



Leading Community College Art Museums & Galleries in the United States

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White Paper by **Nathalie Sánchez**

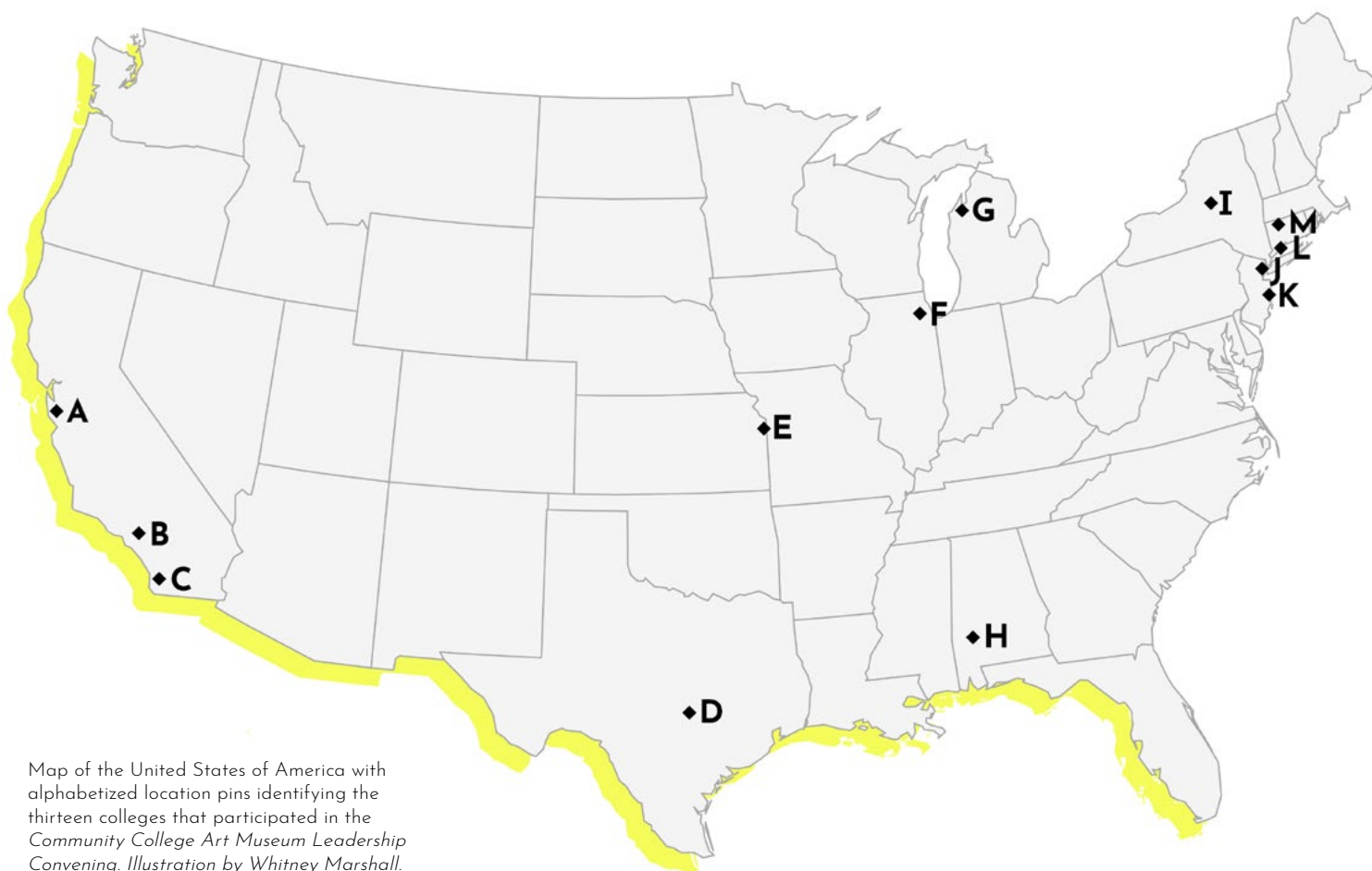
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List of Participating Colleges

- | | |
|---|---|
| A) Foothill College, California | H) Coastal Alabama Community College, Alabama |
| B) East Los Angeles College, California | I) Pratt Munson, New York |
| C) San Diego Mesa College, California | J) Hudson Community College, New Jersey |
| D) Austin Community College, Texas | K) Ocean County College, New Jersey |
| E) Johnson County Community College, Kansas | L) Connecticut State Community College
Housatonic, Connecticut |
| F) College of DuPage, Illinois | M) Connecticut State Community College
Northwestern, Connecticut |
| G) Northwestern Michigan College, Michigan | |

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By Nathalie Sánchez

I. INTRODUCTION

This white paper introduces the value, impact, and needs of art museums with permanent collections and art galleries on community college campuses in the United States. The insights captured here stem from a historic gathering of community college art museum and gallery leaders, who convened in Bridgeport, Connecticut on October 9-10, 2024 at CT State Community College Housatonic. [The Community College Art Museum Leadership Convening: A Gathering to Foster Collaboration and Expand An Understanding of American Art on 2-year College Campuses](#) brought together representatives from twelve museums and galleries from nine states.

As a result, this paper provides general context for understanding art museums and galleries in community colleges, shares a summary of the conference, and highlights four key themes:

- 1. Educational Value,**
- 2. Workforce Development,**
- 3. Community Connections,**
- 4. and Parent Organizations**

The conference findings highlight both the challenges and opportunities for community college museums and galleries nationwide and implications for the fields of academic museums and higher education (i.e., four-year universities).

II. CONTEXT

Art Museums & Galleries in Community Colleges

Community colleges are predicated on the principle of accessibility. The Morrill Act of 1862, also known as the Land Grant College Act, expanded access to public higher education by granting federal lands to states in order to establish colleges centering vocational training with programs in agricultural sciences and mechanical arts. Following this landmark bill, the Morrill Act of 1890 was written into law. This bill ensured non-discriminatory admissions practices that otherwise would disenfranchise students of color, especially Black students. In the mid-1940s, the government approved the G.I. Bill of Rights and released the [“Higher Education for American Democracy: A Report of the President’s Commission on Higher Education”](#) which committed to the financial and social investment of public higher education for prospective students.¹ As a result, student enrollment surged.² In subsequent decades, a community college building boom resulted in hundreds of new community colleges to accommodate millions of new students.³ Eight of those community colleges established during 1945 through 1973 are represented as case studies in this paper. Today, community colleges continue to provide affordable (i.e., low-cost or free tuition) and open-enrollment courses for students interested in pursuing a college degree (i.e., associate degree for transfer to state university or four-year university), career (i.e., certificate programs), or lifelong learning (i.e., non-credit courses). According to the [U.S. Department of Education](#), in the 2020–21 academic year, over

8.87 million students attended community colleges and 859,826 students earned an associate degree.⁴ Consequently, community college graduates contributed to 10.7 million jobs, otherwise accounting for approximately one out of eighteen jobs in the United States, based on the report findings in the [AACC The Economic Value of America's Community Colleges](#).⁵

This paper introduces the acronym “CCMG” as shorthand for a Community College Museum or Gallery. CCMGs serve as a non-commercial educational space that provides “unstructured informal learning through exhibitions and other programs.”⁶ Oftentimes, galleries are smaller in scale in comparison to museums. Additionally, some community colleges possess a permanent collection of material objects, such as art, natural history, or ephemera. Collections may vary in medium, genre, and overall size. These objects or original artworks are considered knowledge in and of themselves and are intended for observation, study, and interpretation. Collection items and exhibitions can also serve as supplemental teaching materials for course curriculum and student research.

Based on recent census data collected by the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries (AAMG), a total of 572 CCMGs exist nationwide. This is the first time AAMG compiled metrics for CCMGs. According to the [American Association of Community Colleges \(AACC\)](#), 1,024 community colleges continue to operate in 2025.⁷ Therefore, approximately 55% of community colleges today steward an on-campus museum or gallery. Museum and gallery disciplines include: anthropology, arboretum, art, archeology, archives, cultural heritage, historic house, history, planetarium, paleontology, science, and sports. Consistent with the AAMG census, 81% of all CCMGs specialize as art museums or art galleries. Furthermore, a CCMG works in tandem with their respective college, also referred to as their parent organization. Together, the parent organization

and CCMG determine a mission-driven curatorial and educational vision and, if applicable, a collections-based speciality, such as literary arts, contemporary art, or Latinx Art, to enhance course curricula.

Similar to academic museums at four-year and graduate institutions, CCMGs often serve as extensions of the classroom. While traditional museums are [defined by the International Council of Museums \(ICOM\)](#) as “...non-profit, permanent institutions in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage,”⁸ academic museums and galleries not only uphold these standards, but also function as the “...training ground for the nation's next generation of cultural leaders, the first engagement for many of our young with original objects, and campus centers for interdisciplinary discussion,” as described by [AAMG](#).⁹ Embedded on-campus and open to the public, CCMGs provide accessible entry-points for first-time visitors, offer part-time employment opportunities for students interested in museums as a possible career path, and serve as community hubs for interdisciplinary, dialogue-driven learning through the arts and material culture.

III. ABOUT THE CONVENING

During Fall 2024, museum and gallery leaders from across the nation gathered for a groundbreaking professional development conference and panel

discussion for the general public. Dr. Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye, Director of the Housatonic Museum of Art, and Craig Hadley, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Dennon Museum Center, invited community college museum colleagues to share expertise, discuss fieldwide issues, network, and collect benchmarking data. After issuing an open call for participants through the AAMG listserv, Dr. Reynolds-Kaye organized monthly virtual planning meetings with interested participants leading up

55% of community colleges today steward an on-campus museum or gallery.

to the conference itself. Funding for this event was generously supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art. Additional funding was granted by the Connecticut Humanities, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts, the College of DuPage Foundation, and the Johnson County Community College Foundation.

Altogether, conference participants work at community colleges that serve a combined total of nearly 230,000 college students.

Participants represented a diverse sample of community colleges from across the nation. Conference participants came from different geographic areas (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural areas) and a variety of major regions across the nation (i.e., West Coast, Midwest, East Coast) with ranges in college student population, CCMG staff, permanent collection, and budget sizes. Altogether, conference participants work at community colleges that serve a combined total of nearly 230,000 college students. Individually, attendees hold the roles of director, chief curator, museum educator, and/or faculty member at their respective institutions (see addendum).

Hosted by the Housatonic Museum of Art at CT State Housatonic, the conference consisted of six 90-minute, theme-based presentations co-led by participants, along with two gallery exhibition visits, and a guided public art walking tour in the city of Bridgeport. The culminating public panel entitled “Art for All: Connecting Campus and Community” featured seven convening participants, who served as moderators and guest speakers. With over 50 in-person attendees and a live stream of the event, the discussion surfaced overarching themes related to

educational value, workforce development, community connections, and parent organizations as they relate to community college based museums and art galleries.

IV. KEY THEMES

Based upon a review of conference presentations, the panel discussion, participant website data, and interviews with attendees conducted by Nathalie Sánchez, four central themes identified from the convening surfaced. These themes include: educational value, workforce development, community connections, and parent organization. The following section distills these themes with examples demonstrating the benefits and challenges institutions face today.

Theme #1: Educational Value

Education is the collective knowledge, values, and culture of people passed along from one generation to the next, while colleges are the educational organizations that “...provide structured formal learning experiences from defined curricula to equip graduates with knowledge, skills, and intellectual capabilities.”¹⁰ As an extension of formal learning spaces, museums provide informal learning engagements amenable to self-guided experiences that pique curiosity or guided educational programs (i.e., educator-led exhibition tour). Some college museums may be referred to as *teaching museums*. Broadly, a *teaching museum* is a museum that intentionally integrates exhibitions and educational programming with course curriculum to enhance student learning. For example, [The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College](#) in New York commits to such a “...designation as a teaching museum [which] signals Skidmore’s intent to make Tang exhibitions and museum use by students and faculty a significant aspect of the interdisciplinary undergraduate liberal arts education it offers...[through] regular use of museum galleries and collection storage as teaching spaces, and the principle that artworks can and should be used to advance knowledge across disciplines.”¹¹ This mission-driven, curriculum-aligned methodology

uses an interdisciplinary approach, hands-on learning, and engagement with the collections. As a result, such college museums function as laboratories for interdisciplinary, experience-based education that encourages the production of experimental exhibitions, student-led research, and inquiry-driven, object-based learning.

Case Study: The Art Galleries at Austin Community College

Established in 2020, The Art Galleries (TAG) at Austin Community College (ACC) support the college's art program to create arts accessibility, promote a diversity of artistic perspectives, and to provide educational spaces that cultivate creativity and critical thinking. [TAG's mission](#) entrusts "...community-wide engagement with the visual arts [that] produces important dialogues, creates new ideas, and gives voice to diverse viewpoints."¹²

TAG Director of Art Galleries and Exhibition Programming Peter Bonfitto dramatically increased accessibility to the Permanent Collection of Student Artwork. For the past 20 years, the ACC, with support from the Office of the Chancellor, acquired student artwork directly from the TAG-hosted annual student art exhibitions to create the ACC Permanent Collection of Student Artwork of over 300 student artworks.

More recently, the [TAG Permanent Collection Online Archive](#) centralized the permanent collection of over 250 artworks as well as artwork selected for the annual student art exhibitions dating back to 2013.¹³ Each digitized artwork includes a high-resolution image, basic catalog information (i.e., artist name, title, medium, dimensions, year produced), and location (i.e., installed, in storage, on loan). To further showcase ACC student artists, Bonfitto installed a series of art discipline-specific display cases with student artwork throughout campus. Each displayed artwork is accompanied by a printed label with basic catalog information and a QR code that directs viewers to additional online information. Through this technology, TAG's student-centered approach makes art accessible to all.

Case Study: The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art at Johnson County Community College

Another exemplar among CCMGs is The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art (NMCA) at Johnson County Community College in Kansas. NMCA is a two-level limestone building, designed by architect Kyu Sung Woo that houses ten galleries, a museum store, a 200-seat auditorium, and an onsite cafe. JoAnne Northrup, NMCA Executive Director and Chief Curator, understands how the museum is a valuable asset to both the campus and surrounding community by featuring rotating exhibitions, a variety of educational events, an online collections database of over 2,000 art objects, and a free [digital museum guide](#) available on the [Bloomberg Connects app](#).¹⁴ At this world-class museum, local and international artists are represented in exhibitions and collections. With a long-standing investment and commitment to the arts, the [NMCA upholds its mission](#) to "...[serve] as [a] cultural leader to facilitate deeper understanding of our world and contemporary issues."¹⁵

Theme #2: Workforce Development

Some CCMGs not only promote arts-based education, but also facilitate professional development by offering student employment opportunities (i.e., work study jobs at on-campus museums or galleries) and museum-related academic programs. Part-time, entry-level paid student positions and semester-long internships prepare college students with valuable on-the-job training and project-based learning essential for professional growth and career advancement. Perhaps lesser-known than undergraduate or graduate university programs, some community colleges offer museum studies associate degree and certificate programs to support emerging professionals in pursuit of a career in the museum field. Considering that community colleges offer open-enrollment and affordable tuition, there is often strong interest from first-time college students, returning students keen on a career change, and museum workers seeking further professional development.

Case Study: Museum Studies Program at San Diego Mesa College

For over two decades, Alessandra Moctezuma, Gallery Director and faculty member at San Diego Mesa College, has overseen two [Museum Studies Programs](#) (MSP) housed under the fine art department: a three course certificate program, and an eleven course associate degree with a focus on exhibition design and curatorial practice.¹⁶ Moctezuma's hands-on, skills-based curriculum and student-centered mentorship approach prepares graduates for careers in museums, the arts, and related fields. As a result, over 60 MSP alumni are employed at 30 museums, galleries, and art organizations in the San Diego area. In lieu of pursuing employment at museums or galleries, some graduates continue their educational journey after completing the MSP. For example, 11 MSP alumni obtained an MFA or PhD and now work as professors; six of them are currently teaching college-level studio art or art history courses. Moctezuma credits the program's success to community networking and relationship-building with nearby museums, arts organizations, and cultural partners. She remains committed to cultivating working relationships with on-campus and off-campus organizations throughout San Diego in order to forge a vocational path for San Diego Mesa College students and alumni.

Such a long-standing program does not come without challenges. The three main challenges revolve around (1) student internship pay and placement, (2) few full-time museum and gallery job opportunities, and (3) a lack of local bachelor's or master's degree programs in museum studies. First, unpaid museum internships continue to persist in the field and entry-level museum jobs often offer low compensation and benefit packages. Second, the low number of full-time, salaried job opportunities in museums leads to increased competition and often those positions are held by employees who graduated from four-year higher education institutions. The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) confirms that unemployment rates decrease as student educational attainment

Over 60 MSP alumni are employed at 30 museums, galleries, and art organizations in the San Diego area.

increases.¹⁷ For example, the unemployment rates are 6.2% for students with less than a high school diploma in comparison to the unemployment rates are 2.5% for students with a bachelor's degree. The unemployment rates are 2.8% for graduates who complete their associate degree. Third, the concentration of higher education institutions seems to align with better outcomes for emerging museum professionals. For example, according to the 2025 [U.S. News and World Report](#),¹⁸ New York state has over 130 four-year universities with a diverse selection of museum-related (i.e., museum studies, museum administration, curatorial studies, art history, historic preservation planning) bachelors and graduate programs. Perhaps this dense concentration has contributed to the success of the [Gallery and Museum Studies \(GMS\) Associate in Science Program](#) at Queensborough Community College (QCC), which surveyed students in 2022 and reported **an impressive 94.7% of GMS graduates continue their studies in museums studies and 77.7% complete a bachelor's degree.**¹⁹

Case Study: Museum Studies Certificate Program at East Los Angeles College

In 2020, East Los Angeles College (ELAC) launched a new [Museum Studies Certificate Program](#) (MSCP)—a seven course comprehensive program with courses in art history, anthropology, library science, and studio arts.²⁰ Additionally, students participate in a part-time, semester-long museum internship with a local host museum—such as the Getty, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes, the Museum of Latin American

Art, or the on-campus museum partner the Vincent Price Art Museum—while simultaneously completing an internship course. Currently, the ELAC MSCP is the only museum studies program available at a community college in Los Angeles county. With over 500 museums in Los Angeles County,²¹ the program attracts emerging and mid-career museum professionals, returning college students with a bachelor's degree interested in a new career, and current studio art and art history college students from across the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). [LACCD](#) comprises nine colleges and is one of the largest community college districts in the country.²²

To maintain an ambitious program like ELAC's MSCP, ample support is needed—both administratively and financially—as well as a streamlined collaboration between faculty across three departments, the Vincent Price Art Museum staff, and internship host museums. The internship component requires dedicated administrative staff for establishing a program structure for the intern placement process, which includes ongoing management of relationships with institutional partners, collaboration with the internship course instructor, administration of student stipends, program evaluation, and recruitment. As the program continues to grow, so too does the alumni community and post-internship student employment rates. Annually, [The Otis College Report on the Creative Economy](#) synthesizes state-wide arts sector data in conjunction with a longitudinal research study that declares “...California is a renowned national and global leader within the creative economy.”²³ The 2025 report findings revealed that creative economy workers are better educated and better paid with the most job gains in Los Angeles despite a state-wide contraction in employment of 0.9%.

Despite their impressive impact, community college museum studies programs remain understudied. Further research is needed to determine the quantity

and quality of museum studies associate degrees and certificate programs nationwide. Considering that these programs can serve as launching pads for students interested in advanced educational degrees and employment in the arts and culture sector, comprehensive data would not only benefit community colleges, but also four-year educational institutions specializing in museum studies and further strengthen the creative sector economy.

Theme #3: Community Connections

Museums serve as community centers for creative expression, cross-cultural understanding, and social engagement. Community college museums and galleries engage diverse audiences, including K-12 students, college students, professors, artists, neighbors, and other community members.²⁴ In addition to showcasing student, faculty, and emerging artists, these institutions curate temporary thematic, solo, or group artist exhibitions and, occasionally, internationally-traveling blockbuster exhibitions with exhibition-related and community-relevant programming.

Case Study: The Housatonic Museum of Art at CT State Housatonic

The host organization for the convening, the Housatonic Museum of Art (HMA), prides itself in serving the community of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Located in the heart of Downtown Bridgeport, the museum is the only designated art museum in



Three Community College Art Museum Leadership Convening participants sit around conference tables during a presentation session. Photo by Brandon Smith, Whiskey & Oxfords.



Four panelists present during the “Art for All: Connecting Campus and Community” public event at Connecticut State Community College Housatonic. Photo by Brandon Smith, Whiskey & Oxfords.

the city with a population that is 45% Hispanic or Latino, 26% white, and 22% Black, and as a community has a 22.5% poverty rate.²⁵ Most of the CT State Housatonic students come from Bridgeport or surrounding communities, and for the Fall 2024 semester, 57% were scholars of color and 64% of financial aid students received a Federal Pell Grant. The HMA is often the only art museum exposure for local students and community members. Not only does the museum offer free admission and public programs, but it also supports local artists, collaborates with local non-profits organization partners, and contributes to the vibrant local art scene. Past examples include partnering with Catalyst CT (formerly RYASAP) to showcase the artistic talents of middle and high school students in [From the Concrete](#), [I Rose: Breaking Ground for the Next Generation of Artists](#);²⁶ an award-winning exhibition, [The Practice of Democracy: A View from Connecticut](#);²⁷ and highlights the history of the Thomas Merton Family Center in the display, [Faces of a Sacred Place](#).²⁸

During the convening in October 2024, participants visited [Arwe Journey: Twentieth-Century](#)

[Afri-Caribbean Migration](#), a solo exhibition featuring the artwork of Bridgeport-based artist Iyaba Ibo Mandingo, at the HMA.²⁹ This exhibition tells the story of the Afri-Caribbean migration to Europe and North America in the twentieth century through his paintings and sculptures. Mandingo had an opportunity to showcase a sixty-one part painting series titled *Arwe Journey* for the first time as a full series. *Arwe Journey* depicts the history of the Windrush Generation as inspired by Jacob Lawrence’s *Great Migration* series and August Wilson’s plays was on view for the first time. Although Mandingo has displayed his artwork in group shows in galleries and museums, this was his first solo museum exhibition. This exhibition is a significant milestone for the artist in his career and a major contribution by the HMA to the community. As a third of the Bridgeport population were born outside of the United States, the theme of immigration resonated deeply with the community while the exhibition also offered a platform for amplifying Mandingo’s artwork. For the duration of the exhibition, from September 18, 2024 – February 21, 2025, an influx of museum-goers, many who were first-time visitors, viewed the exhibition and attended

public programs. Public programs included: Kwanzaa celebration, artist talk, book launch, and poetry performance. Furthermore, CT State Housatonic college students attended the museum as part of select academic courses and extracurricular student groups visits. Whether showcasing a solo exhibition of a local artist or spearheading a national conference of CCMG professionals, Dr. Reynolds-Kaye and the HMA team thoughtfully puts community at the center of its work.

Case Study: Cleve Carney Museum of Art at the College of DuPage

Justin Witte, Director and Curator of Cleve Carney Museum of Art (CCMA) at the College of DuPage in Illinois, produced the major retrospective exhibition [Frida Kahlo: Timeless](#) in 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic that mandated a college closure, quarantine, and remote work.³⁰ *Frida Kahlo: Timeless* featured 26 original artworks by the renowned artist while simultaneously featuring the *Tres Fridas Project* by contemporary artists' Revecca Torres and Marriam Pare. To accommodate the increased size and scale of the exhibition, CCMA expanded substantially beyond its own gallery walls from 2,500 square feet to 10,000 square feet by temporarily transforming a portion of the college's McAninch Arts Center into additional gallery space. In part, the gallery expansion and exhibition fundraising efforts were made possible with the partnership of all departments housed in the McAninch Arts Center. **This blockbuster exhibition and over 50 corresponding public lectures attracted an overwhelming public response with more than 102,000 visitors from all 50 states and 43 countries.** Consequently, the exhibition generated \$2.1 million in sales and an estimated \$9 million in economic impact for the surrounding community. Following the success of this exhibition, Witte and the CCMA team presented [Warhol](#) in 2023, a comprehensive exhibition of Andy Warhol's life and artwork with 94 artworks from the [Andy Warhol Portfolio: A Life in Pop | Works from the Bank of America Collection](#) on loan through the [Art in our Communities® Program](#) alongside over 150 photographs from the [College of DuPage Permanent](#)

[Art Collection](#).³¹ For the duration of the exhibition, from June 3, 2023 – September 10, 2023, over 50,000 visitors attended the v exhibition at CCMA.

These large-scale, widely-popular exhibitions had significant successes and challenges. A retrospective exhibition about a high profile, internationally-acclaimed artist, such as Frida Kahlo or Andy Warhol, demands a substantial exhibition and program budget to account for exhibition-related expenditures, expert curatorial staff, programming, and operations. In addition to fiscal support from the museum's parent organization, College of DuPage, and partner institution, McAninch Art Center, additional revenue from public and private funding sources tasks the museum director and fundraising arm (i.e., foundation board, membership program, museum gala) of the college. Such a successful exhibition can create a benchmark for college administrators who will come to expect well-attended, world-renown artist exhibitions with greater frequency, which may be unsustainable in the long-term. Furthermore, exhibition-related programming that accommodates all audiences—both the campus community and the community at large—can prove to be a monumental undertaking for a small museum staff, as was the case with CCMA's staff of five employees consisting of one full-time director and four part-time museum staff members.

Theme #4: Parent Organization

Community college art museum and gallery leadership face administrative challenges, including accountability to multiple stakeholders, the parent organization's expectations, and museum accreditation standards and best practices.

These museums and galleries are accountable to multiple stakeholders depending upon the organizational structure of their institution. Whether a community college is private or public, organizational hierarchy tends to guide the museum's governance structure and operations. Public institutions are accountable to the public and state government officials allocating tax payer funds, in addition to internal governing bodies

(e.g. college board of trustees), fundraising boards (i.e., museum foundation board), and other funders (i.e., individual donors, foundations, corporate sponsors, federal government). Considering that private institutions rely heavily on private funding sources (i.e., student tuition and philanthropy), they are ultimately accountable to their donors, alumni, and trustees. CCMGs are responsive to the interests and needs of the campus community: students, faculty, college staff, administrative leadership (e.g. the college president, vice president of instructional services, and dean of visual and performing arts), the board of trustees, as well as the arts community (i.e., artists, art historians, curators). With a multitude of stakeholders to consider, an academic museum or gallery director must balance various—and often competing—expectations set by decision-makers at both the college and state level.

CCMG staff may frequently face unrealistic administrative expectations, demanding programmatic output, and requests to continuously increase visitorship. **Most conference attendees reported financial, human resource, and collections-related constraints or a combination of these recurring issues.** Overall, participating CCMGs cite a small number of full-time staff regardless of museum or collection size, as well as year-to-year budget changes, inadequate collections storage facilities, and college leadership turnover that leads to abrupt priority changes or policy shifts.

Case Study: The Dennos Museum Center at Northwestern Michigan College

One way to assess and recognize a museum's standards-based operations and impact is through the American Alliance of Museum's (AAM) [Accreditations & Excellence Program](#).³² To obtain AAM accreditation, a museum undergoes a rubric-based, peer-review evaluation process focused on its operations and impact based on AAM's [Core Standards for Museums](#).³³ Among the conference-participating museums, the Dennos Museum Center at Northwestern Michigan College aims to apply for first-time accreditation in Fall 2026. As with any institutional distinction or

award, the accreditation process directly and indirectly benefits both the institution and parent organization. These benefits may include systematic streamlining of museum operations, enhanced donor confidence and philanthropic support, and increased grant competitiveness. Equally important, the parent organization bolsters their institutional reputation and credibility from a nationally-recognized museum accreditation award. Little is known to-date about the extent to which community college museums in the United States are accredited by AAM, or how community college museums seeking accreditation might differ in relation to their four-year academic museum peers.

Case Study: Proposal for a new program at Foothill College

After the hiring of a new college president at Foothill College in Los Altos, California, a renewed support for the arts motivated the formation of an Art on Campus Committee and inspired advocates to pursue an on-campus, student-centered art gallery. Because no such gallery currently exists at the college, Art History Professor and visual artist Cynthia Brannvall worked in collaboration with fellow colleagues to draft a proposal. The Foothill College Art Gallery proposal envisioned converting an underused classroom into an art gallery that doubled as an experiential learning lab for students, faculty, and guest presenters. When given the opportunity to present the proposal to the college administration, it was approved without designated funding or staffing. Therefore, the fundraising and staffing of the gallery would fall on the shoulders of faculty members with no promise of release time or additional compensation. Without sufficient resourcing from administrators, advocates reconsidered the would-be gallery. In the truest sense, a budget reflects an institution's values and, thereby, investment. With updated data to support the construction of an art gallery alongside key stakeholder buy-in, perhaps the Foothill College Art Gallery will come to fruition in the future. For now, the art gallery proposal remains on pause with the hopes of further defining

a mission-aligned vision, strategic plan, budget, staffing, and programming for a future opportunity.

V. DISCUSSION

CCMGs and their staff are essential to visitor learning, student career development, and community engagement. **As valuable assets within their respective communities, CCMGs require financial investment and college administrative support to ensure the success of the museum and, by extension, the students, staff, and the broader community.**

Despite the unique challenges CCMGs face, staff at these institutions remain resilient and steadfast in their work. Student-centered and community-minded, CCMGs produce meaningful educational offerings, such as ground-breaking art exhibitions, museum studies certificate programs, and public engagement events. Often overlooked are the ongoing working relationships and mentorship between museum staff and college students, alumni, faculty, museum colleagues, and other institutions. Nevertheless, museum and gallery staff members benefit from ongoing professional development opportunities that focus on both content knowledge and community networking tailored to the specific contexts and potential of their institutions.

As a result of the pilot conference, participants formed a supportive community and an organizing body for ongoing virtual knowledge-sharing meetings, future in-person convenings, and scholarship focused on CCMGs. Immediately following the conference, the CCMG cohort organized a virtual community check-in

meeting. Thereafter, the cohort agreed to a second national convening hosted by the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas. Understanding the importance of the collection and distribution of up-to-date metrics, additional outcomes include a commitment to working with AAMG to refine community college demographics, a chapter in a forthcoming volume produced by Rowman & Littlefield with a chapter entitled, “Rethinking our Purpose, Rethinking our Role: Student Engagement in the Academic Museum” written by the Denno Museum Center staff, and the production of this white paper. Furthermore, the CCMG cohort formed a “Community of Practice for Community College Art Museum & Gallery Leaders,” a bi-monthly virtual facilitator-led session based on relevant field-wide topics coupled with collegial conversation. This community-centered approach to peer-to-peer learning inspires thought-partnership and generates a collection of relevant shared resources. The CCMG cohort maintains educational excellence by not only seeking professional development opportunities in service to their respective college community, but by also leading by example amongst a community of colleagues that are actively advancing the field.



Six panelists present at the “Art for All: Connecting Campus and Community” public event to a room full of seated event attendees. Photo by Brandon Smith, Whiskey & Oxfords.

Endnotes

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Addendum

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

For more information about the Community College Art Museum Leadership Convening, panel discussion, and participants, please visit tinyurl.com/CCMG-2024 or scan the QR code below.

✉ hello@housatonicmuseum.org

☎ 203-332-5052



A. LIST OF CONVENING PARTICIPANTS:

- > Alessandra Moctezuma, Gallery Director and Adjunct Faculty Member
Art Gallery
San Diego Mesa College, California
- > Dr. Andrea Siegel, Coordinator, Permanent Collection of Art and Adjunct Faculty Member
HCCC Art Galleries
Hudson Community College, New Jersey
- > April Oswald, Museum Education Director Munson Museum of Art
Pratt Munson, New York
- > Craig Hadley, Executive Director & Chief Curator
The Dennon Museum Center
Northwestern Michigan College, Michigan
- > Cynthia Brannvall, Art History Faculty Member and Artist
Foothill College, California
- > Deborah Kline, Director and Adjunct Faculty Member
The Gallery at Founders Hall
Connecticut State Community College
Northwestern, Connecticut
- > Dr. Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye, Director
Housatonic Museum of Art
Connecticut State Community College Housatonic, Connecticut
- > JoAnne Northrup, Executive Director and Chief Curator
Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art
Johnson County Community College, Kansas
- > Justin Witte, Director and Chief Curator
The Cleve Carney Museum of Art
College of DuPage, Illinois
- > Kelly Gates Elmore, Coordinator
Kathryn Tucker Windham Museum
Coastal Alabama Community College, Alabama
- > Dr. Marilyn Kralik, Co-Chair and Faculty Member
Foundations Art Collection
Ocean County College, New Jersey
- > Nathalie Sánchez, Independent Contractor and Curator of Education Programs (2022-24)
Vincent Price Art Museum
East Los Angeles College, California
- > Peter Bonfitto, Director of Art Galleries and Exhibition Programming
The Art Galleries (TAG)
Austin Community College, Texas

B. CONVENING PARTICIPANT-LED CONFERENCE SESSIONS:

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Twelve Community College Art Museum Leadership Convening participants stand in front of the gallery entrance at the Housatonic Museum of Art at Connecticut State Community College Housatonic. Photo by Brandon Smith, Whiskey & Oxfords.

D. ADDITIONAL READING:

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About the Author

Nathalie Sánchez (she/her) is a Los Angeles-based arts education and museum leader, interdisciplinary artist, and arts advocate. Nathalie firmly believes in the transformative power of arts education, community, and mentorship. For the past two decades, she has developed and led visual arts, museum education, and professional development programming at arts education non-profit organizations and museums, including: ArtworxLA, Avenue 50 Studio, ESMoA, Fowler Museum at UCLA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), P.S. ARTS, Slanguage Studio, and the Vincent Price Art Museum. She graduated with her B.A. in Art History and Studio Arts with an emphasis in education from Loyola Marymount University and received her M.F.A. in Public Practice from Otis College of Art and Design.



Photo by Luis Godinez.

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