

GETTY FOUNDATION RELEASES IMPACT REPORT ON DECADES OF DIVERSITY INTERNSHIPS

Pioneering Getty Marrow program recruits interns from underrepresented groups and leads to arts careers and museum engagement



Getty Marrow Undergraduate Internships class photo 2018. © 2018 J. Paul Getty Trust

LOS ANGELES – Getty Foundation has released the [first major report](#) on the impact of its long-running Getty Marrow Undergraduate Internship Program, showing that it successfully influences individuals from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue careers in art museums and visual arts organizations and inspires a lasting interest in the arts.

Getty Marrow is the largest and longest-standing diversity internship program in the visual arts in the United States, and since 1993 has supported paid positions for more than 3,200 interns at 175 organizations across Los Angeles County. By introducing college students to careers in the arts, the program aims to diversify the staff of art museums and visual arts organizations to better reflect the communities they serve.

Created in the wake of the beating of Rodney King and the resulting civil unrest in 1992 that brought widespread visibility to deep-seated inequities in Los Angeles, the Getty Marrow program (originally known as the Multicultural Undergraduate Internship program) was developed by then-Getty Foundation director Deborah Marrow, after whom it is now named. At the time, there were no internship programs in the visual arts at such a scale that offered similar opportunities to students from underrepresented groups.

For the report, Getty partnered with the consulting firm Engage R+D to analyze results from over 2,500 intern alumni surveys gathered over the past decade, nearly 30 years of demographic information about participants in the program, and recent alumni interviews.

Below are key findings (full report available here):

- **32%** of all Getty Marrow interns have gone on to work in the arts, a significant percentage given that prior work experience or educational background in the arts is not required to apply
- **92%** of those who now work in the arts attribute their career decision to the internship program
- The more internships alumni complete, the more likely they are to work in the arts
- **80%** of alumni visit museums regularly as a result of their internships
- **45%** have joined arts organizations as members as a result of participating in the program

Because the report was already underway when the COVID-19 pandemic began, a short survey was added in summer 2020 to assess the early impact of this crisis on alumni of the program. Among alumni working in the arts, 15% have been furloughed or lost their jobs due to COVID-19, which is commensurate with furloughs or job losses experienced by those working in other sectors of the economy.

“This report reveals the ways that internships can spark an enduring interest in and commitment to the arts among communities that have been underrepresented in cultural institutions for far too long,” says Joan Weinstein, director of the Getty Foundation. “We know that internships are just one pathway to change in cultural institutions, but the findings in this report demonstrate that they are a powerful one.”

Alumni surveys and interviews provide strong testimonies about the effectiveness of the Getty Marrow program in helping participants see that careers in the arts were possible for them.

“The summer that I spent as a full-time paid Getty Marrow intern was transformative, providing me with hands-on experience and helping me seed a professional network that continues to play a role in my career development,” says Getty Marrow alum Yao-Fen You, acting deputy director of curatorial and senior curator and head of product design and decorative arts at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. “I realized that I could pursue this career, and the sense of belonging that the internship program gave me is still critical today for underrepresented groups who don’t always feel welcome in museums.”

For many former interns, their experience opened the door to leadership roles at art institutions in Los Angeles and beyond. The report shows that 16% of the 2019 survey respondents working in the arts identified as a member of senior staff or department head of their organization.

“The Getty Marrow internship was an empowering experience for me that opened up the possibility of a career in the arts in service to communities and artists of color,” says Betty Avila, executive director of Self Help Graphics & Art in Los Angeles. “Now I strive to carry this forward by empowering others, including hosting new interns each summer and connecting with and mentoring these younger generations that will follow in our footsteps.”

Getty has been deliberate in funding internships that provide broader exposure to career pathways across all areas of museum practice, from curatorship, conservation, and education to communications and public programming. Participating organizations over the years have included major museums such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Getty Museum, culturally specific organizations such as the Japanese American National Museum, and community-based organizations such as St. Elmo Village.



2019 Getty Marrow Undergraduate Intern Jeremy Taylor at the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College. © 2019 J. Paul Getty Trust

The report also reveals that nearly 75% of alumni feel a greater sense of belonging to a network of museum professionals as a result of their internships. Raúl Flores is a Getty Marrow alum who interned at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and is now the artistic director and an intern supervisor at artworxLA, an arts education nonprofit that serves alternative high school students in Los Angeles.

“As a supervisor, I regularly draw upon my experiences as a Getty Marrow intern, not only for the methods of museum education my supervisors taught me, but also for the meaningful mentorship they provided,” says Flores. “My supervisors instilled in me the importance of seeing BIPOC in executive leadership positions at cultural institutions of all sizes, and I nurture that vision in interns at artworxLA as well.”

Although Getty’s program focuses on the visual arts, the report also offers timely insights for higher education. Surveys showed that 66% of alumni subsequently took coursework in the visual arts as a result of their Getty Marrow internships. This metric, combined with statistics of alumni pursuing arts careers, stands in contrast to the downward enrollment trend in arts and humanities in colleges and universities.

Along with outlining key components of the Getty Marrow program that lead to success, the report indicates areas for improvement and provides data-driven insights for an increasing number of organizations that have started new internship programs in recent years. Based on responses to the survey findings, Getty has identified several action steps that could improve the program, including:

- Expanding participation for alumni who self-identify as African American, the most underrepresented group among former interns now in the arts workforce
- Increasing the number of community college participants as a measure of greater equity and accessibility
- Strengthening culturally inclusive mentorship training for intern supervisors
- Providing more professional development for alumni working in the arts, particularly at the early career stage when many appear to struggle with securing full-time work

The report also acknowledges that while internship programs like Getty's can have an impact on diversifying the staff of museums and visual arts organizations, they are not enough to solve longstanding problems of racism and inequity in cultural institutions. Alumni interviews conducted for the report consistently point to three key challenges that may deter people of color from entering the field: low pay, lack of diversity, and limited job opportunities.

However, many alumni remain in the profession despite these challenges because of a passion for what they do and a sense of responsibility to help diversify cultural institutions. "I choose to stay in this field because it will not change if I leave," said one alumna in the confidential interviews. "There's so much important work to be done to make visual arts organizations and museum spaces truly inclusive and equitable."

"There is a tremendous opportunity for those of us focusing on the internship piece of the puzzle to learn from one another and work together more collaboratively to help alumni thrive," says Weinstein. "After all, these are the change-makers who will create cultural institutions that are more diverse, equitable, and inclusive."

For more information about the Getty Marrow program and videos featuring internship alumni, visit: <https://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/current/mui/index.html>.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Alexandria Sivak
Getty Communications
ASivak@getty.edu
1+ 480-239-4324

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