



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations.

Prospective applicants should consult the Humanities Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/challenge/humanitiesaccess-grants> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Office of Challenge Grants staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions of the narrative, primarily in the budget category, may refer to 2016 guidelines that are no longer pertinent. Finally, some parts may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Internships in Curatorial Studies

Institution: Spelman College

Project Director: Andrea Barnwell

Grant Program: Humanities Access

Institutional Context

Spelman College, a global leader in the education of women of African descent, is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and the intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of its students. Established in 1996, the **Spelman College Museum of Fine Art** emphasizes art by and about women of the African Diaspora. The Museum has offered internship experiences to Spelman students since its inception. The **Curatorial Studies Program** is a partnership between the Museum and the **Department of Art & Art History**, and provides a curricular and co-curricular framework for students pursuing careers in museums.

Describe the humanities activity or program that the grant would support, including its genesis, history, and goals. Include evidence of the program's significant humanities content and intellectual value.

Spelman College's request for a Humanities Access Challenge Grant to support, formalize, expand, and sustain the Spelman College Museum Internship Program is firmly rooted in its institutional mission. Spelman College, with leadership from its Department of Art & Art History and Museum of Fine Art, has an established track record in preparing students for curatorial careers and other museum professions. Since the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art was established in 1996, two to three students each year have worked for 10 to 15 hours per week as interns. These interns have been involved in a range of curatorial projects including conducting research for upcoming exhibitions, writing and editing object labels, maintaining archives and visual materials, updating artist files, writing interpretive materials, and helping to devise questions for interviews with artists. Museum interns have also facilitated tours and served as docents. These activities challenge students to extend what they have learned in the classroom, distill art historical information, and bring academic knowledge to bear.

Over the past two decades, through concentrated efforts, mentoring, and networking, the Department of Art & Art History faculty and the Museum staff have helped students secure summer internships at prestigious museums such as the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem. These internships have enabled students to work on meaningful projects in close collaboration with professional curators, contribute to curatorial research, and experience how curators collaborate with museum professionals in other departments and institutions. Interns benefit from mentoring, regular assessment, and formal evaluation, allowing them to explore and plan for curatorial careers and museum administration. This focused hands-on time in museums during critical summer months enables them to link their academic work to practical experiences.

Through this approach Spelman has built a strong track record and carved out a unique and noteworthy niche for guiding students into art history and museum careers. More than ten students have gone on to obtain advanced degrees in art history. Several have become noted curators, founding museum directors, and other arts professionals. Laurie Cumbo is the Founding Director of the Museum of Contemporary Diasporan Arts. Ingrid LaFleur is founder of AFROTOPIA. Naima Keith is the Deputy Director of the California African American Art Museum and former Associate Curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Adrienne Edwards is Visual Arts Curator at Large at the Walker Arts Center and Curator at Performa. Tuliza Fleming

is Curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Two students that once served as interns at the Museum have returned to Spelman; Makeba Dixon-Hill is now the Spelman Museum's Curator of Education and Anne Collins Smith is the Curator of Collections.

We fully expect that our current students will go on to assume equally impressive leadership positions in museums nationwide. We seek NEH support to bolster our fundraising efforts to build upon Spelman's impressive trajectory by creating opportunities for at least 10 students to have meaningful 8- to 10-week paid museum internships each summer.

Discuss the connection between the humanities activities and the needs and capacities of one or more of the following groups: youth, communities of color, or economically disadvantaged populations. Include information about previous efforts by your institution to reach and serve these groups.

Efforts to formalize a paid Museum Internship Program are timely, as Spelman College has actively begun to reimagine the possibilities for the arts, academic standards for the arts, and how to make Spelman a magnet that speaks directly to Black women, creativity, and arts professions. Through a series of focused conversations, Spelman College has been re-envisioning the potential for the Department of Dance and Drama, the Department of Music, the Department of Art & Art History, the Digital Moving Image Salon, and the Museum of Fine Art, which are now collectively referred to as ARTS@Spelman.

Communities of color have not, for the most part, held leadership roles within arts and culture fields. A recent study, administered by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Association of Art Museum Directors, reveals that only 4% of museum curators, conservators, educators, and leaders are African American. Spelman is well-positioned to dramatically impact diversity in the curatorial realm.

Most museums do not have the financial capacity to offer paid internships, however, most Spelman students find it impossible to engage in unpaid work over the summer. Unpaid internships are serious barriers to achieving diversity in art history professions. The Museum Internship Program expands the College's existing efforts and addresses this barrier directly. Moreover, it helps create a pipeline of African American undergraduates who will over time be prepared to apply their humanities backgrounds to help museums better reflect the communities that they aim to serve.

Explain how the institution, through its mission, personnel, governance, facilities, and resources, has been and will be capable of sustaining outstanding humanities activities over the long term. Identify any collaborators or partners.

Current efforts to formalize the Museum Internship Program are part of a long and established history that is worth noting in detail. The Spelman College Department of Art & Art History, formerly known as the Department of Art, has a rich tradition of art instruction and collecting efforts dating back to the mid-1930s. Hale Woodruff, a painter, printmaker, and muralist, and Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, a pioneering sculptor, established a stellar art program in the Atlanta University Center. Together, they created a premier institution for art instruction for African

Americans and set the stage for institutions that would begin amassing important collections of American and African diasporic art.

For more than 50 years, the College has maintained a permanent collection, which includes three-dimensional, polychrome, wooden artifacts by various African peoples, as well as works by celebrated African American artists including Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Hale Woodruff. Collection objects were historically displayed in various College offices, public meeting spaces, and dormitories throughout the campus.

In 1996, the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art was established with major financial support from the Clara Elizabeth Jackson Carter Foundation. The College boldly declared that the Museum would emphasize art by and about women of the African Diaspora—a mission that was unheard of at that time. When the Museum opened, campus-wide display of art was disbanded and the Museum became responsible for the College’s collection, preservation, and exhibition efforts. The Department of Art & Art History was instrumental in formulating the Museum’s trajectory and faculty served as Interim Director and Curators. In 2001 the College hired the first full-time Museum Director. Since then, Curator of Collections and Curator of Education positions have been added.

In recent years the Museum and the Department of Art & Art History have collaborated on meaningful projects. In 2014, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded Spelman College \$250,000 to pilot a Curatorial Studies Program. The award has supported

- 1) the hiring of a Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History and Curatorial Studies to teach courses entitled *Introduction to Curatorial Studies* (in progress), *Mining the Museum*, and *Curatorial Studies II*;
- 2) roundtable discussions with curators who are guest presenters at Spelman; and
- 3) paid summer internships at partnering institutions.

While the College has always responded to students’ interests in arts professions, support from the Mellon Foundation recognized this commitment and made it possible to create a curriculum that better supports the needs of future arts professionals. The Museum Internship Program supports the larger aims of the Curatorial Studies Program and aligns with the College’s previous efforts. It promises to make a profound impact on students, inform their professional pursuits, and, ultimately help prepare the next generation of African American curators and museum professionals. In summer 2016, Spelman students will be interning at an impressive group of partnering institutions including: the Cleveland Museum of Art (OH), Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, AR), the Detroit Institute of Arts (MI), the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (Washington, DC), the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art (Gainesville, FL), the Studio Museum in Harlem (NY), and the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY).

Describe the institution’s fundraising strategy to achieve the required match in the first two years of the grant, and delineate clearly and in detail the planned grant expenditures (federal and nonfederal combined) in years three to five.

The remainder of the match will be raised through private donors and Spelman's alumnae base. We have already outlined several alumnae events and outreach strategies to generate interest in and support for the Museum Internship Program.

In years three to five, term endowment funds will be expended in the form of multiple \$5,000 internship allowances awarded to Spelman College Curatorial Studies Program students. These awards will defray the costs of student transportation, room and board, stipends, and other costs associated with summer internships.

Provide a plan for assessing and measuring, in both qualitative and quantitative terms as appropriate, the impact

In previous years the Museum staff and Art & Art History faculty have conducted informal post-internship interviews with students. However, extensive measures are now in place to heighten the qualitative and quantitative integrity of the Spelman College Museum Internship Program.

Qualitative impact

One of the goals of the Spelman College Museum Internship Program is evolving a core of students with diverse backgrounds that bring unique experiences to the field and have the ability to treat works of art as portals to uncover new knowledge. Mentor/Curators at partnering institutions are asked to assign projects that encourage students to regard objects as primary resource materials that link audiences to new ways of thinking and alternative ways to engage society. We also require students to maintain a journal and regularly document their experiences.

Mentor/Curators are asked to involve students in projects that allow them to conduct research, make object-based presentations, and create interpretive material. Being involved in these curatorial tasks profoundly impacts student development, as it allows them to build upon research that exists in object files and create new narratives that spark the imagination. Such curatorial tasks increase students' ability to ask critical questions, develop personal consciousness, reinvent contexts, and discover new contemporary truths. Additionally, these experiences allow them to be involved in inventing new ways to connect with museum visitors and invite viewers to reconsider their relationship to others.

A member of the Museum staff or a faculty member in the Department of Art & Art History will interview students before, during, and after their summer internships in order to ensure that they are actively engaged in meaningful projects that will allow them to experience a range of curatorial tasks including (but not limited to): conducting research on permanent collections, new acquisitions and/or temporary exhibition objects; completing selected collections management tasks; participating in curatorial planning meetings to discuss overarching exhibition themes; and interacting with other museum professionals (i.e. exhibition designers, art handlers/installers, programming specialists, museum educators, development officers, etc.). Student interviews will capture important information such as the students' overarching understanding of how curators work with various departments and museum professionals; how they apply the art historical

knowledge gained in the classroom; their overall evaluation of their experiences and their interest in the field; and the strengths and areas for growth they have identified through the Museum Internship Program.

A member of the Museum staff or a faculty member in the Department of Art & Art History will have informal discussions with Mentor/Curators and other relevant staff from partnering institutions before, during, and after the internship period. The Curator/Mentor at each of the partnering museums will be required to formally evaluate the interns based on their performance and also provide recommendations for their continued professional development. These interviews will ensure that students are engaged in meaningful experiences that are commensurate with their interests as well as the needs and direction of the field.

Quantitative Impact

The quantitative impact of the Spelman College Museum Internship Program is to create a pipeline of students that have pre-professional experiences and are competitively positioned to consider graduate programs that focus on art history and other humanities disciplines. The Museum staff and Art & Art History faculty have defined quantitative goals that are ambitious yet achievable. In previous summers, two or three Spelman students had museum internships. This summer, with the formal introduction of the Curatorial Studies Program, 10 students will participate in museum internships across the country. By 2019 the number of students will increase to 15 interns per summer. The intention is to incrementally, strategically, and methodically increase internship placements while employing ongoing assessments to continuously improve student experiences.

The Spelman College Museum Internship Program will yield programmatic results that include strengthening relationships with partnering museums, increasing the number and preparedness of Spelman student interns, and impacting the diversity of the museum professions. Traditional quantitative measures such as tracking students' academic and professional pursuits will be used to assess the success and growth of the program. As this program—which is thoughtfully considered and intentionally focused—grows, it will encourage Black women to be centrally involved in expanding our collective knowledge of how artists and works of art help us view art, exploring first-hand engagement with objects in new ways, gaining new insights into society, and reconsidering humanity.