

Services & Activities Fee Annual Program Review

Program Name: Museum of Culture and Environment
Program Manager: Hope Amason, Lynn Bethke
Fiscal Year: FY2023

1. In what ways does your program support CWU students? Please be specific, yet concise.

The Museum of Culture and Environment (MCE) provides opportunities for informal education by providing 3-6 exhibits per year. Additionally, the MCE offers a wide range of programming from lectures by experts to hands-on activities to appeal to our diverse CWU student body. The MCE also supports the Museum Studies minor by offering opportunities for internships that develop essential practical and professional museum skills.

2. What are your specific program goals or learning/operational objectives? How are you assessing the effectiveness of your program in achieving those targets?

The MCE seeks to provide exhibits and programs that create opportunities for lifelong learning and foster self-discovery, global citizenship, and environmental stewardship. We assess effectiveness through visitation numbers, qualitative feedback, and an annual community survey administered each spring.

3. What is the overall purpose of your program and what service(s) does your program provide?
 - a. Are there overlaps or intersections with other university programs who have a similar purpose or service?

The overall purpose of the MCE is articulated in our mission statement, "to create opportunities for lifelong learning that foster self-discovery, global citizenship, and environmental stewardship." We work towards this mission by creating an informal learning environment (through our exhibits and programs) where students and community members can come together and engage in conversations about relevant issues, such as social justice and antiracist activism, climate change and its impacts in our community, or local habitats and biodiversity.

The MCE intersects with several university programs, including the Sarah Spurgeon Gallery, the Diversity and Equity Center, academic departments, student clubs and organizations. Our overlapping goals and programs strengthen the University by creating a web of resources. We work with many of these programs as collaborators to reach our shared goals.

The CWU Museum is recognized as being a key collaborator not only with other programs and departments within the CWU College of the Sciences, but also with community stakeholders, curators, and other CWU colleges. Below are some of the partnerships we fostered during 2021 – 2022:

Native American Student Union (NASU) and the Diversity and Equity Center (DEC): Our partnership with NASU and the DEC centered on an exhibit and march to raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People.

APOYO: We worked with APOYO to develop an exhibit about the history of this organization, to be opened in Fall 2022.

4. How does your program align with the purpose of S&A funding? *“Supporting cocurricular and extracurricular activities and programs participated in by students in the furtherance of their education.”*

The MCE is highly aligned with the purpose of S&A funding. We provide exhibits and programs for all learners which challenge and enrich the educational experience.

Year-round, we offer exhibits (informal learning opportunities) that enhance and support student’s academic experiences.

Below is a list of the exhibits developed by the MCE during AY 2021 - 2022 (including exhibits developed by student interns and museum studies classes), along with descriptions and the duration of each exhibit.

᠑ax̣ẉmn’ - “To Brush the Water”: Reviving Canoe Culture on the Upper Columbia River (2012 – 2021), Sept. 29 – Dec. 4

This exhibit celebrated the distinctive design and aesthetics of Indigenous technologies, including a distinctive canoe type, from the Columbia Plateau. It was curated by Dr. Shawn Brigman (an enrolled member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians and descendant of the Sinixt and Secwepemc).

You’re in Wheat Country: A Photographic Journey with Skip Smith, Sept. 29 – Dec. 4

Photographs of everyday life from small eastern Washington towns were featured in this exhibit, along with excerpts from conversations with residents from Washtucna, Kahlotus, Lind, Connell, and Ritzville. Curated by photographer Skip Smith, this exhibit invited visitors to encounter the subtle beauty and stark landscapes of eastern Washington’s arid wheat country.

“They thought they buried her, but didn’t know she was a seed” Photographs from Louisville, 2020, January 12 – March 12.

This exhibit featured the photography of Erica Williams, a Houston-based artist with roots in Louisville, Kentucky. Williams, who also curated the exhibit, provides a photographic response to the deaths of Black community members, including Breonna Taylor, at the hands of the Louisville Metro Police Department.

Calls to Action: Protest Signs from Ellensburg, January 12 – June 4

This exhibit takes the message of Black Lives Matter back to our own doorstep. Included in this exhibit were signs created by Ellensburg protesters that demand an end to racism, that support the Black Lives Matter movement, and that call for immigration reform and a strengthening of immigrants’ rights.

Tooth + Tusk: Evolutionary Storytellers, March 30 – Dec. 10

This exhibit poses the question, “What can we learn just by looking at teeth?” Visitors are able to compare the shape, size, color, and arrangements of hundreds of animal teeth (fishes, mammals, reptiles—even fossils).

Day of Action: Making Real Change in Ellensburg, March 30 – June 11

This exhibit showcased local activists who are working to make changes in our community and beyond—it is a companion exhibit to *Calls to Action*, which features protest signs from the Ellensburg community, advocating for equitable housing, the rights of DACA recipients, and Black Lives Matter.

The programs implemented in 2021 - 2022 reflected our audience interests (as assessed by our annual survey).

Program name	Program type	Date	Description	Attendance
Curator’s tour and opening: “They Thought they Buried Her . . .”	Virtual tour and opening celebration	01/11/22	Erica Williams, curator of the exhibit “They Thought They Buried Her But Didn’t Know She was a Seed,” provides a virtual tour of this powerful exhibit documenting the Black Lives Matter movement in Louisville Kentucky. Ellensburg Black Lives Matter activists join in to reflect on how the Movement progressed over time and across the U.S.	29
Teach-in: Ukraine	Hybrid event (in-person and virtual)	02/28/2022	A teach-in to address Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, featuring scholars with knowledge, experience, and personal ties to Russia and Ukraine.	300
The Art of Belarus Protest	Film showing and virtual talk by an artist		We showed the film <i>Courage</i> , which showcases members of the Belarus Free Theatre as they protest restrictions from President Lukashenka in 2020. We then hosted a talk by Rufina Bazlova, a textile artist who raises awareness of jailed protesters through embroidery.	18
COTS Community Celebration	In-person celebration for COTS faculty and staff	05/19/2022	This was an opportunity to re-introduce the COTS Community and the Museum, to hopefully inspire future exhibits, programs, and classroom visits.	19
Pots and Pans, Resistance and Rebellion: Myanmar’s Political Crisis and its Global Significance	Virtual panel of Myanmar activists	05/26/2022	This was intended to be a panel of activists and scholars working to resist the military junta that took over Myanmar in Winter 2021. It was canceled due to safety concerns of a panelist located in Myanmar.	Canceled

TOTAL Event Attendance	366
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5. How does your program support CWU’s mission and goals? (<https://www.cwu.edu/mission/>)

We recognize that CWU is in the midst of strategic planning—and we laud that this process has been centered on broader community input. Throughout the year, MCE staff and faculty have been responding to surveys and participating in listening sessions as a means for gaining insight into this work to redefine CWU’s mission, vision, and values. Given these fluid circumstances, we have chosen to draw from the things we have learned in these strategic planning sessions in order to evaluate not only our current exhibits and programs but also to plan for the future.

Three themes have emerged from the strategic planning thus far and we feel as though the CWU Museum of Culture & Environment is perfectly poised to address all of these. One of the community concerns that has emerged is how CWU not only celebrates but invests in the strength of our diversity—with the goals of creating a more inclusive and equitable campus environment. At the MCE, we feel that we share a similar vision for CWU and our broader community and it is encapsulated in our own mission statement, which emphasizes diversity and global citizenship. We have hosted events (the Art of Global Protest series) and exhibits (such as *“They Thought they Buried Her But Didn’t Know She Was a Seed” Photographs from Black Lives Matter, Louisville, 2020*) that focused on activism for communities who are marginalized by systems of white supremacy and oppression. We recognize, however, that the goal of inclusivity and equity need to be continually evaluated and the work we do re-assessed—and we will continue this work into the future.

A second theme that has emerged from the strategic planning process is sustainability. Again, this is encapsulated within the MCE’s mission statement, through our focus on environmental stewardship as well as global citizenship. During Spring 2021, we developed a YouTube series called “Imagine Sustainable Futures.” This entailed interviewing community members, students, faculty, and staff who are working to address habitat loss, climate change, and pollution. We have also featured exhibits and speakers series that address the future of climate change within our region (*Our Changing Pacific Northwest, 2017 – 2018*). We will continue this work into 2022 – 2023 with an exhibit about microplastics and their impact in our local watershed. This will include a series of events (possibly lectures) as well as opportunities for student involvement in exhibit development and program planning.

Finally, the third concern raised by our community was “engaged learning,” which is sometimes articulated as learning experiences that are transformative, “High-impact teaching practices.” We strongly feel as though museums, due to their tactile and experiential nature, are at the center of engaged learning (and this is evidenced by decades of research in education). That said, not all museums meet this standard. At the MCE we have been working hard to offer more opportunities for engaged learning for students, faculty, and staff. This includes developing 3D images of collections for classroom use and working with faculty and K-12 teachers to develop field trips that target specific learning objectives using hands-on activities. We know we can do more, however. Our future plans include reaching out to students and faculty who are interested in researching material culture or natural history collections, as well as expanding how we work with faculty to develop opportunities to meeting learning objectives through experiential and hands-on activities.

6. Please provide detailed information regarding who utilizes your program? (*Students, faculty, staff, community? Specific demographic information? Class standing, gender, ethnicity, transfer, campus location, etc.*)

The MCE has an annual visitation of approximately 3500 people. Visitors include students, staff, and faculty from across the university. The museum also has visitors from the community including seniors and families with school-age children. We track visitor numbers hourly and daily, but don't record specific demographic data.

7. How many unique CWU students utilize your program or services?
- How do you gather these metrics?
 - If you do not, what is preventing you from getting that data and how are you determining usage by CWU students?

We do not have data on how many unique CWU students utilize the museum. While we keep track of visitors hourly and daily, we don't have a way to track repeat visitors or to differentiate between a student and a community member. Anecdotally, about 2/3 of our visitors are CWU students. We are prevented from getting exact data because it would be disruptive to the museum experience to ask every visitor if they are a student. We do record when a faculty member brings their class to the museum, or when we become aware that a faculty member has assigned a museum visit. In 2021-2022, we recorded structured class visits from many departments, including Anthropology, Theatre, and Elementary Education totaling 140 students.

Numbers of CWU students visiting as part of a class are detailed below:

Term	#CWU students in class visits
Fall 2021	44
Winter 2022	46
Spring 2022	50

8. Are there any current vacant positions in your program?

No.

9. Given the budget reductions taking place and continuing for the remainder of the funding cycle, please tell us what specific impacts those reductions have had on your program compared to what was originally planned and including in your initial base funding request.

The budget reductions require the MCE to think more strategically about our use of resources. While we are still able to fulfill our primary goal of employing students, our ability to create dynamic exhibits and programming may be impacted. At this time, we have been able to absorb the cuts with minimal impact.

10. Are there any circumstances or challenges that are currently impacting your ability to use your base funding allocation this year?

No.

11. What growth or increases would you like to see in your program in the future?

There are many potential areas for growth at the MCE. We recently participated in the American Alliance for Museum's Museum Assessment Program for organizational success, which is designed to help museums transition to more effective models for serving their communities. This entailed a visit from a museum peer reviewer during Fall 2021, who interviewed faculty, staff, and students about their interactions with the MCE. Among the recommendations from our peer reviewer is expanded staffing, as we currently have 1 full time staff member, a part-time staff member (in the form of faculty workload release), and 2 part-time front-desk/docents. The peer reviewer noted that, while the MCE is making a good effort towards fulfilling our mission, the current staff are overwhelmed with day-to-day operations that they are not able to strategically plan for the future. And, given the many transitions occurring at CWU during 2021- 2022 and 2022 - 2023, the need for better planning has become of prime importance.

At the MCE, we are guided by a Museum Advisory Council (MAC), a group comprised of students, faculty, staff, and community members. This group is responsible for advising on our exhibits and collections acquisitions as well as broader structural concerns (policies, bylaws, etc.) Thus, the MAC is central to future planning. However, we have had a difficult time having sustained and diverse student involvement due to the many demands on students' time. We would like to expand student involvement with the MAC (perhaps creating a distinct student committee). And we recognize that this would be most successful if we were able to compensate students involved with the MAC with a stipend, in hopes that this more equitably accounts for their labor and insights.

Overall, one of our goals is to develop more equitable structures for student involvement at the MCE, that would involve compensating individual students as well as student clubs and organizations who provide curatorial consultation, planning for exhibits, or collaborations on programs.