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Newark Museum Awarded Grant to Diversify Leadership in Art Museums

NEWARK: The Newark Museum has been selected by the Ford Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation as a partner in a major initiative aimed at diversifying the art museum profession. As part of this vision, the Newark Museum will offer an intensive three-year program for six undergraduate students from nearby colleges who represent populations that are not traditionally part of museum leadership.

“We have devoted our energies towards creating a progressive institution where all cultures feel welcome and inspired. Increasing and nurturing diverse leadership is part of our responsibility as a leading cultural anchor in the region,” said Interim Co-Director Deborah Kasindorf.

Through the Diversifying Art Museum Leadership Initiative, the Ford and Walton Family Foundation have each committed \$3 million over three years to support creative solutions to diversify curatorial and management staff at 20 pioneering art museums across the United States.

The initiative will support innovative strategies and programs to advance diversity across the sector, including hiring professionals from under-represented populations and offering fellowships, mentorships, and other career development options. The funded initiatives will affect curatorial and programmatic decision-making in the museums, as well as managerial choices, and lead to long-term benefits for the participating museums and the field as a whole. The outcomes of the funded initiatives will be shared with the larger field, enabling other art institutions to learn from successful approaches.

The Newark Museum’s program will increase the pipeline of diverse students pursuing museum leadership careers by having all six participants either employed in the museum field or enrolled in a museum-related graduate program by the end of the project in June 2021. The project will equip participants with essential professional resources and knowledge that will help them overcome

financial, educational, experiential and cultural barriers that might stand in the way of building careers as museum leaders.

“For museums to be truly inviting public spaces, they must better reflect the communities they serve. Achieving diversity requires a deeper commitment: to hire and nurture leaders from all backgrounds. This initiative creates the opportunity for museums to build a more inclusive culture within their institutions,” said Alice Walton, founder and board chair of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

Other museum initiatives that received funding through the Diversifying Art Museum Leadership Initiative include the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh; the Art Institute of Chicago; the New Orleans Museum of Art; the Oakland Museum of California; the Phoenix Art Museum; the St. Louis Art Museum and the Studio Museum in Harlem, in New York. The Diversifying Art Museum Leadership Initiative is fiscally sponsored by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

“The arts play an essential role in our society by inspiring people of all ages to dream and to imagine new possibilities for themselves, their communities, and the world. To ensure the future health and vibrancy of the arts in America, we need more arts leaders who understand and relate to the deeply varied perspectives and life experiences that weave the rich fabric of our nation,” said Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation.

The Newark Museum serves more than 250,000 children, adults and families onsite, offsite, and online annually. Reflecting the demographics of the city of Newark and the New Jersey-New York region, the Museum’s audience is economically and ethnically diverse, and includes individuals from the growing academic, business and artistic populations that have been drawn to Newark in recent years. The Museum reaches underserved, heterogeneous audiences through targeted initiatives including free family memberships for Newark residents, free admission for all Newark public and charter schools, school programs for New Jersey’s urban and suburban districts, and program offerings for early childhood audiences and seniors.

For further information on the Newark Museum, follow the Museum on Facebook at facebook.com/newark.museum or Twitter at twitter.com/newarkmuseum; or visit www.newarkmuseum.org.

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