SPARK | THINK | MAKE

Transforming the Museum
Museums are unique institutions on campuses. They collaborate closely with academic departments to strengthen classroom learning, but they also nurture students’ lives outside the classroom, provide intellectual inspiration for faculty broadly, and act as a hinge between a curious public and the college. They are also often the sole entities on campus to house works of art that offer viewers a bottomless source of knowledge, pleasure, continuity, and disruption to current ways of thinking, knowing, and communicating.

Because of its varied collections and its breadth and nimbleness of forms, the college museum is especially well positioned to take risks and to strengthen, support, and catalyze student learning and faculty teaching as it evolves in the 21st century. It offers students experiential, applied interaction with art and ideas through observation, analysis, curation, and creation.

We began this plan at the cusp of the museum’s 9th decade of history. As we developed the vision for its future we sought to both leverage its remarkable history, and to move beyond it, to strengthen its particular capacities and flexibility of forms. Our ultimate goal is to express the college’s mission and support its community in more integrated, creative, and innovative ways.

To fulfill its mission WCMA has historically balanced six key tensions, shown below. Each decision the museum faced happened along the spectra of these tensions. One might plot choices about acquisitions of art, staffing, exhibitions, rules about gallery behavior, hours of operation, and more as points on these lines.

Museums have often treated these tensions as dichotomies: we prioritize learning and teaching or a global reputation; we work primarily inside our walls or outside of them. As we developed a vision of what WCMA could become in the next decades, we debated these tensions. Some we decided were false dichotomies: a mission centered squarely around learning and teaching, for example, is not at odds with a global reputation. Other times, their existence helped push our thinking forward: we concluded spaces and programs for productive chaos can beautifully coexist with white cube spaces, as long as the public knows which is which. And at times we used the tensions to make deliberate decisions about how we wanted to reposition the museum: more outside our walls, for example, than in the past.

What follows is a vision of the museum as an inspiring and exciting center of learning and pleasure, seeing and making, contemplation and risk taking. I hope you will engage with us in the coming years as the museum expands its reach and relevance in the years to come.

Christina Olsen
Class of 1956 Director
Williams College Museum of Art

Vision

As the locus of Williams’ legacy in the arts, the museum will become an expanded center for the arts at Williams: a dynamic site of art and programs that embodies the potential for the liberal arts to catalyze our ability to think creatively and critically. We believe the museum should be a vibrant hub for deep student learning and participation; for taking risks and testing creative, future forms of scholarship and teaching; and for boldly affirming the relevance of the arts. Partnering closely with faculty and others, we aspire to be “a safe place for unsafe ideas” on campus. We will not just sustain but revitalize the college’s world-class legacy in the visual arts for generations to come.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan outlines a path to a richer and deeper relationship between the museum and the college, students, faculty, alumni, and the public. The plan is divided into two sections: first, three major initiatives that together would transform the arts at Williams and will require substantial increases in space, staff, and financial resources. Second, a set of revitalization steps required to continue to do our best work.

Major Initiatives

The plan centers on three major initiatives designed to expand the museum’s role in the life of students and faculty, and leverage its resources, spaces, and practices to keep pace with the evolution of the college. These require significant investments of staff, time, space, or funds.

The building is a key element in realizing these initiatives. The planning process confirmed that WCMA has outgrown Lawrence Hall. Although the museum will transcend its walls as its programs have greater reach, its space must be significantly improved and enlarged if the aspirations of this plan are to be realized.

DEVELOP A CRITICAL MAKING INITIATIVE

Combining critical thinking, design thinking, and creative practice, critical making seeks to build students’ capacity to make and design experiences. The museum will both lead and catalyze projects, sometimes acting as a site for the exploration of design problems outside its walls and other times as the site of a project’s final form, which manifests as an exhibition, program, installation, etc.

WAKE UP THE COLLECTION

The collection is at the center of the museum, and has tremendous potential to stimulate learning, creativity, and scholarship. The museum will “wake up” the collection’s potential by significantly growing it, increasing the quality and space dedicated to its display and study, and offering it up as a campuswide platform for student creativity and experimentation.

BECOME A CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL LIFE

The museum will expand its role as a portal between a broad, diverse public and the campus by becoming a curator and broadcaster of an array of public programs around visual culture, both onsite and online. As a dynamic hub the museum will fertilize interdisciplinary connections and bring together thinkers in purposeful and inviting spaces that build social and intellectual life for the college community.

Revitalization Steps

The plan also includes eight revitalization steps. These steps focus on critical elements of the museum’s infrastructure that must be strengthened for the museum to continue to fulfill its mission:

- Program
- Students and Faculty
- Collections
- Facilities
- Digital Engagement and Infrastructure
- Sparking and Feeding Passion
- Museum Staff
- Finance

Institutional Metrics

The museum will establish four key metrics to measure success:

1. Deep and wide engagement: many people having meaningful experiences
   Public interaction (students, faculty, the public) with the museum and with art is the primary manifestation of our mission. Our goal is to measure how many people are engaging with WCMA and at what level. The spectrum of participation moves from 1. Clicks on the website; 2. Feet in the door; 3. Repeat visitation; 4. Co-production with us, i.e. co-teaching, or co-curating.

2. Superlative, diverse staff: highly trained staff with an excellent work ethic doing their best work
   As the engine that drives the museum’s success, our goal is to attract and retain highly trained, diverse, motivated, and enthusiastic staff who are the best professionals in their area of expertise.

3. Buzz: recognition in the larger field
   Broad recognition for unique and challenging exhibitions, programs, and training of emerging museum practitioners are yardsticks to measure our influence in the greater art and college museum fields.

4. Passionate giving: significant increases in the donation of art, funds, and people’s time
   Resources in the form of time, money, and expertise donated to WCMA are important indicators of the interest and excitement our programs and exhibitions generate.
TRANSFORMING THE ARTS AT WILLIAMS
Develop a “Critical Making” Initiative

The museum will launch a major initiative aimed at building the capacities of students to make and design. Inspired by the term critical thinking, Critical Making is an expanded practice of curating that borrows from design thinking: a creative and collaborative process in which our spaces, collections, and publics provide the context and/or the materials for a rigorous form of creative practice. Critical Making teaches the power of failure as a vital component of innovation. The initiative is inherently open-ended – there is no single right solution to problems – and interdisciplinary. Critical Making combines research, observation, critical thinking, hands-on design, and fabrication. Projects move through multiple, iterative phases and in the process, students build a range of skills and new ways of thinking and working. They start by conducting field research, for example by documenting visitors’ attitudes, preferences, and behaviors, or by analyzing data and researching the topic at hand. As ideas take physical form – as exhibitions, prototypes, and more – students learn visual discernment and selection, and develop spatial understanding. Group collaboration and social learning come into play as teams combine data and refine their project. The students master observation by testing prototypes and evaluating participants’ reactions. And finally, they learn to improvise and solve problems when prototypes fail and need to be rethought.

The initiative will be campuswide, and the museum will lead or catalyze projects, sometimes acting as a site for the exploration of a design problem outside our walls, and other times as the site of a project’s exploration seen through to its final form – as an exhibition, program, installation, or course.

Key Initiatives

**BIENNIAL WINTER STUDY PUBLIC PROGRAM: “YES, AND”**

Students will form groups and work with a faculty advisor to dream up an installation for the galleries. The caveat: their project must be able to be produced in a week and must fit in a designated space. In a fast-paced public program the groups will present their ideas to a team of judges led by WCMA’s director. Judges will select one project to go forward. But, the museum director can impose one constraint – a material, conceptual, or spatial condition, for instance. The director’s “Yes, and” condition must be delivered within 20 minutes of hearing the proposal. The winning group receives a stipend and a team of museum staff to help realize their vision within a week.

**MUSEUM-BASED COURSES**

*Making Art Acquisitions,* a 200-level course cross-listed in Art & Economics

Co-taught by a museum curator and economics professor Stephen Sheppard, students research aspects of the museum’s collection, attending art auctions in New York, and studying specific contemporary artists and the fluctuations in the market value of their work. Their final assignment is a presentation to the museum’s curatorial acquisitions committee arguing for the value of a specific acquisition to the museum based on market research and faculty and student use. The group that makes the most persuasive argument receives funds to purchase the object for the collection.

*Making Exhibitions*

The course above will alternate each year with a course taught by museum curators on exhibition-making that will culminate in an exhibition made collectively by students in the course.

*Designing the Museum: Spaces and Places*

In this course, co-taught by museum staff with faculty in architecture, economics, and sociology, as well as visiting artists, students will explore and reimagine the museum’s various spaces and functions – for example shop, entry area, event space, and visitor services activities. Students will apply creative thinking and problem-solving skills to real-world issues facing the museum and experiment with what have become important sites of contemporary artistic practice as artists push beyond the confines of the traditional exhibition space.

**CURATORIAL FORUM FOR FACULTY COLLABORATION**

With faculty partners across disciplines, WCMA will offer an in-depth inquiry into the potential of museums as sites of learning in a liberal arts setting. Designed in response to strong desire among Williams faculty for opportunities to co-curate, the forum is modeled on highly successful efforts at sister institutions. Led by faculty and museum staff together, the forum will conceive of new pedagogical and programmatic models for faculty-museum collaboration.
Wake Up the Collection

Every work of art in the museum’s collection has a rich history and multiple meanings that necessarily shift over time and place. The collection is critical to the museum’s past and future success and plays an essential role in attracting and inspiring faculty, students, and the public. Yet currently much of the collection is underutilized because of limited display space, inaccessible storage, insufficient online access, and minimal interpretation.

We will wake up the collection’s role in the life of the college around three main priorities: 1. Significantly growing the collection by acquiring and borrowing the highest quality works of art, to keep pace with the curriculum, globalization, and changing artistic practices; 2. Increasing the quality, quantity, and nimbleness of spaces devoted to its display and teaching; 3. Creating and supporting more access to it, intellectually, socially, pedagogically, and creatively.

Key Initiatives

STRENGTHEN THE COLLECTION

We will undertake an ambitious effort to grow the collection by strategic alumni outreach and increasing endowment support for acquisitions. Growth will focus on filling curricular gaps to teach the popular Art History 101-102-103; building on the museum’s strengths in American art, global contemporary art, and other key areas beginning with ancient, African, and Southeast Asian art.

Art Outside Our Walls

The highly successful WALLS program will grow to include 300-500 works of art giving more students the opportunity to participate. Programming will expand to include optional “gallery tours” of dorm rooms and ways for borrowers to respond to their works of art through blogging and other means. The campus’s public art collection will likewise grow, through pursuit of additional resources for acquisition, conservation, and interpretation.

Consortium for Video and New Media Collection Sharing

Because technology-based artworks are prohibitively expensive for most small museums to purchase, maintain, and preserve on their own, WCMA will partner with college and university museums to develop a collection-sharing initiative around new media and video work.

ADDITIONAL, FLEXIBLE SPACE FOR STUDY AND STORAGE

To study works of art up close and use them in courses, students and faculty need dedicated space. WCMA’s Rose gallery provides such space, but currently is at capacity. Additional, flexible classrooms/galleries are needed to keep up with demand and meet the interest of new faculty. New spaces will be modular, offering shifting seating configurations and moveable walls – functioning as gallery or program space as needed.

Visible Storage

Currently most of the collection is packed in tight storage spaces at the museum, or off-site. We will establish a new storage space at the museum where faculty, students, and the public can view stored objects through glass walls. Digital access to the collection through touchscreens outside the glass will allow visitors to learn more about what they see in this visible storage facility.

STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY ARTS LEADERSHIP

The museum will develop a broad initiative to strengthen our role as a deep and creative learning resource for all Williams students, including those historically less likely to pursue careers in the arts as well as graduate art history students. Key methods include strengthening the Mellon Curatorial Fellowship for Diversity, teaching skills of connoisseurship and close physical observation of works of art using the museum’s collection, curating and publishing students’ original research on the collection, and more.

BETTER ONLINE ACCESS

The majority of the collection will be catalogued and digitized (currently at about 30%) and published online. The museum will redesign the online collection interface so users can browse and search it visually and in more ways, including “faculty use.” For example, faculty interested in exploring works of art commonly used in teaching the Civil War, impressionism, or organic chemistry will be able to do so.

KEYS TO THE COLLECTION

This broad-based initiative is aimed at exciting interest in the collection through creative and performative engagement strategies. By encouraging users to mine the collection for inspiration, the initiative will draw out diverse meanings of objects and highlight their inexhaustible potential. Students, faculty, artists, and others will create, perform, make, or publish plays, songs, works of art, short stories, and more inspired by collection objects.
The museum will expand its critical role as a portal between a broad, diverse public and the campus by becoming a broadcaster and curator of an array of public programs around visual culture, both on-site and online. As a hub the museum will bring together scholars, writers, artists, and other specialists to talk about their discipline and how it relates to the social, cultural, and political world around it. The purpose of the center is to amplify and deepen existing programs on campus that offer scholars a broader public for their ideas, fertilize interdisciplinary connections between the humanities and other disciplines, combine intellectual and social life, and provide purposeful, comfortable, and inviting spaces for programs.

**THE LEVITT FELLOWSHIP AT THE MUSEUM**

This existing fellowship for an emerging artist includes a mixture of teaching, projects involving faculty and students, and a public exhibition or performance. It is intended to foster collaboration and synergy between at least two of the arts programs at Williams. The fellowship, however, is underfunded, lacks an administrative center, and the fellow does not have studio space, housing, or exhibition or program space. The museum will become the new home for the fellowship, administering it and providing programming or gallery space as appropriate. The fellowship will also be strengthened to include housing and studio space.

**TOUGH TALKS**

This series will feature speakers addressing difficult, controversial topics that relate to the humanities, or a pair of speakers in conversation with strongly opposed points of view. Talks will explore or expand notions of visual culture but in all cases address probing and provocative current questions and issues. Examples include: biotechnology as scourge/biotechnology as artistic medium, and the deinstitutionalization of culture.

**NEW PUBLICATION FORMATS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

We will develop a series of low-cost, sustainable print and online publishing channels including a print-on-demand imprint for fast publication of museum conversations and student work. We will also partner with other institutions to jointly tackle and blog about important issues in the humanities and visual culture, and develop them simultaneously and collaboratively. The aim would be to heavily cross-link institutions to create a more coherent narrative than the usual call-and-response of blogging. The essays could be collected and published as an edited volume later.

**SUMMER SCHOOL**

Using our exhibitions and programs, along with those of nearby visual and performing arts organizations as their material, faculty and other experts will offer a dynamic set of lifelong learning experiences centered at the museum around the arts and culture of the region, transforming Williams and the museum into a summer learning hub of cultural experiences in the Northern Berkshires.
STEPS TO REVITALIZATION

During the strategic planning process, our working group considered not just big transformational initiatives, but also a host of smaller changes to strengthen our current functions. These will be achieved primarily, though not exclusively, using existing resources.

The incremental and iterative steps toward revitalizing the museum will provide exceptional testing grounds on the road toward some of our larger initiatives.

PROGRAM
- Create exceptional exhibitions and programs
- Catalyze learning through making
- Innovate new ways to work and communicate

STUDENTS AND FACULTY
- Inspire for tomorrow’s arts leaders
- Empower students
- Empower faculty
- Create dynamic spaces
- Bring students face-to-face with artists

COLLECTIONS
- Assess and rethink
- Strengthen collection research and access
- Grow

FACILITIES
- Enhance entry experience
- Create a beautiful place for art
- Provide a comfortable space for programming and events
- Devise an effective and efficient place to work together

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
- Build capacity
- Develop user-friendly, robust, and accessible online collection
- Position the website as platform and form for exchange of ideas
- Create a nimble, beautifully designed website
- Improve digital communication

SPARKING AND FEEDING PASSION
- Tell the story well
- Make visiting committee a coveted invitation
- Build support from individuals and foundations
- Build donations of art
- Channel passion effectively
- Keep in touch

MUSEUM STAFF
- Establish a culture of communication
- Foster a creative work culture
- Build leadership strength
- Attract and maintain a highly professional staff
- Evaluate our collective work
- Address staffing needs

FINANCE
- Generate accounting accuracy and transparency
- Produce budgets with impact

STEPS TO REVITALIZATION

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Program

By 2017 WCMA will choreograph a comprehensive program that manifests its “transforming initiatives” as ambitiously as possible in its current space and with current or moderately increased resources. Collections, exhibitions, and programs will drive one another: exhibitions and programs will often grow out of the collection, and objects will enter the collection by way of exhibitions and programs. We will creatively leverage our intimate size, college setting, and interdisciplinary context; experiment with new and hybrid forms of exhibitions, programs, courses, and more; and make the program a nimble platform for curatorial and museum training.

Create Exceptional Exhibitions and Programs
Create dynamic, engaging exhibitions and programs that advance scholarship, stimulate new thinking, explore new forms, and put WCMA on the map.

TACTICS
• Exhibit and engage great global contemporary art and artists working across an array of artistic, performative, and social practices
• Broaden and deepen our approach to American art and material culture, for example with the Fielding exhibition and course
• Experiment with a course that takes place in the galleries during public hours, allowing the public to experience the course and students to consider the role of the public in gallery and exhibition making
• Test a set of dynamic summer programs that mimic academic forms – classes, workshops, lectures – for a non-academic public, using cultural resources of the Berkshires

Catalyze Learning Through Making
Leverage the museum’s unique capacity as a locus of both intellectual and hands-on experimental learning on campus by giving students and faculty the opportunity to create exhibitions, programs, publications, and hybrid forms.

TACTICS
• Construct public and co-curricular aspects of the Publication Studio program around book production
• Test artist-driven projects that stimulate thinking about spaces and functions in the museum, i.e. the atrium, the store
• Launch a college/graduate student course on exhibition-making in fall 2014

Innovate New Ways to Work and Communicate
Become a reflective institution that articulates and shares our practices with students, faculty, and others to lead the field in museum methodology.

TACTICS
• Convene think tanks of curators, museum practitioners, artists, and faculty around key intellectual and pedagogical issues, for example interpretation or digital collections, and share with the broad public
• Develop a clear methodology for sharing and critiquing exhibition and program ideas at their genesis, and build engagement, display, and evaluation strategies out strategically from those ideas
• Create standards for interpretive materials with an eye to excellence and clarity

Measurement
• WCMA regularly receives national press, awards, and accolades for its exhibitions, programs, and publications
• Other college and university museum colleagues ask how to implement similarly innovative programs at their institutions
• WCMA becomes a must-see destination for elite travel groups from other institutions as well as the general public

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS
Publication Studio:
As part of a broader Williams initiative, Book Unbound, WCMA will set up an on-demand press in fall 2014

Labeltalk:
Ongoing exhibition series that celebrates multiple interpretations and perspectives on art
Students and Faculty

By 2017 WCMA will be a vibrant hub for cultural, social, and intellectual life, both inside and outside the classroom. We will create permanent or pop-up spaces and conditions that support student and faculty co-curating, as well as convening, socializing, and lingering; deeply involve students and faculty in the creation of the museum’s program; and create sustained mechanisms for students and faculty to have meaningful, first-hand interactions with art and artists.

1960 Scholars:
Every year, the art department selects a small number of students who they believe have potential for a career in teaching, research, and creative work.

Museum Associates (MA):
A group of Williams students who facilitate museum experiences for PreK-12 school groups.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Fullerson Award for Leadership in the Arts:
Recognizes graduating students who are poised to become future arts leaders.

Art Majors Club:
The art majors club consists of interested and motivated art majors from art history, art studio, and history and practice.

WCAA Advisory Committee (WAC):
Williams students brainstorm ideas and take charge of projects aimed at creating meaningful museum experiences for their peers.

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TACTICS

Increase student attendance and repeat student visitation

Empower Students
Foster student agency and participation in the museum and collections

TACTICS

• Imagine and implement programming to engage and reflect on campus affinity groups and encourage their integration with one another and the museum
• Play an active role on campus discussions about identity, diversity, and related issues through powerful art experiences
• In tandem with the art department, explore collaboration or possible consolidation of student art groups (Art Majors Club, 1960 Scholars, Museum Associates, WCMA Advisory Committee) to create more vital and well-funded organizations that have a meaningful role in aspects of exhibitions and programming
• Collaborate with Museum Associates to develop an MA-facilitated peer tour program

Empower Faculty
Foster initiatives that encourage faculty to drive WCMA initiatives

TACTICS

• Create a new faculty advisory committee instituted by the college
• Create parameters for faculty-driven exhibitions and programs and provide resources to make them happen
• Deepen WCMA’s integration into new thinking around Art History 101-102-103 by working closely with art department faculty on an ongoing basis
• Integrate tactics articulated in Digital Engagement goals to empower faculty to engage more deeply with the collection and programs in their teaching
• Secure funding for additional Rose staff support position

Create Dynamic Spaces
Modify, enhance, and create new permanent or pop-up spaces to generate energy and use among students and faculty

TACTICS

• Create new museum spaces that encourage social interaction and informal gathering as well as individual lingering or study
• Select and install seating and furniture to support a range of activities and needs
• Test seasonal shift in hours to noon – 8 PM to better suit students’ schedules and to maximize use of space

Bring Students Face-to-Face with Artists
Create more opportunities for sustained, first-hand experiences with art, curating, and artists

TACTICS

• Consistently build time and space into the installation schedule to increase opportunities for artist/curator/student interaction
• Refine WCMA at Night. Rethink frequency to heighten energy and refocus program on creating experiences that connect students to artists and their practice
• Collaborate with the art department to devise artful joint campaigns to spread the word to students and the extended public about upcoming visiting artist presentations

Measurement

• Overall student attendance has increased by an annual average of 10%
• Repeat student visitation has doubled
• Faculty use across disciplines has increased by 20%
• Enrollment for WCMA-based course is at capacity
• Museum Associates and WAC membership grow by 10% annually and participants report that their experience strengthened their interest in and skills related to arts leadership via exit surveys
Collections

By 2017, WCMA’s director and curatorial staff, working closely with a cross-section of faculty, will develop and implement a collection strategy that prioritizes both quality and curricular use. The collection plan will develop clear, forward-thinking collecting priorities. The collection will grow, be refined, and become more accessible to all comers, both physically and virtually.

Assess and Rethink
Review all objects in the collection and their use

**TACTICS**
- Assess the collection beginning with areas that receive little attention, for example extended loans and reserve collection, works displayed or stored offline
- Identify works in need of conservation or ones that require special handling
- Develop and implement a deaccessioning plan

Strengthen Collection Research and Access
Research collection areas that lack authoritative supporting materials and publish research online

**TACTICS**
- Increase digitization by seeking additional grant funding for research, digitization, and collections interface
- Seek funding to hire research assistants at masters level to do thorough collection research
- Establish a practice of making current and past label copy digitally accessible

Grow
With a greater understanding of the collection’s existing strengths and weaknesses, the new collection strategy will focus on permanent holdings of exemplary quality that are integral to the curriculum across disciplines and act as a catalyst for new thinking in museum practice

**TACTICS**
- Streamline the acquisition process and refine collection priorities
- Actively seek and solicit important gifts through Collection Council and strengthen faculty participation through Faculty Advisory Council (FAC)
- Refine collection priorities in conjunction with FAC and seek out and create innovative models for building, maintaining, and using collections
- As much as possible purchase, works from WCMA-generated exhibitions

Measurement
- 100% of collection has been assessed as to status, storage, usage and conservation
- 75% of works in database have academic usage information
- Collection is used 10% more by faculty, both in Rose and the exhibitions
- Other college and university museums use WCMA as a model for building and usage

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Facilities

By 2017, if a new museum building or major renovation is not being undertaken by the college, we will find ways to use our building to best support our institutional goals and programs and to flexibly serve Williams students and the broader public.

Enhance the Entry Experience

Overhaul first experience of WCMA to maximize clarity, comfort, and coherence of the museum visit. Develop ways for approach and entry to invite visitors to take part in the programs and intellectual life of WCMA.

TACTICS

• Design a comprehensive wayfinding system
• Separate greeting function from surveillance function at front door
• Place programming/art in entry area
• Assess the role of the store as part of the museum experience
• Develop and implement parking solutions
• Investigate use of the historic front door in Lawrence for events in the Rotunda

Create a Beautiful Place for Art

Develop more beautiful, versatile exhibition spaces, and address long-standing concerns about the form and condition of the public galleries.

TACTICS

• Improve gallery lighting, for example by reopening skylights and windows
• Upgrade elevator appearance and function to allow for access to public space while keeping other floors locked off from public access
• Remove carpeting in galleries where possible

Provide a Comfortable Space for Programs and Events

Maximize spatial and structural capacities to improve participants’ experiences at programs and events.

TACTICS

• Assess and improve acoustics in gallery spaces to enhance discussions and events
• Develop and communicate a policy related to use of WCMA spaces for external events
• Evaluate staffing required to craft exemplary experiences for WCMA patrons

Devise an Effective and Efficient Place for Work

Create sufficient comfortable workspace for all museum tasks including administration, object storage, research, registration, and preparation of objects for exhibitions.

TACTICS

• Hire an architect to evaluate and improve spaces for collaboration, interaction, and office adjacency for all staff and improve workspaces for interns and work study students adding white boards and flexible furniture configuration
• Review space allocation in art storage and reallocate or redesign space to maximize capacity and improve conditions
• Investigate closer offsite storage options, including potential expansion of Williams Library Shelving Facility

Measurement

• Visitor confusion at entrance declines by 50%
• With a target of reaching 100%, significant annual progress is made to increase available art storage and to store objects at best practice standards while remaining available for access
• Satisfaction of WCMA staff with workspace is increased by 90% as measured through a workplace survey
Digital Engagement and Infrastructure

By 2017, WCMA will seamlessly integrate digital tools, channels, and strategies into all of our work. Our digital presence will be both a means and an end - a platform and a form - to engage our audiences with art and the museum.

Build Capacity
Gain knowledge of best practices and develop in-house skills and strategies related to digital engagement.

**TACTICS**
- Bring in consultants and practitioners to share best practices
- Hire project manager for digital initiatives
- Acquire software and hardware to capture and edit video, audio, and photographic content and train staff to use it
- Establish a social media plan that engages staff in creating interesting content in a timely manner
- Establish practices related to capturing, storing, and sharing digital content

Develop a User-Friendly, Robust, and Accessible Online Collection
Deepen and broaden access to online collections to support research, scholarship, and creative work.

**TACTICS**
- Change online interface to support intuitive, dynamic browsing of works in the collection
- Participate in Google Art Project
- Research and rethink policies related to image rights

Position Website as Platform and Form for Exchange of Ideas
Engage online visitors in discussion, reflection, and exchange related to art and the visual world. Produce and share new knowledge/content in digital form.

**TACTICS**
- Establish a plan to regularly produce compelling digital content
- Create mechanisms on our website to support interaction
- Create flexible digital forms for students and the public to write and publish
- Develop and implement a social media strategy to capture and share content

Create a Nimble, Beautifully Designed Website
Make WCMA's website nimble, responsive, and efficient.

**TACTICS**
- Redesign website to foster interaction and intuitive use
- Assemble a think tank of leaders of digital engagement to inform our thinking and a committee of staff, faculty, and students to help develop and test new design
- Ensure website’s content management application is user-friendly, evergreen, and broadly used by staff

Improve Digital Communication
Improve appearance and strategies related to digital communication to reflect strategic plan.

**TACTICS**
- Redesign e-blasts, e-newsletter, and other digital communication
- Refine strategy for e-newsletter (sign-ups, frequency) in relation to broader communication strategies
- Develop systems for tracking response to digital communications and refine practices accordingly

Measurement
- Collection searching ability generates new faculty use of WCMA
- Traffic to website increases by 25%
- Length of time spent on WCMA's website averages two minutes
- 75% of the collection is digitized and searchable by public by 2017
- Digital content sparks sustained conversation and engages a variety of people
Sparking and Feeding Passion

By 2017 WCMA will have a comprehensive picture of both our academic and non-college audiences. We will leverage programs and exhibitions to encourage engagement and excite our most enthusiastic supporters.

Tell the Story Well
Evaluate and improve WCMA communications to ensure consistent, effective WCMA brand message.

TACTICS
• Inventory and evaluate communication methods
• Identify and interview potential branding firms
• Embark on a rebranding effort informed by strategic planning research and interviews with stakeholders

Make Visiting Committee a Coveted Invitation
Inspire Visiting Committee members to become more deeply and passionately involved in the museum.

TACTICS
• Create captivating meeting agendas that are educational, participatory, and deeply related to WCMA program
• Improve recruitment process
• Work closely with chair to redefine VC member roles, especially subcommittees and participation by members rotating off the VC
• Inspire VC members by clearly communicating a bold vision for the future of WCMA

Build Support from Individuals and Foundations
Grow the number of high-level donors and amount of financial support from foundations.

TACTICS
• Create and grow an active Collection Council that assists in the identification and acquisition of works of art
• Strengthen the Fellows program through recruitment and programming
• Identify desired impacts for existing donors and solicit resources for all aspects of WCMA’s program – exhibitions, engagement activities, public programs, and more
• Work with grants manager and senior staff to research and more proactively seek grant funding

Build Donations of Art
Increase the quantity of donations of quality works of art.

TACTICS
• Identify past donors or members of collectors list each year to be courted by WCMA through a personalized approach, i.e. by assigning prospect to Visiting Committee for cultivation
• Work with curators and engagement staff to create programs around donor engagement
• Work with curators to use exhibitions to cultivate new donations by securing loans for exhibitions and breathing possible gifts

Channel Passion Effectively
Get to know existing visitors and members in order to channel their support.

TACTICS
• Implement a system to gather names and addresses of visitors through incentives or affinity program
• Use TRGArts to analyze visitors/members and target new visitors/members in same demographic
• Determine best structure for Friends and Fellows programs through research and assessment

Keep in Touch
Maintain and build relationships with recent art major undergrad and grad students as well as WALLS participants to build a pipeline for future WCMA Friends, Fellows, and Visiting Committee members.

TACTICS
• Connect with Williams leaders in the arts and leverage the museum’s arts leadership programming to strengthen ties with this group
• Track art majors and grad alums and develop an engagement strategy for them
• Develop an engagement strategy for all WALLS program former participants, track engagement

Measurement
• As measured through an annual survey, Visiting Committee members (VC) feel well-informed, and there are two or fewer absences from every meeting
• Fellows and Friends membership increases by 20% annually on average
• At least 25% of visitors provide mailing address and list is analyzed demographically each year
• Donations from Williams graduates who are arts leaders increase by 25% annually on average
• Grant funding increases by 50%
Museum Staff

By 2017 all WCMA staff will be fully empowered to do our best work. We will keep skills fresh and stay abreast of developments in our respective fields. The culture at WCMA will be highly innovative and nimble. WCMA staff will be aware of new initiatives on campus and leading changes in the field and all staff will take responsibility for change and new practices.

Establish a Culture of Communication
Ensure all staff are fully informed of and work to support WCMA’s mission, vision, activities, and goals. Foster a climate in which input from all parties is welcome.

TACTICS
- Communicate commitment to innovation and accountability to all staff and ensure performance review process reflects that commitment
- Commit to multifaceted collaboration at the start of exhibition and program planning between curators and program staff

Foster a Creative Work Culture
Make WCMA an inspiring and energizing place to work.

TACTICS
- Provide funds to departments to creatively engage staff in a gathering, event, or project
- Develop a bimonthly lunch program that brings a group of staff members from across functions together to think about a salient institutional idea over a meal
- Develop a quarterly Think & Drink happy hour for all staff to come together to think aloud about a salient question
- Organize annual or biannual visit to an inspiring exhibition or institution doing great work

Build Leadership Strength
Ensure that the leadership team members effectively work as a group, lead as individuals, and develop as professionals.

TACTICS
- Senior staff identify and share opportunities for leadership training for self and all members of staff
- Leadership team members engage in appropriate professional development and contribute to the field by, for example, speaking at conferences
- Devote time and/or entire senior staff meetings to the topic of professional development
- Share new ideas, creative thinking, and inventive practices with all staff members

Attract and Maintain a Highly Professional and Diverse Staff
Ensure that all staff members are following best practices and innovative thinking in all aspects of their work. Strive to recruit and maintain a more diverse staff body. Evaluate our individual work through ongoing performance reviews and create individual development plans.

TACTICS
- Create structure and clear expectations regarding professional development and participation in the field and in the Williams community
- Bring in outside experts to expose staff to new ideas, evaluate current practices, and provide appropriate training

Evaluate Our Collective Work
Put systems in place to define our measures for success and to review and evaluate the work we are doing.

TACTICS
- Conduct regular exhibition/program critiques: what worked, what could we have done better, and what will we do differently next time
- Collect and share examples of inspiring work from other places to jumpstart new ideas and develop a structure for staff to share insights and ideas gathered from professional development and beyond

Address Staffing Needs
Continually evaluate staff positions against the goals and mission of the museum and recalibrate accordingly.

TACTICS
- Ensure positions and titles reflect our goals and objectives
- Map organizational structure to clearly communicate both individual and collaborative functions
- Make the temporary exhibition manager position permanent
- Pilot one-year position for a graduating Williams senior acting as a bridge between museum and student body
- Apply for a one-year Kress Interpretive Fellowship to further a variety of initiatives that fuse interpretive and curatorial practice
- Evaluate communications staffing
- Evaluate curatorial positions against collection strengths and priorities and augment permanent curatorial staff with fellowship/post-doc positions in target collection areas
- Pilot one- to two-year research assistant positions for collections projects for graduates of the graduate program

Measurement
- Staff express high satisfaction with jobs during performance reviews and work culture surveys and would recommend WCMA to others as a great place to work
- High number of qualified applicants for open positions that grows over time
- Members of WCMA staff are regularly invited to participate in national and international conversations around museum practice

- Provide management training and ongoing coaching for all managers annually
- Host a biennial conference on college and university museum practice
- Base performance evaluations on commitment to innovation or excellence, best practices, and how well primary audiences are served
- Track staff turnover rate and size and quality of job applicant pool when positions are open
- Conduct regular workplace surveys
Finance

By the FY2016 budget cycle, WCMA staff and the provost’s office will thoroughly understand WCMA’s budget, funding, and operating resources. Our financial plan will reflect our institutional goals, and our resources will be allocated to match areas of need and programming priorities. These changes will make grant funding easier to apply for and win.

Generate Accounting Accuracy and Transparency

WCMA has exemplary accounting accuracy and offers timely and transparent reporting.

TACTICS

• Correct budget line will be used for all exhibition and program expenses
• Leadership staff will be trained to read budgets
• Regular updates on budget are presented to all staff
• Collegewide knowledge of WCMA’s budget and priorities is strengthened

Produce Budgets with Impact

WCMA’s priorities are articulated through its operating budget and financial reporting.

TACTICS

• Budgeting process embodies our institutional goals
• Ongoing evaluation of expenditures to verify all are in line with institutional goals
• Financial reports are reviewed monthly by all managers and senior staff
• Funds are mapped strategically to new or existing projects early in the budget process

Measurement

• 100% of leadership team understands how to read financial reports
• WCMA staff are able to respond within 24 hours to request for YTD information on their areas of the budget
• Zero complaints are received from staff or college administration about wait time or inability to access financial reports
• Any carryover from restricted funds is intentional
APPENDIX
Hundreds of sticky notes and gallons of coffee, not to mention a whole bunch of flip charts, were deployed to help create the strategic plan you have before you. It started in September when Tina Olsen gathered a diverse group of five museum staff and three members of the Williams art department together to spend nearly six months debating the value of everything surrounding the museum from art that moves you to tears to an elevator that you’re proud to show visitors to programs that get students to camp outside in sub-freezing temperatures.

The first step was to gather as much information as we could. First we talked. We talked to WCMA staff, we talked to art faculty, we talked to students, we talked to donors, and we talked to experts in museums and others who we thought were doing fascinating work in a variety of disciplines.

Then we gathered. We gathered colleagues. We gathered staff. We gathered community members all in a glorious day-long Imagining retreat in December 2013.

Lastly we surveyed. We surveyed faculty and we surveyed students, and with the expert assistance of Organizational Performance Group, we translated all this incredibly valuable information into usable data to deeply inform this plan.

As we are publishing this plan, we’ve already taken many steps toward the outlined goals. We intend to use this plan simultaneously as a road map and a yardstick for the next five years. We hope you will stay tuned.

wcma.williams.edu
WILLIAMS COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

HISTORY OF WCMA

Widely considered one of the finest college art museums in the country, the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is a department of Williams College, a four-year, coeducational liberal arts college located in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. The College has a long and distinguished reputation for producing the nation’s most imaginative and influential arts leaders – a quick run through the American Art Museum Directors roster or the College Art Association will yield dozens of Williams-educated scholars in leadership positions in all aspects of museum work from curatorial to finance to engagement.

At the center of that reputation, the match, so to speak, that lit the passion for art among those leaders, is WCMA. With an encyclopedic collection of more than 14,000 objects and a particular strength in American art from the late 18th century to the present, WCMA is an active, collecting museum, with strengths in modern and contemporary art, photography, prints, and Indian painting. The museum owns the largest collection in the world of work by American artist brothers Charles and Maurice Prendergast.

Karl Weston, the museum’s founder and first director, established WCMA in 1926 to provide Williams students with the opportunity for firsthand observation of fine works of art, a privilege he maintained was essential to the study of art. For 22 years Weston taught art history and solicited gifts from alumni for the museum’s collection. In 1948 Weston was followed in both roles by his former student S. Lane Faison Jr., whose 28-year tenure saw a significant expansion of the art department and the collection.

Housed partly in the beautiful brick octagon Lawrence Hall (originally the college library), as WCMA’s collections and programs grew, the museum needed more space and was expanded while under the direction of Thomas Krens in 1981 with a major addition by architect Charles Moore.

In 2001, on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the museum commissioned “Eyes (Nine Elements),” a permanent outdoor sculpture by renowned artist Louise Bourgeois. For the museum, the work symbolizes an ongoing dedication to contemporary art while providing students and visitors with a unique outdoor meeting place.

Today the museum continues to increase the interdisciplinary and curricular use of its collection. Opened in 2004, the Rose Study Gallery supports continual engagement with the collection by providing faculty with a dedicated space to teach with art displayed specifically for their class. In the Rose and throughout the museum galleries, art catalyzes discussion for disciplines across campus.