



FY2020 One-Time Request, Blaffer Art Museum, First Friday Tours

FY2020 one-time requests should include a rationale or justification and a detailed line-item budget (including 6% administrative charge). One-time requests should be submitted separately from your unit's FY2019 Student Service Fee Base Augmentation requests. Please enter the amount in Column G, Row 13 of the spreadsheet.

Setting: Fine Arts Courtyard, Blaffer Art Museum. *It's 2:00 pm on the First Friday of the month. The weekend is still to come, and the week's challenging academic classes are in the rearview mirror. Outside the glass gallery walls, students are playing a friendly Ping-Pong match. At the museum's entrance, a sign on the sandwich board reads, "Welcome students—free museum tours start here." Entering the building, a small group of students from Cougar Village is greeted by a docent. Another group pours in from the studios in the adjacent Fine Arts Building. Then another... Several students tell the docent it is their first time to the museum. Fast forward, an hour later... A group trickles out of the museum's café/lounge, noshing on chocolate cookies and drinking sparkling water. **They are talking about art.** They are relating what they saw on the tour to their life experience, to something seemingly unrelated that they learned in a class, wondering if that idea connects to something else they learned. They are thinking new thoughts. They are inspired.*

Summary:

Blaffer Art Museum respectfully request \$3500 (in a One-Time Request for FY19) to hold First Friday Tours, a series of free, docent-guided tours given to students on the First Friday of every month from September through April, eight events in total. The tours will be followed by snacks and conversation and accompanied by art-making in the museum's café/lounge—and, weather permitting, ping-pong in the Fine Arts Courtyard. The museum already has most of the resources at the ready (docents, a ping-pong table, the space and expertise to create art activities). If awarded, SFAC funding will offer a free avenue for students to engage a world-class art museum, pursue creative thinking and appreciation of new, innovative, and challenging art in support of and as an exciting complement to their academic pursuits.

About Docent Guided Tours: Guided Tours of Blaffer exhibitions spark discussion and inquiry-based learning. A team of nine knowledgeable docents, with varied areas of focus and strong backgrounds in the visual arts leads the tours to groups of ten or more, from university groups, to K-12 classes and community groups. About half of the docents are arts professionals and half are advanced undergraduates and graduate students at UH studying art history, fine arts, and arts education. Tours are provided to university groups, K-12 classes, and community groups of 10 or more, with the goal of holding between 40-80 tours per year.

Level of Interest: In addition to providing scheduled tours, the docent guided program was expanded in 2015 ending in 2017 to include weekly drop-in Two O'Clock tours, where individuals and small groups explored exhibitions, directed by their own curiosity. This pilot program was discontinued after its funding ended, and many positive benefits of the program –accessibility, personalized engagement with

new ideas in contemporary art, and a conversational format offering the potential for thoughtful dialogue-- will now be developed in the First Friday Tours. This semester, the strategic planning process for the program benefits from feedback from the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association and a group of Bauer College Business students to help inform the program's value to students. The tours will be customized for and marketed to UH students, the free tours offering an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and discussion. Also, given the expertise of the docents, a group of students has a certain interest that is identified in advance or at the start of the tour, their tour can be re-formatted to or focused to connect to that interest.

Proposed First Friday Tour Program Components:

1. Customized content: Tours are inquiry-based and tailored to an individual interest. Techniques such as focusing discussion on a small number of artworks will be employed to promote dialogue and engagement.
2. Time frame: Starts at 2:00 pm, reservations encouraged. One hour, with visitors feeling free to come and go. Tours are 1 hour, art-making to follow. Museum closes at 5 pm.
3. Food and engagement: Snacks will be provided, as well as related art-making activities in the café/lounge to encourage discussion and the exchange of ideas. A ping-pong table will be available in the courtyard, weather permitting.
4. Attendance goal: 30-50. Drop-ins will be welcome.

Marketing to students exclusively: The day and time were chosen to maximize accessibility, on the basis of student and staff feedback. In the past, Blaffer has partnered with Residential Life to conducted programs offsite in many of the residence halls as well as in the museum. Therefore, marketing efforts will be targeted towards Residential Life. Additionally, the First Friday programs will be advertised at the Student Center and through campus media outlets such as *The Cougar*, as well as through the communications team at the KGMCA. Finally, yard signs directing student to the museum and ample signage will be put in place. In addition to food, the museum will encourage promotion of the event through various strategies encouraging social media, dialogue, and discussion. For example, one tactic used successfully by the Los Angeles County Museum is the creative use of social media Snapchat, where viewers combine images and music to interpret what they see. (LACMA has more than 2 million followers on social media platforms—see, 10/28/16, “Museums, The New Social Media Darlings,” Kerry Hannon, *New York Times*), At Blaffer, a simple tactic could be to encourage visitors to take pictures either as part of the tour or afterwards and post them on social media, perhaps offering a more creative platform as with the Snapchat project, which overlaid imagery with sound, creating a relation between two creative outputs with very different contexts.

Blaffer Art Museum First Friday Budget:

Type of Expense (per event)	Amount
Two or three museum docent @\$50 each (10 docent hours)	\$1,000
Snacks + beverages @ \$125	\$1,000
Advertising + yard signs	\$1,500
Total	\$3,500

The program goal is to reach up to 400 students, which if achieved, would translate to a cost of \$8.75 per student.

The First Friday Tours will build upon Blaffer Art Museum's resources, accomplishments, and past experiences. The goal is to offer inspiration for future intellectual and creative pursuits as student embark on their quests for life-long learning, by guiding students as they discover contemporary art as an invaluable source of enrichment and fun.