

Services & Activities Fee Annual Program Review

Program Name: Museum of Culture and Environment
Program Manager: Lynn Bethke, Karisa Terry
Fiscal Year: FY2025

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 a broad range of students. The MCE also supports the Museum Studies minor by offering opportunities for internships that develop essential practical and professional museum skills. CWU students participate in setting the direction for the MCE through participation and membership in the Museum Advisory Council, which is also comprised of CWU faculty and staff, administrators, and community members.

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's mission is to provide exhibits and programs that create opportunities for lifelong learning and foster self-discovery, global citizenship, and environmental stewardship.

Our vision is to be a forum where mutual understanding, respect, and support for one another will be the outcomes of exploring our shared diversity.

We are working with the Museum Advisory Council to align our mission, vision, and values to the new CWU strategic plan by developing a strategic plan unique to the MCE.

Currently, we assess effectiveness through visitation numbers, qualitative feedback, and an annual community survey administered each spring. Once a strategic plan is in place, new indicators will be identified in order to assess progress.

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 mission of the MCE is to create opportunities for lifelong learning that foster self-discovery, global citizenship, and environmental stewardship by offering a variety of exhibits and programs throughout the academic year. The MCE provides an informal learning environment where students and community members can engage with a variety of topics.

- A. The MCE intersects and collaborates with several university programs, including the Sarah Spurgeon Gallery, the Diversity and Equity Center, academic departments, student clubs and organizations, and off-campus community partners (such as the Kittitas County Historical Museum, APOYO, the City of Ellensburg, and Gallery-one).

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. We also provide opportunities to collaborate with the MCE by co-developing programs and exhibits with students.

Exhibits: We’re currently hosting a major student-curated exhibit, which were developed and planned entirely by students. *Where the Forest Meets the Road* (based on student research in the Biology department) provides an update on the progress of the I-90 Wildlife corridor project and highlights the contributions of CWU students and faculty.

Programs: So far in 2024-2025, we’ve hosted several student centered programs. These include the Opening Reception for *Where the Forest Meets the Road*, at which student curators, designers, and exhibits installers had the opportunity to speak about their experiences and connect with other students, faculty, and administrators. We also hosted a panel of CWU Biologists and students involved in the I-90 Wildlife project to speak about their work. In collaboration with the Diversity and Equity Center’s Dia de los Muertos celebration, the museum hosted an ofrenda for community members. At this time, we also updated the exhibit *Where the Forest Meets the Road* with a Spanish language translation guide developed and published by a museum intern and GA. We participated in the College of the Sciences sponsored event *The Nature of Night*, in which our student interns developed a science-based activity, *Animal Detectives*, for 5-12 year olds. Just before the Thanksgiving holiday, the MCE collaborated with the Department of Anthropology and Museum Studies and American Indian Studies to host Jim Baugh, a Cherokee elder and traditional toolmaker, for two days of drop-in demonstrations and storytelling. As a capstone to the quarter, the MCE partnered with CWU Biology to host a Reptile Encounter, in conjunction with student curator led tours of *Where the Forest Meets the Road*.

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

The Museum of Culture and Environment at Central Washington University (MCE) works to support CWU’s Mission and Vision by presenting exhibitions and programs that stimulate appreciation and understanding of the world around us in students of all disciplines, and foster high impact practices, sustainable practices, and community partnerships.

This work also supports the core values of engagement, belonging, and stewardship for student success. This support includes:

- Hands-on experience for student interns and those in other courses in the areas of exhibit design, production and installation; exhibit curation; museum collections care; and informal education. Students from disciplines across CWU campus work within the museum. *Relates to high impact practices.*
- Multiple yearly exhibits on topics that intersect with the interests of the CWU community and are installed with assistance from CWU students. So far in FY25, *Where the Forest Meets the Road*, which was curated by students, has been our primary exhibit. In Winter and Spring, we will open *Roots of Wisdom: Native Knowledge. Shared Science* (traveling exhibit) and *Honoring Washoe* (in collaboration with the President’s Office, CHCI, Primate, Behavior, and Ecology, and PAN). *Relates to high impact practices and student engagement, community partnerships and belonging, and sustainable practices and stewardship.*

- Collaborations with student clubs, academic departments, and campus entities to create and enhance programming. Most recently, we collaborated with the Biology Department and Museum Studies to create an exhibit about wildlife crossings on Interstate 90. We were part of a collaboration with the Diversity & Equity Center's Dia de los Muertos Celebrations providing an ofrenda in our museum lobby area. Additionally, we provided programming for CWU College of the Sciences sponsored event *The Nature of Night*, that brings science education to community members. *Relates to high impact practices and student engagement and belonging.* We are actively working on collaborations with Pacific Islander Student Union, Native American Student Association, and American Indian Studies for programming for our Winter 2025 exhibit on indigenous knowledge from communities in Hawaii and the Pacific Northwest.
- Collaborate with community groups. We are actively working to partner with APOYO to provide bilingual tours of an upcoming exhibit (January-May 2025). Currently, a student intern and museum graduate assistant have developed a Spanish language translation guide for our exhibit *Where the Forest Meets the Road* (September 2024-January 2025), and are developing a similar guide for our upcoming *Roots of Wisdom* exhibit (January-May 2025). We continue to foster relationships with the Yakama, Wanapum, and other local indigenous groups as we develop programming for our Winter 2025 exhibit focused on indigenous knowledge and shared science. *Relates to community partnerships, student success through belonging and stewardship of sustainable practices.*
- Special lectures for students and the public by visiting and CWU professionals in association with current exhibit topics. Recently, this included a talk by biology students and faculty on the I-90 wildlife crossings research and collaborations with off campus organizations, and a 2-day flintknapping demonstration by former CWU student and traditional technology expert. *Relates to high impact practices, student engagement, belonging, and stewardship of sustainable practices.*
- Opportunities for instructors to incorporate current exhibits into their curriculum. In FY24, instructors in the areas of Anthropology and Museum Studies, Apparel, Marking and Textile Design, Sustainability, American Indian Studies, and Environmental Science brought groups of students into the gallery. Additionally, a museum student intern provided a guided tour for classes. We anticipate many more classes utilizing the MCE during Winter and Spring quarters. *Relates to student engagement, belonging, and stewardship of sustainable practices.*

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 2800 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.

7. How many unique CWU students utilize your program or services?
- a. How do you gather these metrics?
 - b. 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 this way we can make some educated guesses.

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?

In addition to the regular increases in the minimum wage for our student employees, we anticipate two areas of expense increases in the future: Higher costs for the rental of traveling exhibits, and higher costs for travel and compensation to bring guest experts to campus.

Higher costs for exhibits: Exhibit costs have increased for several reasons. Shipment costs have risen along with other prices (such as fuel). More importantly, the MCE is committed to paying professional guest curators in a manner that reflects their unique perspectives and expertise. The MCE has intentionally sought collaboration with professional guest curators who offer much-needed perspectives from marginalized communities. Paying them fairly is a high priority for developing trusting relationships between CWU and these individuals (and, by extension, with their communities).

Higher costs for travel/compensation: Programming costs have increased along with other prices (such as associated travel costs, e.g. rising mileage reimbursement and lodging rates). Additionally, it should be noted that the MCE works intentionally to build relationships with program participants who have expertise and lived experience that speak to themes within our featured exhibits (for example, we invited well-known Yakama beadwork artists for our Oct. 16, 2023 beadwork demonstration, which connected to the exhibit *Yakama Beadwork: Images in Glass*). Because MCE exhibits offer perspectives on (and/or celebrate the cultures of) marginalized communities, program participants (as with professional guest curators) bring much-needed insights to our campus community. Paying these program participants fairly is a high priority as it creates a necessary foundation for a trusting relationship between CWU and these individuals (and it is hoped that this trust extends to their communities).

In the future, our goal is to develop more equitable structures for student involvement at the MCE, which will entail compensating individual students as well as student clubs and organizations who provide curatorial consultation, planning for exhibits, or collaborations on programs.