



FY26Q_Blaffer Art Museum FY2026 Program Questionnaire

- 1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.*

The mission of the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston is to create meaningful experiences with contemporary art that ignite curiosity, challenge pre-conceptions, and expand ways of seeing and thinking. In so doing, we endeavor to enrich the human condition and inspire rigorous engagement with the world today. The Blaffer Art Museum is a non-collecting museum that for more than 50 years has strived to be timely and topical. We present a continually changing schedule of exhibitions, performances, publications, public programs, and opportunities for learning that promote a relationship to contemporary art and the many socio-cultural issues it confronts.

The Blaffer serves the university community by cultivating partnerships with academic and nonacademic units to offer UH students a unique platform for learning, making, networking, and career-building. In recent years, the museum has re-energized our community as a forum for artistic experience-actively expanding programs and online resources. The Blaffer is stronger and more vital than ever. **Our yearly attendance of 18,648 has exceeded the five-year average by 60%** following the record setting year in FY23 (more than 20K) while growing attendance for a range of projects that expand the reach and student-driven activity of the Museum.

To benefit the UH student population, the Blaffer Art Museum accomplishes the following on a yearly basis:

- Presents nationally recognized exhibitions and programs (on par with CAMH and the Moody Center at Rice University) that consistently integrate student participation.
- Showcases UH student art in the *UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and *UH School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*, developed and presented with students and faculty.
- Produces collaborative programming for and by students via the Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA), founded in 2005. Has advised BAMSA without pause.
- Develops on-site interdisciplinary programs such as *Convergence Research* and *Blaffer Art and Design (B.A.D.) 2.0*, which support and promote student work in the public arena.
- Provides free guided tours of exhibitions for UH classes and group led by our (paid) docent staff that includes advanced undergraduate and graduate students in art, art history, and arts education.

- Hosts a successful academic internship program where both undergraduate and graduate students receive course credit while learning important professional skills.
- Employs students in both Visitor Service/Security roles and on the exhibition installation team
- Designs special opportunities for students to engage with museum professionals and exhibiting artists via class visits, critiques, and academic assignments.
- Organizes free public lectures and presentations that bring world-renowned artists, scholars, and arts professionals to campus and to classrooms.

SFAC funds are essential to the most significant and long-standing services the Blaffer provides the UH student community: the *UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition* and *Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*. Each year the Blaffer hosts these expansive exhibitions (and accompanying events including student artist talks) to gather students, friends, family, and our campus community to celebrate the next generation of rising stars. Since the reputation of the UH School of Arts graduates is local and national in scope, these high-profile exhibitions generate some of the Blaffer's largest audiences year after year. **In FT24, the two student exhibitions garnered 3, 892 museumgoers, accounting for almost a quarter of the museum's yearly attendance in a four week period.**

In addition to the student exhibitions, the Blaffer serves the UH campus community through programs designed specifically for students. **The Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)** creates career-building opportunities for students and makes substantial contributions to cultural life on the UH campus. Their semi-annual Red Block bash creates a hub for student organizations to meet and share their missions with the larger student population, and the BAMSA Biennial Art Show invites students from all disciplines to present art in a public forum. The **Blaffer Art and Design (B.A.D) 2.0** program further extends these efforts, providing the resources and stewardship for students in Industrial Design, Graphic Design and the School of Art to conceive, produce, and sell original objects at the Museum. **Convergence Research** is co-produced by the Blaffer and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts to promote experimental inter-disciplinary performances by current and recently graduated UH students spanning theatre, music, dance, spoken word, and visual art.

Our **base level of support has been \$21,500 since 2017 and we respectfully request a continuation of that amount in FY 2026. The Blaffer has significantly expanded and extended our commitment to student-centered programs and respectfully request One Time support in the amount of \$37,000 this year.**

2. Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the DSA strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exists, discuss any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting this data.

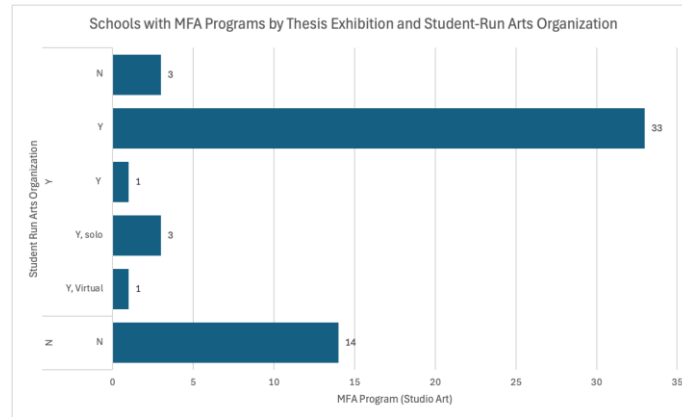
The Blaffer takes pride in building and supporting the creative capabilities of students, and we prioritize Division of Student Affairs Strategies and UH Goals to do so. **A key goal is to Develop opportunities for student exhibitions, engagement, and learnings, in alignment with the DSA goal to increase student engagement.** These initiatives' learning objectives are designed to build leadership and professional skills, communications abilities, project management tactics, and to expand on diverse experiences to nurture a creative community. Furthermore, the above align with the Strategic Goals set forth by the McGovern College of the Arts, (<https://uh.edu/kgmca/about/vision/>).

Key objectives:

- Realize two spring student exhibitions, the **UH School of Art Annual Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition** and the **UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition** held in the spring to culminate annual achievements
- Prioritize **student-focused programs** and partnerships such as **First Fridays** and **Convergence Research**, a creative, cross-disciplinary laboratory
- Steward **Internships** for both undergraduate and graduate students to build academic and professional knowledge and skills
- Provide professional experience to paid student **docents, art installers, and gallery attendants**
- Increase student attendance to exhibitions and programs, and provide space for students to present and discuss their artwork

Benchmarking and Measurements:

- A survey of 57 peer institutions—universities in Texas and nationally—revealed that in comparison, the Blaffer is maintaining best practices by advancing student opportunities with its current initiatives. Throughout the sample, 56% of the universities incorporating a visual arts MFA program presented student exhibitions. Additionally, 72% sponsored a student run organization. In Texas universities, the level of student support was a bit higher, with 68% of universities with MFA programs hosting exhibitions, and 86% universities affiliated with student run arts organizations. More than half (57%) of the universities surveyed had both student arts orgs and MFA shows.



Attendance Metrics:

The key metric the Blaffer uses to chart growth and measure success is attendance data. (Please see the figure below). The data for FY2024 showed steady progress. Following the Blaffer's banner 50th Anniversary Year (2023), when a new benchmark of 20,000 was met, in FY 2024, the Blaffer attendance was 18,648. Though short of last year's record, that figure represents a 60% increase over the museum's 5-year attendance average. Also noteworthy is that 36% of attendees were UH affiliates. Looking ahead, the Blaffer will set a goal for 50% of total attendees to be UH affiliates.

Monthly Attendance September 1, 2023-August 21, 2024).

Attendance	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY24
September	890	262	1,178	2,234	1,965
October	1837	174	949	2,457	2,003
November	1811	434	1,115	1,883	1,553
December	739	210	626	696	961
January	760	1,112	502	1,893	972
February	1007	185	1,056	1,819	1,152
March	871	522	2,409	2,034	2,379
April	n/a	450	1,263	2,289	2,495
May	n/a	601	823	1071	548
June	n/a	446	945	1,250	1,062
July	n/a	506	694	1075	492
August	n/a	422	1,376	1,607	1,511
Total FY sum	7915	5324	12,936	20,308	18,648

It is noteworthy that in March and April, when the two student shows were on view, attendance increased significantly from last year's total.

Attendance Details, Student Exhibitions:

- The combined total attendance of the *2024 46th Annual UH School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition* and the *UH School of Art Exhibition* was 3,892, which is almost one quarter of the museum's total annual attendance, in a 4-week period.
- Student engagements continued rapid growth—with an increase of 18% from the 2023-2024 student show attendance and a 36% increase in attendance from 2022-2024.

Program Descriptions:

UH School of Art Annual Student Exhibition. Every spring this popular exhibition introduces both campus and Houston audiences to the work of School of Art upper-level undergraduate and first- and second-year graduate students. The show features works selected by School of Art faculty in consultation with student artists. More than 100 UH artists will present works during this exhibition—which has long served to introduce rising artists to local patrons and provides students with the experience of presenting works in a professional museum.

Introducing emerging artists who are upcoming arts leaders and practitioners, ***The UH School of Art Masters of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition*** is much anticipated in Houston art community and beyond. Inclusion in this exhibition is required of all candidates from the school's five studio programs: Graphic Design, Interdisciplinary Practices and Emerging Forms, Painting, Photography/Digital Media, and Sculpture to graduate. The exhibition showcases highly developed bodies of work produced in a studio intensive environment over a three-year degree program.

The ***2024 UH School of Art 46th Annual MFA (Master of Fine Arts) Exhibition*** featured the works of eleven artists and included a full color exhibition catalog produced by the UH School of Art and is accompanied by well-attended public programs that included artist talks and performances. Additionally, a graduate Art History Intern wrote extended wall labels for each student artist's work after a thorough process of studio visits and interviews. The processes used to install these exhibitions met the museum's standards for professional practice as used in shows of national and internationally known artists. In the case of the MFA exhibition, each student's experience was customized as they worked one-on-one with professional staff members to plan, implement, and realize their respective installations. Many students and alumni consistently give positive feedback about the skills learned while installing their works and delivering public artist talks, some for the first time.

Founded in 2005, the **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA)** at the University of Houston is a student organization that focuses on building a strong community among the student body and is a point of pride for the Blaffer Art Museum. BAMSA encourages participation from all majors and artistic backgrounds, believing that artistry can take many forms. BAMSA organizes programs that support our

members' growth as artists and raise their visibility on campus. Additionally, BAMSA participates in the Blaffer's First Friday Tours, emphasizing our goal of encouraging students to engage with the Blaffer as a valuable resource.

Attendance Snapshot of Public and Educational Programs

Blaffer hosted **52 public or educational programs involving nearly 2,400 participants**, spanning artist talks, student activities, performances, workshops, and scholarly lectures. The number of programs is up from 47 in 2023.

**Please see notes about collecting attendance at the end of this section.*

- **Blaffer Art Museum Student Association** BAMSA hosted six public events and two public meetings with nearly 600 attending. Held **109 free Guided Tours**, up from 68 in FY 2013. Tours are provided free of charge to schools, community, and University groups. 1,123 University students/staff (primarily students) took 58 tours, about half of the total tours groups. By comparison, 645 University students took 36 tours in FY23
- For the fourth season, **Convergence Research**, held in partnership with the **Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts** showcased interdisciplinary student performances, featured six performances of artists spanning the College.
- In the summer, **Blaffer interns and BAMSA attended New Student and Transfer Student Orientations** to personally engage with new students.
- Hosted **109 free Docent Guided Tours of museum exhibitions**, a 60% increase from FY23. More than half of these tours were to UH groups, primarily students.

Blaffer Art Museum Student Association (BAMSA) Programs:

- Red Block Bash is a showcase for students to vend their creative work, as well as to engage in activities such as mural painting and museum tours, with free food and music. This fall's Bash attracted 202 students.
- BAMSA's Student Art Biannual is a student-curated exhibition that celebrates student artists working in various mediums. Each semester, BAMSA introduces a new element to the biannual, whether it's a unique theme, a catalog, or extended viewing hours. This ensures that each show offers something fresh and engaging for students to experience.
- The purpose of BAMSA Speaks is to invite guest speakers from Houston's art community to share their professional experiences and insights. These talks are designed to inspire students and offer guidance on how they can pursue similar career paths in the art world. On November 1st, BAMSA will host a panel featuring artist Unies Gonzalez. With experience as a photographer, curator, FLATS Lab Manager, and UH alum, Unies brings a wealth of knowledge that will be valuable to students with a wide range of career goals.

Additional Student Program Descriptions

The Blaffer raises awareness of the arts and the exhibition program by introducing our resources to students at campus-wide events, from the Weeks of Welcome to Stress-Free Finals and Orientation. Highlights include the programs below:

Visiting Artists: The Blaffer Partners with the School of Art to invite exhibiting artists to give public or talks and special interactions, class visits, and studio visits with students. Students, faculty, and community members gain access to leading practitioners in art, art history, and other disciplines that actively contribute to the contemporary cultural landscape. Recent Visiting Artists were Gabriel Lester and Jarod Lew.

Blaffer Art & Design (B.A.D.) This program has been a collaboration with UH students and faculty from Industrial Design (Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture & Design) and Graphic Design (School of Art, KGMCA). B.A.D. has continued steady progress, including its full public launch in 2023. In this program, students design and produce functional art objects that are displayed and sold at the Blaffer. Speaking to its success and applicability, faculty leaders now integrate the project into their curriculum annually, as a unique opportunity for art and design students to participate in all stages of creating a commissioned series of works for a real-world museum client. A designated showcase is at the museum to promote the objects and their designers.

Convergence Research is held in partnership with the **Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts**, starting its fifth season. Convergence Research is a creative, cross-disciplinary laboratory for interdisciplinary art students at UH. This free program is presented six times per year, and features UH student artists, singers, musicians, dancers, writers, and actors crafting interdisciplinary collaborations that frequently draw upon museum exhibitions for inspiration.

In the Blaffer's mutually beneficial partnership with the **UH Bauer School of Business**, the museum is a client for business students who conduct a twice-yearly analysis of the Blaffer campus marketing and communications strategy. Through continual feedback from student surveys, the class projects provide invaluable market research and recommendations to inform current marketing strategies.

Evaluation: Social Media/Website Analytics

Goals are also evaluated through metrics for the museum's **social media platform** supporting both the exhibition and educational programs at the Blaffer.

In FY24, analytics showed that Instagram gained a total of over 1,700 new followers with an 11.5% increase in profiles visits. Blaffer's Instagram account showed unique engagement across a variety of post types (static posts, reels and stories) with an average of 77 likes and 3 comments per post, respectively.

We were happy to see that student-related social media projects on Instagram totaled about 2000 content interactions.

(See chart below)

Performance

Reach ⓘ

25.8K

Content interactions ⓘ

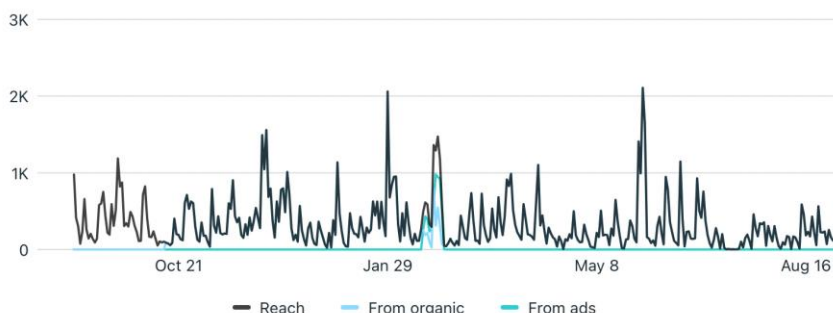
2K ↑ 100%

Followers ⓘ

Lifetime
11.2K

Link clicks ⓘ

106 ↑ 2.0K%



To highlight successful engagement regarding student exhibitions, the *UH School of Art 46th Annual MFA Thesis Exhibition* generated the highest interaction with a static Instagram post highlighting a series of artist talks led by MFA graduates; Phillip Pyle II, Zulma Vega, Madelyn Foutz and Ian Williams. This post, which performed "Higher than typical" across all metric points, highlighted the unique way the artists presented their MFA Thesis project. The post reached 1,400 accounts, generated 86 likes, 37 shares and 7 post saves.

Finally, from September 1, 2023-August 31, 2024, our **website** gained more than 95,000 page views from 36,636 active users. Pageviews for FY24 represents an 8.3% increase over the same period in FY23.

**Notes about Measuring and Evaluating In Person Attendance: In-person museum attendance is calculated by a twofold system: visitors are registered upon entry into the museum through a sticker and/or clicker, and the data is collected in a spreadsheet. This system is also employed during outdoor events, off-site programs, and large-scale openings. By always being free of charge, and prioritizing friendly, inclusive interactions with our guests, the Blaffer cultivates return visits and ongoing patronage. Students often make repeat visits to coincide with class assignments or public programming.*

Attendance data is gathered into comprehensive spreadsheets that delineate programming and daily attendance into categories such as tours, off-site events, and student organization events. These monthly spreadsheets are organized by fiscal year (and fiscal quarters), which makes it possible to review how many people were in attendance for a category in any given week, month, quarter and/or year. Additionally, the education staff regularly consults visitor relations staff to ensure accurate recording at public and education programs.

3. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2025) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.

In terms of the budget, there was a variance in what we initially budgeted and how we decided to spend the funds. This was a result of the museum's decision to prioritize hiring more student workers, particularly over the summer when the work-study program did not fund student employment. The Blaffer also awarded scholarships to students in the amount of \$6817. We spent \$2,027 more than we were allotted. This was due to some excess student salaries posting in FY2024. We will take these funds out of the FY2025 budget.

Also, SFAC support consistently enables Blaffer Art Museum's student-focused exhibitions and programs to thrive and grow alongside organizational changes. Under the steadfast leadership of Blaffer Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator Steven Matijcio since 2018, the Blaffer attained a position of strength from which it now moves forward. During Matijcio's tenure, the Blaffer met and exceeded its attendance and programmatic goals. Additionally, funding remained consistent with a mixed portfolio of grants, foundation gifts, Board contributions, and individual patronage.

In January 2024, Steven Matijcio departed to become Executive Director of the Knoxville Museum of Art. This change was followed by Susana Monteverde's departure in the role of Lead Gift Officer at the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts. Subsequently, Linda Shearer assumed the role of Interim Director for the Blaffer Art Museum, with Melissa Noble, Managing Director of the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, since stepping in to fill the role until the arrival of the new Director in November. Additionally, Blanca Wilson (Museum Administrator) and Rob Kimberly (Installation Manager) departed. The museum then welcomed Colleen Maynard, Executive Administrator) and Schuyler Shireman (Installation Manager); both of whom had previously been Blaffer staff members, as well as Jasmine Bousie (Visitor Services & Security Coordinator).

During these changes, the museum's SFAC-funded programs and initiatives went as planned and budgeted overall, with the changes listed above.s

In November 2024, we are thrilled to welcome Laura Augusta (Ph.D. and an M.A., Art History, University of Texas) as the new Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator. Augusta is an internationally known curator at the Stanlee and Gerald Rubin Center for the Visual Arts at the University of Texas at El Paso, where she leads all aspects of exhibition development, creation, and production for a 16-person team, including a three-person exhibitions team, while mentoring 5 paid undergraduate interns in curatorial practice, exhibition installation, and collections management. She manages daily operations for the museum, including collections care, budget processes, and maintenance; she supervises all new hires in the curatorial department; and she builds interdisciplinary programming in collaboration with campus and community partners. She serves as liaison with the university's Department of Art and with the El Paso and Ciudad Juárez communities, connecting them with the Rubin Center, the university, and with national and international visiting artists. And she leads grant-writing initiatives and donor cultivation

events for the Rubin Center's exhibitions program; in the past year the Rubin Center has been the recipient of major grants and fellowships from the IMLS, the Mellon Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation, among others, with Laura serving during that period as co-PI for grants totaling nearly \$800,000 in income.

4. Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2025 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5.0% in your total FY2025 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.

The Base Budget Request is to allocate \$16,000 for the completion of two on-site student exhibitions, \$4,000 for BAMSA programming and \$1,500 on other student-related programming. (This amount of \$21,500 does not include the One-Time funds requested to support expansion of student-oriented programming, First Fridays, Blaffer Art and Design, internships and jobs for UH students, and the funding of the Assistant Curator of Education position to lead campus initiatives). The current Base budget does cover fixed costs essential to the installation and promotion of the Student shows and programs, including wall painting, construction, furniture for the display of artwork, and publicity costs. Dedicated funds for student-centric programs are critical to the larger funding portfolio of Blaffer, which spans a spectrum of grants, foundations, individual patrons, and endowments.

If there were a 5% budget reduction to our proposed FY26 base fee of \$21,500, the reduced amounts of \$1,075 could—with difficulty—be absorbed in the \$15,000 installation costs of the two student exhibitions. This will be a challenge because all costs incurred with these exhibitions are fixed expenses including building and painting walls, constructing exhibition display furniture, and purchasing the miscellaneous hardware required to present the work. The Blaffer could downsize these shows by reallocating the modestly sized Saleri Gallery (located on the Museum's 2nd Floor) as storage space for an upcoming exhibition. This accommodation would reduce installation costs, but also the amount of artwork on display.

Additionally, if there were a similar 5% reduction in One Time Costs (\$37,000), the \$1850 would result in cutting student printing and installation costs (\$1000) and a small amount of student employment opportunities (\$850).

5. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

The Blaffer raises all the funds needed to produce exhibitions, performances, educational programs, and publications. University support is limited to facility operations and partial salary and benefit support. As such, the Blaffer works actively to gather outside resources such as grants from public agencies, private

foundations, board members, and individual supporters to continue operations and present our ambitious program. In the past two years these sources have included the National Endowment for the Arts, the Terra Foundation, Texas Commission for the Arts, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

These funds are systematically pursued throughout the year via grant applications, the development of personal relationships with prospective funders, direct mail campaigns, and with the support of our Advisory Board and colleagues in the KGMCA. **However, these funds are often marked as restricted use for exhibitions and are unavailable for student exhibitions and programs.** External funding from charitable foundations for exhibitions of student work is not available either. **SFAC funding is the only resource devoted specifically to UH student programming and exhibitions.** The Blaffer staff prioritizes the importance of student program and UH School of Art's student exhibitions and is committed to providing a professional level of service and expertise. There is a significant amount of time and effort spent to achieve the high standard of presentation expected. Similarly, the BAMSA is a crucial mode of contact for the student community that has been in continuous operation since 2005, and funding for their partnering events comes solely from SFAC (as does the funding for programs outlined in the One Time request).

The Blaffer Art Museum actively raises funds from individual donors to support the production of exhibitions, performances, and public programs. The primary conduit for raising such funds is the Blaffer's Advisory Board, which consists of up to 35 community members from various fields. Their yearly dues are \$2000, and each member is encouraged to give additional funds towards programming; ensuing donations range from \$500 to \$15,000. We encourage unrestricted giving whenever possible, so that the Museum can allocate said funds to exhibitions and programs in most need.

The Blaffer takes a similar approach to soliciting individual giving from outside the organization, and often work with art collectors or galleries affiliated with the artists we are presenting. We have conducted annual giving campaigns in the past, but these rarely yield significant donations; as such, these activities have been curtailed in favor of more targeted asks. The Blaffer does not work with corporations to solicit sponsorships, but we do receive occasional in-kind donations from entities which are notated by the KGMCA business office. Most of these donation records are maintained by the KGMCA business office, and many are given with an understanding of confidentiality and privacy.

Income sources are:

Income Sources, Every Year (Non-University Sources)	FY25 Projected	\$97,500
Grants and Foundations	FY25	\$602,080
		Total: \$699,580
Income Sources, Every Year (Non-University Sources)	FY24	\$97,500
Grants and Foundations - FY24	FY24	\$706,881
		Total: \$804,381

The key staff members who play the largest role in developing and seeking donations are the Jane Dale Owen Director & Chief Curator at the Blaffer Art Museum and the Associate Curator, as well the UH Development officer assigned to the College. They work closely with the Blaffer Advisory Board to raise funds.

Blaffer Art Museum is the only professional art museum on the main campus at the University of Houston and is open to all without an admission fee. We present innovative exhibitions of contemporary art and educational programs that are relevant and intellectually stimulating to the university community. By curating a program that brings together national and international artists with the work of UH students, the Blaffer creates a vital bridge that is unique to this campus. The Blaffer is dedicated to providing high quality programs for the entire student body, from student social events designed in partnership with students to rigorous programs engaging students directly with internationally known visiting artists and more.