



FY 2020 SFAC Request, Program Questionnaire

- 1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.**

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 expand ways of thinking and seeing 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's exhibitions, publication, and public programs bring dynamic, innovative contemporary art to campus to create a community that fosters exploration. Free and open to the public, the museum provides opportunities for dialogue and participation, and it inspires 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 student activities 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 and volunteers;
- *School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and *Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* developed in collaboration with the School of Art;
- Collaborative programming for and led by student driven organizations, focusing since 2005 on the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA);
- Academic (volunteer) internship program where students can receive credit hours for their time and learn from museum professionals;
- Artist-led classroom visits and workshops 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;
- Docent-led tours of our exhibitions for university classes and groups that are often led by our advanced undergraduate and graduate student experts in art, art history, and arts education.

One of the most significant and longstanding relationships and services the museum provides to the UH student population is through the *School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and the *School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*. Each year Blaffer hosts these exciting exhibitions and accompanying events to connect students, friends, family, and our community interested in discovering artwork by 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 produced by the School of Art's Graphic Design program. Additionally, working with

Blaffer's professional museum staff to realize and display their projects introduces students into the formal arts world. Recently, student work featured in the exhibitions has been collected by and displayed in the university's Student Center.

In addition to the student exhibitions, an important facet of the museum's service to the 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 brings students interested in art together to provide a forum for expressing artistic outputs between peers while actively contributing to the museum's community. BAMSA's capstone achievement is the semi-annual Red Block Bash, a popular interdisciplinary arts celebration designed for and by students, and features student performances. An estimated 250-300 students typically attend the event, which includes participation by 12-18 partnering student organizations. And, a new career development component to the BAMSA's program gives students the opportunity to dialogue with professionals in the arts.

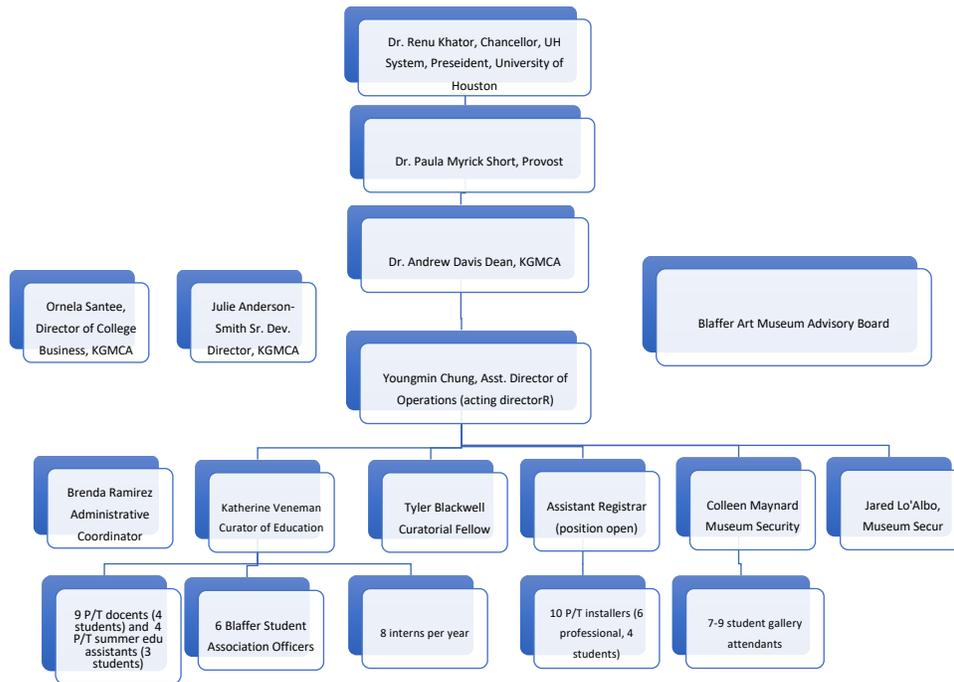
Blaffer Art Museum respectfully requests \$21,500 in base support to fund the annual student exhibitions and other avenues which include Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA) and student-related programming.



School of Art 40th Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition, Blaffer Art Museum

2. Organizational Chart

Blaffer Art Museum currently engages about 33 students per semester as docents, installation crew, interns, BAMSA officers, and museum gallery attendants. Student employees and volunteers provide invaluable assistance in connecting Blaffer with the University community and gain employment and/or professional development experience at the museum.



- 3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2017-2018 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 nexus 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. The *School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and *School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*, the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA), and student programming all develop elements of UH's strategic principles: Institutional Excellence, Student Access, Diversity, Research, External Partnerships, Faculty and Staff recruitment and retention, PK-16 Partnerships, and Accountability and Administrative Efficiency. At the same time, programs focused upon students directly

address the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services goal one to “Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.”

Outlined below is how we utilize the SFAC funds to support our goal of student success:

UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition and Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition: In 2017-18, Blaffer Art Museum presented and promoted two annual student exhibitions, providing a professional setting to celebrate students’ artistic accomplishments and introduced the next generation of artists to the Houston community. Between the two exhibitions, more than 100 School of Art artists studying



School of Art Annual Student Exhibition, Blaffer Art Museum, 2018

Graphic Design, Interdisciplinary Practice and Emerging Forms, Painting, Photography, Printmaking, and Sculpture participated. Achieving a landmark milestone to celebrate its 40th anniversary, this year’s School of Art *Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* featured the works of eleven graduating artists. The reputation and high profile of this exhibition in both the Houston and campus communities contributed to the large number of guests that attended the opening receptions and exhibitions. Moreover, MFA students learned professional

standards and best practices of exhibiting their work in a museum setting. Students worked extensively with museum staff while conceptualizing and realizing their culminating master’s thesis projects displayed in the professional venue, gaining experience that prepares them to work with galleries and museums in the future. Blaffer also co-presented the *UH Annual Student Art Exhibition* featuring over works by about 100 undergraduate and graduate student artists from the School of Art.

In addition, SFAC funds were used to promote the programs on-campus and to hold public gallery talks by all eleven exhibiting MFA artists. An established series held with all museum exhibitions, Gallery Talks provide students with an opportunity to hone their public speaking and presentation skills as they bring their work and the university’s program to the attention of the campus and Houston art communities. In discussions moderated by Curator of Education Katherine Veneman, exhibiting artists gave dynamic, engaging presentations on key topics related to their works’ content and practice.

SFAC funds also provided key operating support for the **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)**, a student-led volunteer group that strives to center a student art community at the museum and bring arts of all disciplines to the student population. Its mission is “to generate and establish resume-worthy events, opportunities, and experience through active engagement in the Blaffer Art Museum.” Using the museum as a catalyst, BAMSA members generate excitement and awareness of museum exhibitions, events and educational outreach programming. Significantly, BAMSA creates, implements, and sustains new endeavors in collaboration with its members, peer organizations, faculty and staff. In addition, participation in BAMSA offers students the opportunity to learn professional skills

such as program planning and budgeting, implementation, and evaluation.

BAMSA fosters opportunities for student collaboration across the arts and beyond. The most far-reaching 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, the Bash is hosted at Blaffer and the Fine Arts Courtyard with other units participating to showcase student work in the visual and performing arts. The spring 2018 event featured a large number of partnering student organizations, including new and regular participants inside and beyond the arts such as the Glass Mountain literary journal, and Uncommon Colors. The event featured student performances by a range of musicians as well as art-making and participatory activities. Significantly, in the past, short student surveys conducted at the event have revealed that the event draws participation across campus, from Bauer School of Business to students in liberal arts and sciences.

In 2017-18, BAMSA continued to expand its program, serving as a forum for like-minded peers interested in the arts to connect and then to expand their knowledge of the professional arts field. New in 2017-18 was the Biennial Student Art Show, which gave students an opportunity to display their work in the Fine Arts Courtyard. In recent years, BAMSA has also increased its focus upon professional development with programs such as BAMSA Speaks, a flexibly formatted panel/roundtable/workshop. Going forward, this new component of the program will allow BAMSA to expand its reach on and off campus to create new opportunities for students. For this fall, the strongly active BAMSA is undertaking an ambitious roster of events including four original programs: BAMSA Speaks, Make Your Own Jackson Pollock, Red Block Bash, and the UH Biennial Art Show.

Additionally, Blaffer offered ongoing educational support through adjunct training to **museum docents, interns, and education assistants** as well as to **installation crew members** and **gallery attendant/guard** staff. This fall marks the start of an active tour season, with nine docents (four of whom are advanced undergraduate and graduate students in art and art history), now in the midst of leading 17 tours (scheduled to date). Guided tours are provided to groups of ten or more, from university classes to K-12 and community groups, with a new focus upon finding ways to attract non-academic university student group participation this year. Additionally, students undertake academically rigorous internships at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Instructed by museum staff in the education and curatorial departments, undergraduate and graduate students completed both collaborative and individual assignments related to museum exhibitions. Furthermore, many students studying in arts-related fields received professional training as members of the exhibition installation crew. Finally, gallery attendants/guards are students serving as the museum's front line, utilizing communication skills to interact with the public while maintaining museum safety.

- 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.**

Together the 2018 *Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* and the *Annual School of Art Exhibition* brought almost 2,050 guests to the museum in just 24 days, the highest volume of museum traffic this year. In

addition, attendance at Blaffer Art Museum Student Association programs drew about 630 student museumgoers. The two MFA gallery talks, always popular, brought in nearly 90 visitors in total.

Consistently tracking attendance at our events, exhibitions, lectures, and guided tours is the most quantifiable way to measure Blaffer's success. Attendance is tallied in a twofold system. At the museum's admission desk, the gallery attendants scan student, faculty or staff Cougar Cards. Any community or special guests are tracked manually. This system is echoed during outdoor events, offsite lectures or large-scale visits/openings. The education staff regularly consults the security and visitor Relations staff to ensure accurate counts at public and education programs, since there is both a general and an education/public program calendar.

Blaffer Art Museum also distributes written surveys onsite. Quantitative measures are also valuable to the success of the SFAC-funded programs, and feedback provided by students is incorporated into future program planning. Well in advance of the student exhibitions, art students, faculty, and museum staff meet to discuss the overall exhibition presentations and work to establish tactics that accommodate both student and museum goals. To evaluate BAMSA activities, museum staff and BAMSA officers regularly work students from the Bauer College of Business to develop marketing plans and conduct focus groups to evaluate students' interests. The variety of methods used to track attendance and student involvement has improved with the regular implementation of surveys and we are looking to expand on those processes.

- 5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2019) 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.**

Blaffer Art Museum continues to accomplish an innovative, internationally, nationally, and locally recognized program with an important role in the University of Houston campus community. In FY18, SFAC-funded programs were accomplished on schedule and within scope. Recently, there has been a change in leadership, with the departure of Toby Kamps, Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator of Blaffer Art Museum and the appointment of Youngmin Chung as Assistant Director of Operations. In FY18, Kamps brought his vision to Blaffer Art Museum in order to build upon the museum's outstanding exhibitions of innovative contemporary art, with the goal of further expanding the scope and reach of its programs locally, nationally, and internationally. Kamps is now pursuing a position at London's White Cube Gallery, and his tenure has resulted in a complete year of programs in 2017-18, now extending to the current fall program of exhibitions, *Alfred Leslie: 100 Characters in Search of a Reader* and *Richard Rezac: Address*.

In FY 20, 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. These are fixed costs that cover the installation and promotion of the shows and programs, and cover items such as painting, construction, furniture for display of artwork as well as publicity costs, and are essential to the outcome of the two student exhibitions. Furthermore, advertising will continue 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 funds 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 KGMCA, 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 docent instruction, student internships, and participation on the exhibition installation crew continue to provide professional experience for many students in art-related fields of study. During FY19, students can look forward to working side-by-side with renowned artists such as Richard Rezac and Rebecca Morris, both the subjects of major exhibitions at the museum. 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.

- 6. If your unit concluded FY2018 with a Student Service Fee (SSF) Fund 3 addition to the SSF Reserve in excess of \$5,000, please describe the conditions which caused the addition and provide a line-item identification of the budgetary source(s) of the addition (i.e. lapsed salary, conference travel, etc.).**

N/A

- 7. Please list your 2019-2020 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.**

SFAC funding enables Blaffer to continue its valuable role as part of the UH Arts Initiative, and to address both UH Goals and Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategies. 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. Blaffer implements 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 culture.

Goals:

1. Continue to develop innovative exhibitions of contemporary art that are global in scope. Design complementary programming to amplify and deepen the program's impact with the goal of making the museum experience of contemporary art vital, intellectually stimulating, and a dynamic force in daily life experience.
2. Continue to align museum's education program with the Division of Student Affairs' aim to "Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery."

This will be accomplished through the two student exhibitions and BAMSA, and by creating deeper engagements and sustained partnerships within the university community to become a key element in our student population's daily life at our café, galleries, and programmatic offerings.

3. Continue to be proactive in enhancing the Blaffer's role as a teaching museum by seeking new partnerships and relationships in KGMCA and across campus. Blaffer can be an important creative partner in academic curricula and programing.

Throughout all our efforts we keep the strategic principles and UH Goals 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 exhibitions and programs are fully integrated into the academic curriculum, maximizing learning outcomes. The museum's visiting artists and scholars provide educational opportunities for university students. Students, faculty, and community members gain 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. The free public programs expand the horizon of intellectual engagement for students and in new ways by connecting teaching the University of Houston to an international dialogue led by artists and scholars around the world.

Student Access: Blaffer is on campus, admission is always free, has six parking spaces reserved for guests. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.) with our only closures aligned with the academic calendar or with the installation of a new exhibition.

Diversity: Blaffer is proud to serve our immediate audience of more than 45,000 students and 4,000 faculty/staff at the University of Houston and the broader community in the city of Houston, the fourth-largest city in the United States. As one of the nation's most culturally diverse campuses in one of its most culturally diverse cities, we present a roster of national and international artists, scholars and professionals in order to promulgate new ideas and discussions in the community.

External Partnerships: Blaffer partners with highly regarded museums nationally and internationally to bring innovative exhibitions to our community. For example, in February 2018, the museum opened the exhibition *The Future is Certain; It's the Past Which is Unpredictable*, a group exhibition on writing and rewriting history curated by Lithuanian independent curator Monika Lipšic with Toby Kamps, the Blaffer's Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator. Organized by Lipšic as part of *The Future Remains: Revisiting Revolution* season, a series of events marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution at the Calvert 22 Foundation in London in 2017, the exhibition was expanded for its University of Houston presentation. Bringing together 14 artists and collectives from the former Soviet sphere of influence will use art to illuminate the ways history—in the hands of governments and others engaged with myth-making—can become a malleable material. An independent exhibition was developed, *Anton Vidokle's Immortality for All: A Film Trilogy on Russian Cosmism*, which illuminated the philosophy and science of Russian Cosmism. Established in the 19th century by librarian and scholar Nikolai Federov, Cosmism posited that immortality, achieved through technology, was inevitable. Not only will the problem of death be eliminated, he believed, but it will eventually be possible to recollect the physical materials and psychic energies of the deceased in order to resurrect them. Because an earth inhabited by immortals would eventually become too crowded, the Cosmists believed that outer space must be colonized. This belief formed a spiritual basis for the Soviet space program.

By serving as a professional museum on campus we are a nexus for sustained scholarship that cuts across many disciplines and enhances the University. Currently, *Richard Rezac: Address* to the museum from September 8—December 8. The exhibition was organized by The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and curated by Solvig Øvstebø. The exhibition brings together 20 works by Chicago sculpture Richard Rezac, who makes his wood and metal sculptures by hand, combining meticulous geometry with a deep feeling for color and form. Inviting multiple readings, these simultaneously strange and familiar objects demonstrate the artist’s ongoing engagement with mathematical ordering systems and the elusive mechanisms of memory and interpretation.

PK-16 Partnerships: In addition to providing tours to K-12 groups, Blaffer strives to create partnerships with schools that regularly visit the museum and works to reach new school groups, often in conjunction with a school visit to the University of Houston and a class assignment. Artworks created by participating K-12 students have been regularly featured in the museum’s café space. And, in FY 2016-17, the educational and curatorial departments developed a partnership that resulted in the inclusion of student photography in an artist’s monograph published by the museum, *Blake Rayne: Tense and Spaced Out* (2017). The publication is available internationally. The school partnership continues to develop this fall.

Accountability and Administrative Efficiency: We strive to set ambitious but achievable goals, and to enact strategies that build upon our successes while consistently considering information from program evaluation.

8. **Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2019 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the FY2020 base budget augmentations and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5% in your total approved FY2020 base Student Service Fee budget and provide a line-item explanation of.**

If there were a 5% budget reduction to our base fee of \$21,500, the reduced amount of \$1,075 could—with difficulty—be absorbed in the installation costs of the two student exhibitions. This will be a challenge because all of the costs associated with this exhibition are the fixed costs associated with presenting exhibitions composed of diverse selections of works of art, including building and painting walls, constructing exhibition display furniture, and purchasing the miscellaneous hardware required to present the work. One potential area of savings that would cause only minimal disruption to the student exhibitions would be to retain the modestly sized Saleri Gallery, which is located upstairs and is the last gallery accessible from one of the museum’s corridors, as storage space for the spring exhibition, which will be reinstalled at the conclusion of the student exhibitions. Crates and materials from either incoming or outgoing exhibitions are kept there already as a cost-saving measure. This minor accommodation would minimize shipping and storage fees, and with a feasible amount of advance planning, would still allow for ample exhibition space for the two exhibitions.

9. **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 and the KGMCA 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, museum funding 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. As a rule, external funding from charitable foundations for exhibitions of student work is not available. SFAC funding is the only resource devoted specifically to the UH student population programming and exhibitions of their works of art. 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 spent 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, BAMSA, and student-related activities.

10. 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 is open five days a week, with free admission. We present innovative exhibitions of contemporary art and educational programs that are relevant and intellectually stimulating to the university community. The museum works diligently to provide high quality programs and access for the entire student body, ranging from holding student events to working with professors incorporating museum exhibitions into curricula. Blaffer regularly collaborates with other academic departments or units to create or enhance programs for maximum impact on campus and community. Past academic collaborators have included: College of Engineering, School of Art, School of Theatre and Dance, The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, as well as various departments in the College of Education, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Honors College, the Hilton College, and the Bauer College of Business. Recent or current non-academic collaborators have included the UH Public Art Collection, Jenkins Art and Architecture Library, Office of Human Relations Work/Life an POWER UP programs, Dean of Students, Student Center, and Student Program Board.

As we prepare this year's program and look ahead to FY20, Blaffer Art Museum is poised to assume a new and central role in the Katherine G. McGovern College of the Arts (KGMCA) and, by extension, in student life. With new leadership and programming directions, Blaffer will work to align its exhibitions and interpretive programs with the units in the KGMCA and with diverse fields of learning. This year's program includes the 41th year of the School of Art *Master of Fine Art Thesis Exhibition* as well as the *Annual Student Exhibition*. And, BAMSA continues to grow in its role on the campus community, continually initiating new programs and sustain and enrich the arts on campus. We are proud of our place as an educational resource for all UH students, connecting the student community to contemporary art exhibitions at the vanguard of artistic innovation. Blaffer Art Museum is thrilled to continue to act as a means for curriculum enhancement, to showcase student exhibitions and expertise, and to inspire a creativity vital in today's world.

