Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Minutes of the Education Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 14 March 2018, 2:30pm

Theater Level Conference Room #1

There were present:

Jil Womack Harris, Vice Chair

Lynette Allston

**Maura Bisceglia**

Cindy H. Conner

Dr. Betty Crutcher

Anne Noland Edwards

**Carolyn Garner**

Martha Glasser

Rupa Tak, via conference

Absent:

Terrell Harrigan, Chair

Kenneth M. Dye

Carolyn Garner

Michael J. Schewel, Jr., Ex-officio

By Invitation:

Jeffrey Allison

Celeste Fetta

Jody Green

Courtney Morano

Dr. Michael R. Taylor

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 2:31pm, Vice Chair Jil Harris called the meeting to order.

1. MINUTES APPROVAL

**Motion:** proposed by Ms. Edwards and seconded by Ms. Glasserto approve the minutes of the December 13, 2017 Education Committee meeting as distributed. Motion approved.

1. EDUCATION UPDATE: DOCENT PROGRAM

Chief Educator Celeste Fetta relayed two of VMFA’s Strategic Plan goals related to education:

1. On the Museum’s campus, create exceptional experiences of art and culture that engage, captivate and delight a growing and diverse visitor base.
2. II. Build the industry-leading education platform to reach every corner of Virginia.

She noted that with this year’s ChinaFest, the museum exceeded all expectations with 11,241 attendees, 170 volunteers, 62% of attendees as non-members, and 43% of attendees as first time at family day. Additionally, the audience diversity was represented in the following manner: 26.72% Asian, 9.19% African American, and 6.26% Latin American.

Then, she gave an update on VMFA’s Docent Program, noting the composition of the tour services team. Ms. Fetta noted that the Education team’s Interpretation and Education Theory emphasizes the importance of creating a dialogue, working together through personal and social interaction to create meaning. This involves engaging the visitor with authentic objects, which is done through the help of docents.

Ms. Fetta announced that VMFA will host the Virginia Docent Exchange, April 14-15, 2019. The event is important for both appreciating docents and learning from other docents in the area. Some of VMFA’s statewide partners, such as the Chrysler Museum, the Fralin, the Muscarelle Museum, and more participate in the exchange, and VMFA hopes to bring in a national speaker. She then noted that VMFA has 102 actively touring docents, 19 emeritus docents, and 57 honorary docents. During FY17, they collectively guided 702 (10,729 attendees) student programs and 827 (7,088 attendees) adult programs.

Ms. Fetta noted that the Education team has come up with a plan for docent evaluation and recruitment. She stated that since 1996, there have been 6 new docent classes, with the last recruitment taking place in 2012. According to Ms. Fetta, docent evaluation must occur prior to recruitment to understand current docent skill set. This also imbues a sense of value and provides vital feedback to docents with the intent of improving practice. Ms. Fetta noted the goals of a new recruitment, and also discussed the timeline which is predicated on the funding for a full time tour services assistant. The timeline reviewed included the following: summer 2019, hire Evaluation/Recruitment assistant; September 2019 – January 2020, docent evaluation; January 2020, recruitment information session; and February – April 2020, applications and interviews. She then reviewed the funding needs which total to $125,503 for FY19-FY21.

Courtney Morano, VMFA’s Interpretation Manager, reintroduced the Evans 360 Evaluation team and discussed their on-going, Visitor-Centered Evaluation. The team’s two projects include an overall visitor study and a gallery specific project. Next, Ms. Morano review VMFA’s purpose for evaluations, noting the museum completes evaluations to understand visitor motivation, experience, and reflection of permanent galleries and museum visitation experiences; cultivate a culture of data-informed decision making by building capacity for long-term use of evaluation; and to centralize data. Ms. Morano discussed the process of how the evaluations are completed at VMFA, noting that results from the process are cross referenced to look for emerging patterns. The pilot study for in gallery evaluation was conducted in the Fabergé and African galleries. Findings have revealed that patterns are emerging on visitor travel path and way the interactive screens are used in the Fabergé galleries and that video complements overall understanding of object use in the African galleries.

She then reviewed the timeline and needs for evaluation funding, which total to a yearly need of $170,755. The program is currently funded through grant money which will end after FY19. VMFA is already leading the way with its evaluation techniques; Ta Thongnopnua, VMFA’s gallery evaluation specialist, presented at a statewide partnership meeting and 3 institutions have already contacted her regarding how to adopt VMFA’s techniques.

1. VMFA ON THE ROAD UPDATE

Mr. Jeffrey Allison, VMFA’s Paul Mellon Educator & Statewide Programs Coordinator, provided an update on VMFA On the Road. He noted that the layout and design are being finalizing and the truck is beginning to be outfitted with its necessary structures to support exhibitions. Sponsorship opportunities are still available and residency sites for VMFA on the Road have been confirmed in each of the Museum’s statewide planning districts. He reported that the truck would be onsite at the museum for Fine Arts and Flowers. Mr. Allison provided additional statewide updates, including details on the Fellowship Recipients for 2018 as well as noting that Hear My Voice has opened at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley.

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Maura Bisceglia noted that she has been made aware of an opportunity for VMFA to be involved with public television in Northern Virginia as they are working on a 26-segment program about the arts in Virginia. She asked if the museum would be interested in getting involved as they are looking to pick up some of the segments on PBS. Dr. Michael Taylor, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Art and Education, noted he would follow up. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:35pm.

Recorded by: Jody Green

Administrative Assistant, Director’s Office