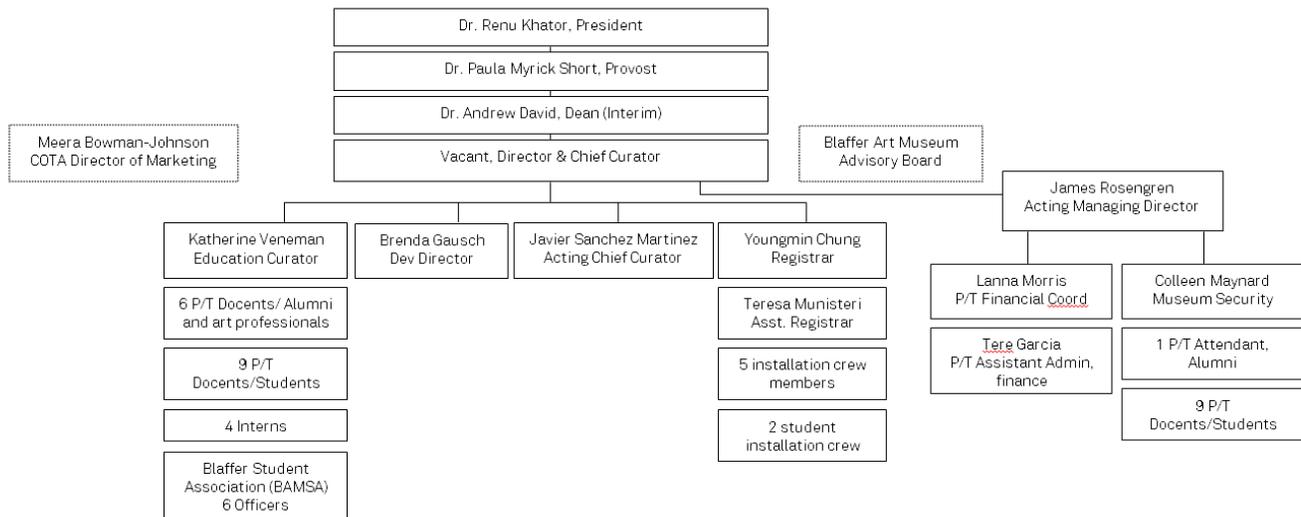
Additionally, with the launch of the College of the Arts Blaffer has begun to host the *COTA Connects* group in our café. Founded in the fall of 2016, *COTA Connects* is a student driven organization to generate programming and events which will elicit discussion between groups that would not normally be brought together. Ultimately these conversations will lead to projects, paper publications, and grow more collaborative projects across disciplines. *COTA Connects* will meet once a month at Blaffer to share their work, discuss career goals and focus on cutting down the boundaries between disciplines and also will become increasingly connected to BAMSA.

Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$21,500 in base support to fund the annual student exhibitions, cross-disciplinary studies through various avenues which include the two student art exhibitions, COTA Connects, and the efforts of the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association and other student-related programming.

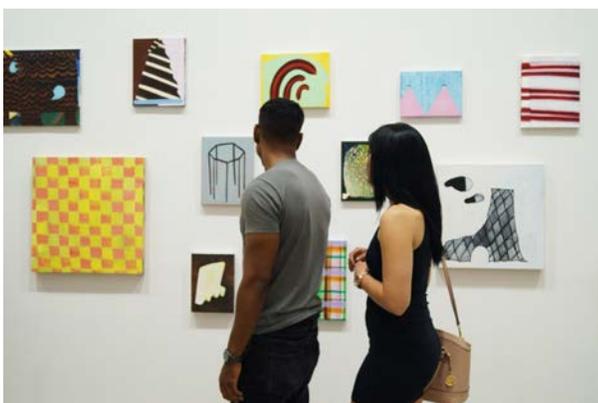


2. Organizational Chart

Blaffer Art Museum currently engages with 30 students per semester as docents, installation crew, and education assistants as well as museum gallery attendants. Student employees provide invaluable assistance in connecting Blaffer with the University community and gain employment and/or professional development experience at Blaffer.



3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2015-2016 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (DSAES) Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate (links below). Please comment on your success in achieving these strategic initiatives/action steps. If a strategic initiative/action step changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new strategic initiatives/action steps, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these items.



Blaffer understands the important role it plays in the University's mission "to offer nationally competitive and internationally recognized opportunities for learning, discovery and engagement to a diverse population of students in a real-world setting." As a gateway between the University of Houston and the City of Houston, Blaffer Art Museum is a place of creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship. Funding from SFAC allows us to continue to build the partnerships and become a vital part of the University's success. Blaffer's School of Art Annual Student Exhibition and the School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition, student run groups and programming all have elements of UH's strategic principals:

Institutional Excellence, Student Access, Diversity, Research, External Partnerships, Faculty and Staff recruitment and retention, PK-16 Partnerships, and Accountability and Administrative Efficiency. Outlined below is how we utilize the SFAC funds to support our student success. "Their success defines our success."

For academic year 2015-2016, 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 large number of guests that attended the opening reception. This introduced 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- campus and hold gallery talks, presentation and performances 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 and presented performance art presentations during brown bag gallery talks. Curator of Education Katherine Veneman moderated panels of 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.

SFAC funds also provided vital operating support for the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA) which is the student-led volunteer group which aims to bring art of all disciplines to the student body. Using Blaffer as a catalyst they create excitement and awareness of Blaffer exhibitions, events and educational outreach programming while creating and implementing new endeavors in collaboration with its members, faculty and staff.

Blaffer Art & Design (BAD) continued to grow as a successful partnership between the students, faculty and staff of the Industrial Design program, the School of Art and Blaffer. Students are cultivated and educated in the real world production process which allows them to showcase their work in the Blaffer space but online as well. All proceeds are fed back into the program but additional funding is key to its development.

Additionally, Blaffer offered ongoing educational support through adjunct training programs such as docent tour work and student internships. Furthermore, participation on the exhibition installation crew also provided professional experience for many students in art-related fields of study.

- 4. Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons served by each of your programs and any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting these data.**

The most quantifiable way to measure Blaffer's success is by tracking attendance at our events, exhibitions, lectures, group tours. Attendance is tallied in a twofold system. At the museum's admission desk we ask the guards to scan any student, faculty or staff Cougar Cards. Any community or special guests are tracked manually. This system is echoed as best we can during outdoor events, offsite lectures or large scale visits/openings. The 2016 Masters Thesis Exhibition and the School of Art undergraduate exhibitions d brought in nearly 2,500 guests in just 24 days.

This past year Blaffer worked with the Hobby Center to conduct a marketing research survey to help inform and improve our efforts. Targeted groups include various audiences but specifically of UH students and faculty/staff. In addition to gleaning insights on barriers (both real and perceived) to attendance, we're getting participants' responses to various marketing materials,



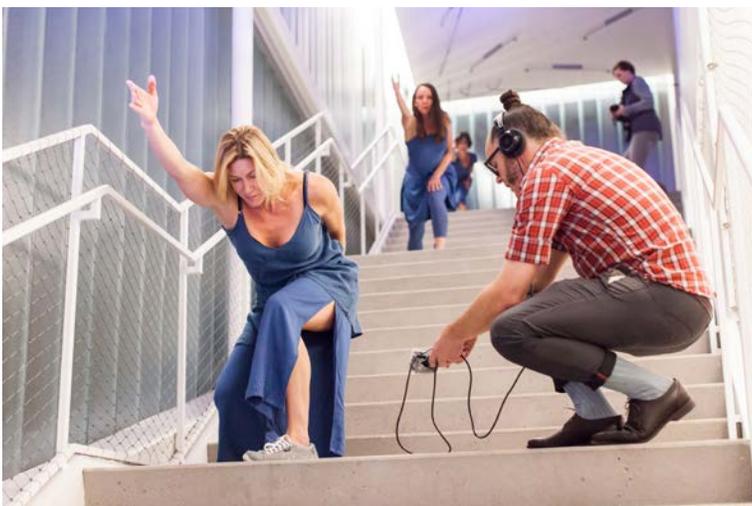
taglines and images. Now that we have analyzed, we'll work with our marketing consultant to prepare a quantitative survey that we plan to distribute to the larger population to ensure we're meeting their needs with our messaging.

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 experienced since your last (FY2017) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections. In addition, if your unit concluded FY2016 with a Fund 3 addition to Fund Equity, please describe the conditions which caused the addition.**

This fall marked an exciting time for Blaffer and the University of Houston with the launch of the *College of the Arts*. Joining our fellow visual and performing arts entities, Blaffer is thrilled to be part of this transformation which will offer the UH students access across disciplines and career enhancing opportunities. As part of the movement to a more unified college our marketing/PR position was moved to serve the entire college and no longer under Blaffer's umbrella. Additionally, we will now be sharing our DBA, Lanna Morris, with CWMC's team. Previously held by Karen Zicterman, she retired at the start of the fiscal year after many years of UH service. Additionally, this summer Claudia Schmuckli, long standing Director and Chief Curator at Blaffer, resigned to join the staff at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The search committee for her replacement is in place and will start reviewing applications before the New Year. The one staff member joining the team this in January was Brenda Gausch as the Director of Development & Membership.

With these changes Blaffer has been able to evaluate all aspects of our operation and how we support the campus community. We've been able to focus on our successful collaborations (*Till Now: Contemporary Art In Context* with the School of Art, The Innovation Series, two student exhibitions, BAMSAs...) with eyes keenly aware of our future interdisciplinary efforts (COTA Connects). In FY17, Blaffer again anticipates spending roughly \$15,000 on the two student exhibitions, nearly \$4,000 for *BAMSA* programming, and an additional \$2,500 on other student-related programming.



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. Working closely with the College of the Arts, Blaffer will continue to create 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 The Propeller Group and Gabriel Martinez. 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 Art Museum reported an operating deficit at the end of fiscal year 2016. Unanticipated, sharp downturns in the performance of individual gift solicitations contributed to a shortfall. The reduction in funding could not be offset with a reduction in hard cost exhibitions expenses and the result was this reported loss. Blaffer has reduced its expense trajectory and expects a fairly rapid recovery.

- 6. Please list your 2017-2018 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) that you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.**



Funding from SFAC allows Blaffer to continue its important role as part of the UH Arts Initiative. We strive to serve as a catalyst for creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship in contemporary art. As the gateway between the University of Houston and the City of Houston, Blaffer Art Museum fosters engagement and exchange by and among artists, curators, scholars, and the museum's diverse audience of students, faculty, and community members through exhibitions, publications, and public programs that are free and open to all, create community through dialogue and participation and inspire an appreciation for contemporary art as a vital force in shaping cultures and societies and our understanding of the world at large.

2016/2017 Goals

- 1- Continue to be proactive in seeking out new partnerships and relationships across the campus. It has become increasingly obvious that strong multidisciplinary and cross-functional collaborations are key to UH's success and Blaffer can be an important creative partner in academic curricula and programming.
- 2- Increase and expand public program offering for the Houston arts community.
- 3- Lead the student groups toward broader programming and success but offering Blaffer's international resources as well as our physical space. Blaffer hopes we will eventually be a key element in our student population's daily life at our café, galleries, COTA meetings, BAMSA events or programmatic offerings.

Throughout all our efforts we keep the strategic principals at the forefront:

- Institutional Excellence
 - Blaffer Art Museum provides a unique opportunity for UH students to engage with and learn from professional artists who are both in early and advanced stages of their careers. The Museum works closely with faculty across campus to ensure that the Museum's exhibitions

and programs are fully integrated into the academic curriculum in order to maximize the learning experience for students. Other important programs are the *Visiting Artist and Scholar Series* (VASS) and the *Innovation Series*. VASS combines public scholarly presentations and artists' talks with in-class presentations and studio visits, giving students, faculty, and community members access to leading practitioners in the fields of studio art, art history, and other disciplines that actively contribute to the thinking and making of contemporary art. It expands the horizon of intellectual engagement for students and adults in unprecedented ways by inserting the teachings at the University of Houston into an international dialogue led by artists and scholars around the world.

- Student Access
 - Blaffer is on campus, always free, has six parking spaces reserved for guests and is open Tuesday through Saturday with our only closures aligned with the academic calendar or exclusively the galleries during installation.
- Diversity
 - Blaffer is proud to serve our immediate audience of 42,000 students and 4,000 faculty/staff at the University of Houston and the broader community in the city of Houston. As one of the most culturally diverse campuses in one of the nation's most culturally diverse cities we present a roster of national and international artists, scholars and professionals in order to promote dialogue in the community.
- External Partnerships
 - The *Innovation Series* serves as an incubator for transdisciplinary dialogue and learning around contemporary art. Conceived in collaboration with many university departments and colleges including the Colleges of Pharmacy, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Engineering, Honors, Business, Architecture, and Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, as well as with the Center for Performing Arts Medicine at Houston Methodist Hospital and the University of Texas Medical Branch, it assumes a flexible format with outcomes ranging from the creation and presentation of artwork or performances to lectures, panels or symposia and more that draw on and illuminate the collaborative research and work around creativity and aesthetics across the arts, humanities, and sciences. Faculty and Staff Recruitments and Retention
 - By offering a professional onsite museum we are a place for continued scholarship which will enhance the University as we strive to be the best and the brightest.
- PK-16 Partnerships
 - We seek out students in the third ward, HISD in general and beyond to offer as much onsite visit assistance as possible. We offer free guided tour and access to our supplemental education materials.
- Accountability and Administrative Efficiency
 - Our success is define by the population we serve and if we accept only the best from ourselves we will provide this to our community as well

7. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

Blaffer Art Museum is responsible for raising all of the funds required to cover exhibitions, publications, education and programmatic costs with the University support limited to indirect facility and partial salary support. As such, Blaffer relies on outside resources such as grants from public agencies, corporations, foundations and individual support to present artists and programs. These entities are solicited throughout the year through direct mail efforts, granting cycles and the support of our Advisory Board. However, these funds are often time marked as restricted use and unavailable for student exhibitions or programs. SFAC is funding is the only resource devoted specifically to the UH student population programing and their exhibitions. Blaffer staff understands the importance of the School of Art's student exhibitions and is committed to providing a

professional level of service and expertise. There is a significant amount of time and effort in order to achieve the high standard of presentation expected. The museum is truly appreciative of the support from the Student Fees Advisory Committee which is a vital resource in the presentation of these two exhibitions, COTA Connects, BAMSA and student related activities.

8. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

Blaffer Art Museum is the only professional art museum on the main campus at the University of Houston and the only public university museum in the region. We are open five days a week, free and present programs and exhibitions in order to spark or support thought provoking dialogues to the university community. The museum works diligently to provide high quality programs and access for the entire student body – which are not only attended by students but often time integrated into their curriculum. Blaffer regularly collaborates with other departments or units to create or enhance programs for maximum impact on campus and community. Collaborators in the past include: College of Engineering, School of Art, School of Theatre and Dance, The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, College of Education, College of Law, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Honors College, the Hilton College, Bauer College of Business, Student Program Board, Office of Human Resources Work/Life Programs, and many other departments.

Additionally, as COTA Connects and BAMSA continue to grow Blaffer is poised to be at the epicenter of innovation among the student population. We are proud of our place as an educational resource for all UH students. Blaffer is thrilled to continue to act as a means for curriculum enhancement, a place showcase student exhibitions and expertise, and to inspire a multidisciplinary approach vital in today's world.

