

—DRAFT—

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS COMMUNITY CULTURE

Universities and four-year colleges are firmly established in their communities and states as centers of culture, providing opportunities for citizens in their regions to take advantage of a wide variety of rich resources. A great many universities and four-year colleges sponsor museums and special collections as an important part of their role in serving their regions. Some of the most outstanding museums and special collections in the United States are located in these institutions of higher education.

In the last several decades the community college has played an increasingly important role in providing opportunities for cultural awareness in communities served by these institutions. Through programs in fine arts, community theater, symphony orchestras, dance ensembles, and a host of other activities, community colleges provide opportunities for area citizens to expand and explore their interest in a variety of cultural activities.

It is not known how many community colleges sponsor museums and special collections as part of their service to area citizens. Some community colleges do, however, sponsor museums and collections, and more needs to be known about the range of such activities and their impact on the communities served.

Community colleges should be encouraged in their development of museums and special collections because of the increased accessibility of these resources to citizens served by these 1200 colleges that are often located in areas that do not have universities and four-year colleges. In addition, over six million credit students attend community colleges that could take advantage of these resources.

The results of a recent survey by the National Endowment for the Humanities found that two-year colleges account for 30 percent of all humanities enrollment in the nation. Enrollments in history, literature, and other humanities courses at two-year colleges numbered almost two million. Most of the nation's two-year colleges offer courses in traditional humanities disciplines; three-fourths offer courses in English and history; and two-thirds offer foreign language instruction.

Local museums and special collections are important complements for these programs and courses.

The following are examples of museums and collections sponsored by some community colleges:

- **Michael and Barbara Dennis Museum Center**—A 39,000 square foot facility with changing exhibits and special programs in the arts, sciences, and performance located on Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, Michigan. The center also serves as the summer home of the Michigan Ensemble Theater. The two-year college museum includes an Inuit Art Gallery, a hands-on discovery gallery, and three changing galleries featuring work by internationally known artists and exhibits from other museums nationwide.
- **The Cowboy Museum**—Hobbs Community College in Hobbs, New Mexico, has sponsored the Cowboy Museum for a number of years. The museum attracts local school children from all over the state and features a variety of panoramic displays on the history and culture of the American cowboy.
- **Louis Wolfson II Media History Center**—Located at Miami-Dade Community College, this archive for visual information and history is a collection of television newscasts. After the center was established in 1986, WTVJ, the first television station to broadcast in Florida and one of the earliest to begin operation in the United States, donated more than three million feet of news film dating from 1949 to 1979. The collection has since grown to more than ten million feet of film and tape. The National Publications and Records Committee has recently granted Miami-Dade \$80,000 for a joint project with the American Film Institute/National Center for Film and Video Presentation to support further development.
- **The New Museum**—Kalamazoo Valley Community College in Michigan recently launched a \$20-million capital campaign to house exhibits from the Kalamazoo public museum currently located in the city library. The new museum will include new exhibits designed by a nationally known firm and traveling exhibitions. The new facility will provide 12,000 square feet of

exhibit space for long-term exhibits that will focus on the culture, history, and scientific and technological development of Kalamazoo County and West Michigan. The college has already received \$12-million in donations to fund the development of the new museum.

- The Antique Musical Instruments Collection—At Cedar Valley College in the Dallas County Community College District, faculty members have assembled an outstanding collection of antique musical instruments. The instruments are part of the music program for which the college has received national recognition. Special arrangements are made from time to time for public display of this excellent collection.

Proposal

The League for Innovation in the Community College proposes to conduct a national study to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do community colleges provide opportunities for area citizens to expand their cultural awareness through museums and special collections?
- How many community colleges sponsor museums and house special collections?
- What is the nature of these museums and special collections?

The League will develop a survey to be sent to every community college in the United States asking for responses to detailed questions including the following:

1. To what extent are these museums and special collections
 - made available to and used by area citizens?
 - made available to and used by area elementary and secondary school systems?
 - made available to and used by the faculty of the community college to enhance their courses?

2. How did these museums and special collections come to be sponsored by and housed at the community college?
3. Did the college have a clear purpose in mind and purposefully seek to establish these programs, or did the college accept the programs when offered?
4. How are these programs financed?
 - special contributions?
 - college operating budget?
 - foundation support?
 - user fees?
5. What is the nature of the facilities? New and or refurbished? Location? Square footage? Access? Maintenance?
6. How are these programs administered? Number of staff or amount of staff time? To what college office does the chief coordinator report?
7. How are these programs governed? College staff? College cabinet? Trustees? Community board? Foundation board?
8. How are the programs marketed?
9. How are the programs evaluated?
10. What are the long-range plans for expanding or curtailing these programs?
11. Are there any plans for acquiring additional materials for the museum or collection?
12. How valuable have these programs been:
 - in helping the college to achieve its overall goals?
 - in marketing the college as a community asset?
 - in recruiting students?
 - in recruiting faculty and staff?
 - in attracting support for other college programs?

- in meeting the needs and interests of a select group of donors and supporters?
- in providing laboratories for faculty members to enhance their courses?
- in serving as a morale booster for faculty and staff?

In addition to the survey response, requests will be made for brochures and reports on museums and collections for additional information.

At least ten community colleges will be selected for site visits to provide for a more extensive review of selected museums and special collections. The site visits will provide an opportunity for more indepth review and will result in descriptions that can serve as examples for other community colleges that might wish to develop museums and special collections or to expand their current development.

Outcomes

A major document, perhaps a book, will be the primary outcome of this project. The document will include an analysis of the data providing the first-ever report on the extent to which community colleges serve their citizens through museums and special collections. The document will also include detailed descriptions of at least ten museums and special collections. Finally, the document will include a set of guidelines derived from the survey data and the on-site visits which can be used by community colleges that wish to develop or expand museums and special collections as a service to their communities.