POSITION DESCRIPTION

Post-Baccalaureate Assistant for Indigenous American Collections

Organizational Unit: Development & Sponsored Programs
Program/Project: Museum Collections Management Commons
Supervisor: Project Manager, Museums Collections Management Commons
Hours/Week: 35 (full-time)
Weeks/Year: 52
Appointment Term: 12-months (July 1-June 30), with no option to renew
FTE (Calculated): 1.00
FLSA Status: Non-exempt
Date: March 26, 2021

Job Summary

The Five Colleges Museum Collections Management Commons (MCMC) Collection Assistant for Indigenous American Collections lays the groundwork for strengthening the integration of Indigenous American art and cultural heritage objects currently stewarded by Amherst College’s Mead Art Museum, University Museum of Contemporary Art at UMass, Mount Holyoke College’s Art Museum and Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Smith College Museum of Art, Historic Deerfield, and Hampshire College Art Gallery. This is a 12-month, full-time, entry-level, term position made possible with the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This position has two openings. The assistants will work with each other to accomplish the MCMC project goals as well as in partnership with both the MCMC project staff and the Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) Gathering at the Crossroads grant staff in work that will ultimately benefit both grant programs. The goals for these positions are to identify and prepare art and cultural heritage object collections created by, or informative of, Indigenous American communities available in the Five College and Historic Deerfield Collection Database as tools for curriculum development across the five college network.

The assistant will research methodologies and rubrics for evaluating the appropriateness of catalog information about Indigenous American art and cultural heritage objects and employ those to assess the metadata of the related objects. Then, using existing workflows, and developing new ones, the assistant will prepare metadata for those objects across the six repositories and work with stakeholders to validate that metadata. Working with museum staff, and MCMC project staff (and consulting with campus NAIS scholars for subject-matter expertise), the assistant will work to understand collection needs and curriculum goals in order to activate the objects for teaching and learning. The assistant will then produce a status report about the Indigenous American holdings at all six repositories, identifying strengths and weaknesses at the repositories individually and together. Finally, working with stakeholders, the assistant will identify one or more object groups that could benefit from specialist attention, seek that person, and work with them to deepen understanding and potential for activation in learning. The assistant will coordinate at least one public program component as part of their work.
The assistant will be supported in their work by networks from both grants: the Native American and Indigenous Studies Advisory Circle and the MCMC Working Group. Additional mentorship opportunities may be cultivated outside of the immediate geographic area.

Importance of Diversity to our Educational Mission

Five Colleges, Incorporated and its five associated institutions (Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) are committed to supporting and sustaining a diversity of people, backgrounds, experiences, ideas and points of view for the essential contribution this diversity makes to educational missions of our organizations. In support of this commitment Five Colleges requires all of its employees to work cooperatively and effectively with the diversity of people at the colleges (students, faculty members, other employees) and within the organization itself.

Duties

• Interrogate the 1,750-3,000 collections items currently identified as having associations with Indigenous American cultures in the Five College and Historic Deerfield Museum Collections database. As part of this research process, the following topics should be broadly addressed:
  o Determine the extent to which each collection is in compliance with Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)
  o Determine the extent of known provenance information
  o Develop a rubric and apply it to evaluate the accuracy of cultural community associations
  o Develop a rubric and apply it to assess the completeness of catalog records

• Work closely with curators and leadership at each museum, individually and together, to understand collection needs and development goals.

• Coordinate with the NAIS Curriculum Development Fellow and NAIS Community Development Fellow to understand how these art and cultural heritage objects can be activated as part of the NAIS program at Five Colleges.


• Identify connections with other managed collections in Five College and Museums10 repositories (libraries, archives, special collections, oral histories, archaeology, etc.)

• Produce a status report about the Indigenous American objects that fall within the scope of this project, housed in all six repositories, discussing each repository’s holding individually, and the body of objects as a single networked resource. Outline current connections between these collections and other managed collections including areas for future research, and methods to enhance cross-collections discovery.

• Recommend areas of these collections, across the six repositories, that could benefit from specialist knowledge and work with supervisors and stakeholders to identify and coordinate visits by scholars to assist in evaluation of these identified subsets of the collections.
Engage in independent research during the last quarter of the project term to support the activation of the identified cross-collection subset of objects, working with supervisors, identified consultants, repository, and community stakeholders. Identify, create, and present a public program or other endeavor to elevate the identified subset of the collection to the repository stakeholders and the general public.

**Expected Outcomes for the Assistant**
- Gain experience working in a professional museum setting in an entry-level role
- Participate in one or more virtual conferences, symposia, or professional learning experiences
- Complete a specific research project with a public component
- Gain experience working with one or more experts in Indigenous American art or material culture
- Demonstrate competency in working in a distributed, complex, and multi-layered work environment

**Minimum Qualifications**
- Bachelor's degree, awarded within three academic years of start date; preference given to graduates from one of the Five College institutions
- Undergraduate degree in a related field completed within the last three years
- Experience working with Indigenous American objects and/or communities
- General knowledge of one or more Indigenous American tribal cultures
- Attentiveness to detail and organization
- Ability to complete multiple tasks and meet deadlines
- Ability to work independently as well as cooperatively
- Demonstrated judgment and discretion
- Ability to engage effectively with Five College faculty members, administrators, and community leaders
- Capacity to comprehend written and verbal communication
- Ability to communicate effectively in person, by telephone, by videoconference, and via email
- Ability to pass a post-offer background check

**Preferred Qualifications**
- Experience working with Indigenous American collections in a museum setting
- Experience working in museums in a higher education environment
- Experience with and interest in data for museum and/or library collections
- General knowledge of Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- Experience creating museum, library, or archive metadata
- Priority in hiring will be given to recent graduates of the Member institutions of the Five College Consortium.