



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART TO HOST FIRST SEMINAR ON DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUM MINOR BY ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

National Endowment for the Humanities Grant To Help With Development of Interdisciplinary Museum and Heritage Studies Minor

[For Release March 28, 2018 – Albany, GA] – The first in a series of museum studies seminars designed to bring together museum staffs, educators, students and community leaders for the development of a curriculum that would open museum and museum-related fields to Albany State University students is set for Saturday, April 31, at the Albany Museum of Art, 311 Meadowlark Drive.

A \$99,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities will help with the development of an interdisciplinary museum and heritage studies minor at Albany State. The goal of the seminars is to facilitate mutually beneficial service strategies while creating the curriculum. Albany State would be the first Historically Black College and University [HBCU] to offer a museum-related curriculum, and only the second university in Georgia to do so. Georgia College at Milledgeville offers a museum studies minor.

In addition to ASU and the AMA, organizations participating in the series of eight seminars are the Albany Area Council of Arts, the Albany Civil Rights Institute, the Flint RiverQuarium and Thronateeska Heritage Center.

The morning portion of Saturday’s seminar – 9:30 am-noon – will be open to the public. The afternoon session – 1-4 pm – will be limited to workshop participants.

“It’s about developing interdisciplinary curriculum for a museum studies minor,” said Grant Director Charles Williams, professor of visual and performing arts at Albany State. “But it’s also

about getting ASU faculty members and cultural organizations' staffs – people from all the institutions – around the table to discuss how we can serve each other.”

Williams serves as gallery director for the Department of Visual and Performing Arts and on the Board of Trustees at the Albany Museum of Art. He envisions the minor as a 15-credit-hour path that includes internships and one cross-disciplinary course, such as business, education, history or computer science. The program development will be a group effort, he says.

In the morning session, Williams will discuss the NEH grant, the history of museums and importance of public history and preservation. He will be followed by Paula Bacon Williams, executive director of the Albany Museum of Art, who will talk about the AMA's mission, its comeback from the 2017 storms and plans for the museum's future, including its relocation to downtown.

After a brief break, Nick Nelson, a former Albany Museum of Art executive director who now serves in that capacity at the Springfield Art Museum in Springfield, Missouri, will discuss museum accreditation process and developing a strategic plan for a museum.

Following a question-and-answer session with the three speakers and a lunch break, participants will engage in roundtable discussions and a tour of the Albany Museum of Art.

“We are proud to be a part of this developmental phase of this museum studies program,” Paula Williams said. “We recognize the impact it can have, not only on the lives of the students who take advantage of the program, but also on the city of Albany.

“This could potentially become the second museum studies program in the state and the only one at an HBCU in the country. It's a tremendous opportunity for our city, and having a museum studies program could make ASU a destination university for this program.”

Charles Williams says he is happy Nelson is returning to Albany for the initial seminar. “Nick's doing a great job,” he said. “He's a good person to talk anyway, but I thought his familiarity with the museum and the community here would make him an excellent guest, a good way to open the series.”

Nelson, who will be making his first visit to Albany since before the 2017 storms, said he believes the museum minor at ASU is an important development, both for the university and for the museum field.

“I'm excited to be back to see what's going on and to be a part of all this,” Nelson said. “I'm grateful for the opportunity. One of the things that have been discussed in the museum field in general is the need for diversity within the field. As a Historically Black College and University, I think it's an advantage to identify opportunities and to grow diversity in museum leadership. It's a great opportunity.

“Anytime you have a cross-disciplinary approach with people from different areas having an opportunity to go into this cultural sector, I think it adds to that cultural sector.”

Paula Williams agreed that the museum studies program at Albany State could be a gateway for more diversity in museum leadership.

“Our field is working diligently to create more diversity in it,” she said. “This would be a big step in that direction.”

Nelson added that the ASU effort is coming at a time when museums are looking for new leadership.

“Especially now, you have a lot of museum leaders retiring, so really thinking about the next generation of museum leadership, where that comes from and bringing people who have a variety of expertise to museum leadership is going to be important,” Nelson said. Charles Williams said the program is a way to acquaint those future leaders with a field they may not have considered.

“I’ve always loved museums, but there also are a lot of potential jobs for students in this field,” he said. “At the same time, it can be a way to partner and increase the relevance of the institutions with a younger crowd of people.”

The second seminar will be June 14 at the RiverQuarium. The third is scheduled for July 14 at the Arts Council headquarters in the old Carnegie Library at 215 N. Jackson St. and the Civil Rights Institute, 326 W. Whitney Ave.

The Albany Museum of Art, located in Albany, Georgia, houses an impressive collection that includes 19th and 20th century American and European art, as well as a substantial collection of sub-Saharan African art including masks, sculpture, pottery, textiles and musical instruments. The Albany Museum of Art is accredited by the American Association of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am until 5 pm. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229-439-8400.

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