



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: Toward Cultural Diversity Within Cultural Institutions

Institution: University of Illinois at Chicago

Project Director: Therese Quinn

Grant Program: Humanities Access

Narrative

This proposal seeks funding to support paid internships, in the form of Graduate Assistantships that offer both stipends and tuition waivers, for graduate students of color enrolled in a two-year, interdisciplinary, majority of color Museum and Exhibition Studies (MUSE) program at a public university in Chicago, Illinois. Currently internships are a required and important part of this program, and we partner with campus museums, galleries, and cultural centers that provide these opportunities when and to the extent that funds allow. For example, this year our students hold these positions at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum (a historic house museum), Gallery 400 (a contemporary art site), and the Rafael Cintrón Ortiz Latino Cultural Center (a vibrant center that offers cultural heritage programming), where they have been able to research in archives and collections; write and publish exhibition reviews; write and offer tours addressing Latino mural arts; and more. With this funding our program will be able to boost the number of Graduate Assistantships regularly available to MUSE graduate students of color.

These paid internship opportunities are essential because by at least one measure, museums are in trouble; despite the increasing diversity of our nation, these cultural institutions employ a homogenous, disproportionately Non-Hispanic white population. A report published in 2010 by the American Association of Museums, *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums*, indicates that only 20% of museum employees, while our nation then had a minority population of 34% (Farrell & Medvedeva, 2010). Half a decade later, in 2015, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation published the results of its research exploring the demographic makeup of art museum staff (Shonfeld & Westermann, 2015). These findings, using United States census categories, mirror those of the earlier research:

Non-Hispanic White staff continue to dominate the job categories most closely associated with the intellectual and educational mission of museums, including those of curators, conservators, educators, and leadership (from director and chief curator to head of education or conservation). In that subset of positions, 84% is Non-Hispanic White, 6% Asian, 4% Black, 3% Hispanic White, and 3% Two or More Races. With the exception of the Asian demographic category, which makes up 5% of the United States population today, these proportions do not come close to representing the diversity of the American population. (p. 3)

In fact, years of attention and discussion to this problem has not shifted the workplace homogeneity of our national cultural institutions; their demographics have not changed significantly in decades. For example, when, in 1990, Illinois State Representative Cardiss Collins held congressional hearings on the “current status and future prospects for minority employment in senior level managerial positions with Chicago’s major cultural institutions,” employment statistics for seven of Chicago’s nine Park District museums showed that at the management and other upper levels of employment, all these museums were more than 80% white and one had no employees of color.

Unfortunately, while important gateways to employment in cultural institutions, museum studies programs nationwide are also homogenous, with student populations that are 80% white (Farrell & Medvedeva, 2010). In contrast, Museum and Exhibition Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), a two year Master’s Program, has a diverse student population; our most recently admitted cohort, Fall 2015, for example, is 64% of color.

MUSE considers the recruitment of underrepresented minorities a foundational program value, as well as a fulfillment of our public research university’s land-grant mission of higher education access. Our efforts have been successful, with our program, which admitted its first cohort in 2011, increasing in diversity each year, as shown in the chart below.

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4th Year	5th Year
African American	1	0	1	0	3
American Indian	0	0	0	0	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	1	1
Hispanic	0	0	1	3	3
White	6	4	8	6	5
Other Race/Ethnicity					1
International	0	0	1	2	0

During its first year the MUSE program was administered by Dr. Lisa Lee, then Director of the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum (JAHHM), a historic house museum, and Lorelei Stewart, Director of Gallery 400 (G400), a contemporary art site; these institutions are the “teaching partners” of the MUSE Program. In 2012 Dr. Therese Quinn was hired as the Program’s first full-time Director, and continues to serve in this position, with the support of Program Coordinator and curator Anthony Stepter. Lee, now the Director of the School of Art & Art History at UIC, Stewart, and Dr. Jennifer Scott, current Director of JAHHM, review applications of prospective students, teach, advise, and serve as an advisory body for MUSE. In addition, as program partners, G400 and JAHHM offer our students rich practical experience through internships and Graduate Assistantships, and through class visits, projects and capstone research.

MUSE, located within the Department of Art History at UIC, is an interdisciplinary program that emphasizes the evolving social and political contexts of cultural institutions, including museums of art, anthropology, architecture, history, nature, science, youth, and contemporary culture, and provides students with engagements essential to careers in diverse positions, including curators, exhibition developers, gallery directors, museum educators, social media directors, and more. MUSE is committed to preparing the diverse museum professionals that our nation deserves by recruiting, admitting and supporting strong applicants from groups underrepresented in our cultural institutions. Our program goals are: To prepare students with the knowledge, values and skills to: 1) Practice in diverse museum settings; 2) with and on behalf of various publics; 3) in a manner that will promote broad access to cultural institutions; and, 4) a more just society.

We know that admitting strong, diverse applicants is only the first step; we must also strive to support these young cultural workers of color throughout their graduate education. This is important for several reasons: First, while financial support alone is no guarantee of success, the affordability of a graduate education is linked to academic achievement (Bain, Fedynich & Knight, 2009). Further, students entering the cultural fields can expect to earn only moderate salaries (according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2015 median salary for Archivists, Curators and Museum Workers was \$46,710), making it important that they find the paid in-school opportunities that will allow them to graduate with little debt. Finally, internships are essential experiences for those seeking to enter cultural fields, yet rarely pay well, if at all. The MUSE Program is committed to helping these students succeed; we all need the new kinds of museums and exhibitions cultural workers of color will create for our society.

UIC is among the nation's top five most diverse campuses; based upon its full time undergraduate enrollment it is designated as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and is eligible to apply for any opportunities set aside for federal MSI, AANAPISI, and Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) institutions. UIC's undergraduate population is currently 26.4% Hispanic, 23.1% Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander, 7.9% Black, 35.8% White, 9.3% International, and 4.3% other/unknown. 53% of UIC's students are low income, and 36% are Pell eligible.

Reflecting the demographics of UIC overall, many MUSE students are low income, non-traditional/returning, self-supporting, and often working--some full-time--while attending classes. As an example, the cohort admitted in 2015 includes a McNair Scholar, and those who have worked at Walmart and other retail venues, as nannies and baristas, at galleries, and in a variety of other service positions. Many continue in these positions during their graduate studies. In response, we have crafted the MUSE program structure and curriculum to address the needs and interests of these students, in particular, for financial and other support, and experiences that build resumes and support post-graduation options, including doctoral study and employment in cultural institutions.

For example, we offer required classes at night as well as in the daytime to accommodate work schedules; admit small cohorts (aiming for 15 students each year) and ensure all students have assigned advisors and regular advising opportunities; we actively help students locate funding on and off campus (as two examples, in the 2015 cohort, 86% received some form of assistance, and we have just formed a partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), which will offer a 2016 applicant a one year paid position to learn and conduct evaluation at the MCA), and emphasize and support gaining both theoretical and practical fluency and experience during the program.

Five required courses introduce MUSE students to the *histories, theories and philosophies of museums and exhibitions; theories and practices of public engagement; histories, theories and practices of collecting; genres of museum and exhibition writing; and exhibition frameworks and practices*. Two of these courses are project-based, resulting in exhibitions and programs that are widely advertised and open to the public. With the assistance of department, program and affiliated faculty (list to follow), students choose five elective humanities courses on subjects and within disciplines supporting their intellectual development and capstone research, and complete 160 internship hours in museums and other cultural institutions. Because our program embraces the importance of interdisciplinary work and a broad humanities based education for our students to support their future careers, students will take classes across the research university and conduct capstone projects reflecting their scholarship. For example, these are a sampling of capstone titles: "Arts and Adolescents: Discovering Cultural Impact Through Photography and Play"; "Through Story: A Guide to Oral History for Community Organizations"; "Institutionalized Community Archives: Understanding a Community's Relationship with Its Collected History"; "Engaging Detroit - The Detroit Institute of Arts and the African American Community"; and "Reinterpreting Ethnographic Collections: Online Community Curation of the Philippine Collection at The Field Museum." Finally, students are encouraged to seek experiences within and capstone advisors from our campus Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change, which include the African American Cultural Center directed by Dr. Lori Baptista, and the Latino Cultural Center, directed by Dr. Rosa Cabrera, and our eight affiliated faculty members, including Drs. Baptista and Cabrera; Dr. Brian Bauer (Anthropology); Dr. Jennifer Brier (History, Gender and Women's Studies); Dr. Lennard Davis (English, Disability Studies); Dr. Robert Johnston (History, Jewish Studies); Dr. Carrie Sandahl (Disability Studies); and Dr. David Stovall (African American Studies, Education Policy Studies).

To further support our students' success entering the cultural fields after graduation we incorporate portfolio and resume building opportunities into the program; these include participation in bi-monthly interdisciplinary research presentations, year-end Art History and MUSE symposia, the internships (we encourage students to split their 160 hours between different sites to expand their networks), participation in exhibition and program creation and implementation in the two required courses noted above (an example of a collaboratively developed final project is AltTour UIC, an alternative walking and self-guided tour of UIC's organizing history; see its Facebook page for examples: <https://www.facebook.com/ALTourUIC/?fref=ts>), funding and other support for conference presentations (students have presented at the American Alliance of Museums, the Inclusive Museum and the International Council of Museums conferences), and encouragement and opportunities to publish, including in our new journal, *Fwd: Museums* (<https://fwdmuseumsjournal.wordpress.com/>), which received over fifty submissions from seven countries via open call for its inaugural issue, and will be released in June 2016.

This approach is proving to serve our students well; a sampling of alumni accomplishments and positions follows: Women's Board Education Fellow at the Art Institute of Chicago; Community Engagement and Programming Coordinator at Rebuild Foundation (artist Theaster Gates's project), Chicago; Education Facilitator, Chicago Architecture Foundation; Collections Assistant at The Field Museum - Anthropology; Smithsonian Institute, Invertebrate Zoology Department, Washington, DC; Curator at Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York; first place winner at Chicago's First Beacon Hackathon in March 2015; Collection Manager and Exhibition Coordinator at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago; Archives Technician, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; and seven MUSE students had essays and articles selected through peer review for publication in *Fwd: Museums*.

The MUSE program's ability to sustain outstanding humanities activities, beginning with its primary purpose of offering a rich graduate education in museum and exhibition studies to a diverse student population, is enhanced and will be supported through its location on the campus of a public research university in a dynamic urban center. Our students have access to all campus resources, from museum studies and art history courses in their home department, to related classes offered across the university, including *Public History*, *Museum Anthropology*, and *Disability Studies*, among many others MUSE students have taken as electives. Our students also draw on their home department and affiliated faculty for advising. In addition, our program benefits from its campus cultural center partners, where students gain critical practical experiences, and Chicago's wealth of cultural institutions, which we connect with for guest lecturers and visiting faculty, to support our curriculum, for internships and capstone research, and in a myriad of other ways.

This semester, for example, two required courses are being taught by visiting instructors who are also cultural leaders in Chicago: Paul Durica, the Program Director of Illinois Humanities, and Jeffreen Hayes, the Director of Three Walls, a contemporary art gallery. Past guest instructors have included Joy Bivins (Curator, Chicago History Museum), Rhoda Rosen (Curator and Instructor at Northwestern University and the School of the Art Institute, and former Director of the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership), and Carlos Tortolero (Director, National Museum of Mexican Art). In addition to ongoing partnerships with the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum and Gallery 400 on campus, we have a new partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art, mentioned previously, that will pilot during the 2016-17 academic year, and which we are confident will be continue into the future.

Museum and Exhibition Studies is part of the School of Art & Art History and the College of Architecture, Design and the Arts. Leadership has put an extraordinary fundraising team into place, headed up by Oliver Ionita, a development Director with a proven track record of achieving School goals. The Director of the School has made this her top priority, and is part of her serious commitment to increasing and funding diversity, access and inclusion. There are already one major donor, who is committed to matching a portion of this grant if it is successful, and several major donors who have already been approached and who would be positively moved by the NEH efforts. A major fundraising event will take place in the Spring of 2017, and this will also be a part of the annual appeal that will go out to over 10,000 alumni and previous donors. In years three to five, the monies will be expended in the following way:

For two MUSE students of color

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Graduate/Research Assistantship Stipends (2 X \$17,465)	\$34,930	\$34,930	\$34,930
Graduate/RA Fringe Benefits (2 X \$553)	\$1,106	\$1,106	\$1,106
Total	\$36,036	\$36,036	\$36,036

The Director of the MUSE Program is an experienced evaluator and researcher; in addition to completing a qualitative dissertation and publishing articles about innovative and policy-shaping uses of data, she has evaluated programs and exhibitions for museums and related institutions. Together with the Program Coordinator, in the third year of the grant, when the newly funded positions will begin, we will gather yearly qualitative data through post internship interviews exploring the experiences and meanings of the internships for participants; and yearly quantitative data tracking initial and subsequent post graduation employment. We will create a theory of change in order to understand the relationship between internships and initial and ongoing employment of emerging museum professionals of color. The Director of our School, Dr. Lisa Lee is also part of a major national evaluation initiative and network: Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship (APPS) that is part of *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life*. This is an ongoing research group that promotes and develops an integrated approach to assessment that takes into account the needs and assets of all stakeholders in a co-creative process, one that allows projects to become more transformational, just, and empowering for all. The data we gather and analyze will inform the program and, when published, the field.

References

- Bain, S., L. Fedynich, & Knight, M. (2010). The successful graduate student: A review of the factors for success. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics*, 3(7), 1-9.
- Farrell, B. & Medvedeva, M. (2010). Demographic transformation and the future of museums. Washington, DC: The American Association of Museums.
- Schonfeld, R. & Westermann, M. (2015). Art museum staff demographic survey. New York City, NY: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.