

JMU ArtsMobile

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Project Budget:

\$25,000

Abstract:

JMU has beautiful, state-of-the-art spaces (e.g., Duke Hall, Forbes Center) for individuals to visit our campus and engage with the arts. While these offer meaningful engagement experiences to those who can access those spaces, we are aware that for a variety of reasons (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, disability, prohibitive cost, proximity, work schedules), these venues facilitate only a subset of Shenandoah Valley residents engaging with the arts. We propose to develop the JMU ArtsMobile to help communities throughout and beyond the Shenandoah Valley engage with JMU's exemplary arts and design programs in ways local communities find meaningful.

Project:

Opportunities to engage with design and arts abound at JMU. While the College of Visual & Performing Arts' (CVPA) venues and programming offer rich opportunities to our community, these opportunities connect with only a subset of the population within and beyond Harrisonburg. Often, factors (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, disability, financial capacity, proximity to JMU) prohibit broad participation in CVPA's educational programs, exhibitions, participatory arts and design experiences, and performances. Meanwhile, our CVPA community is filled with creative, collaborative, and entrepreneurial artists, designers, and scholars who desire to share—and invite community members to actively engage with—their work in ways that promote equitable access to diverse arts and design experiences.

To help address these well-documented inequities, we propose to develop the JMU ArtsMobile, an innovative mobile arts and design engagement vehicle. Based on findings from our in-progress Harrisonburg Arts Needs Assessment, we plan to bring together a wide variety of disciplinary expertise to develop and deliver arts and design programming that is responsive to needs and desires articulated by local residents.

This effort, and CVPA's ongoing work more broadly, is animated by a belief that the arts and design—by themselves and as contributions to multidisciplinary efforts—generate personal and social meaning, inspiration, and change. Our communities are ripe with possibilities for artists, designers, educators, and scholars who can leverage their experiences and education to reimagine and disrupt traditional practices; stretch and break artistic boundaries; collaborate on multidisciplinary teams; synthesize data from the world around them to identify problems and opportunities; and act boldly, justly, and inclusively to create their own unique path.

This project resonates with these CVPA values, and is housed in CVPA's Office of Creative Propulsion (OCP). Through integrative courses, multidisciplinary collaborations, community engagement, and participatory arts experiences, OCP supports students and faculty in ideating, launching, and refining equitable and inclusive arts-based efforts that promote meaningful arts engagement.

JMU ArtsMobile is the latest in a series of creative, innovative, community-based OCP and CVPA initiatives. These include Dance for Parkinson's (a weekly class encouraging persons living with Parkinson's and their caregivers to move, exercise their creativity, and experience community), JMUke (a participatory, community-based music learning and making initiative), Madison Art Collection (a repository of more than 40,000 artifacts currently being digitized to increase access), MusicCPR (a free, web-based interface to promote standards-based instrumental music education), Next Steps Dance Intensive (a summer program for middle- and high-school students in collaboration with Dance Works Chicago), and Stories and Songs (bringing together music and social work students to engage with recently incarcerated individuals at Harrisonburg's Gemeinschaft Home). CVPA also hosts a biennial Disability Studies and Music Education Symposium (which brings together an expanding community of more than 250 scholars, musicians, educators, and other professionals to explore connections between these disciplines); and supports the work of innovative faculty members such as Nick Brinen (whose project-based research links local pest-infested wood supplies with a robust network of community needs, public agencies, and academic institutions), Ben Guerrero (a National Science Foundation-supported researcher studying 21st-century artist-technologists), and David Newman (inventor of pandemic-inspired "car choirs" profiled by New York Times and NPR).

While the ArtsMobile's specific features will be determined based on desires shared within and around the Harrisonburg community, they might include a pull-out stage with a canopy, on-board sound equipment, video capabilities, and built-in storage for supplies, instruments, or other equipment. We envision the JMUArtsMobile facilitating experiences that may include, but are not limited to: (a) participatory art, dance, music, and theatre experiences; (b) "pop-up" visual art exhibitions; (c) interactive dance, music, and theatre performances; (d) community-based participatory research; (e) hands-on visual art and design workshops; and (f) community-based art, dance, design, music, and theatre education opportunities.

While JMUArtsMobile will initially focus on arts and design-based experiences, we have collaborators across campus eager to combine arts- and design-based efforts with other disciplines' practices and resources. For example, JMU's X-Labs, which is partnering with

CVPA to launch a “Grand Challenges for the Arts” initiative, will help us address our concerns with equitable arts access, and other challenges (e.g., Arts and Wellbeing, Arts and Wearable Technologies, Arts and Sustainability). College of Integrated and Science of Engineering colleagues are also interested in using human-computer interaction frameworks to understand how media created for and developed through the ArtsMobile might be used to promote connection among and beyond individuals who engage with the ArtsMobile. We imagine these efforts mutually reinforcing one another, as we act on our artistic and moral obligation to provide equitable, accessible, and inclusive arts and design experiences grounded in contemporary practice.

Project Budget Amount: **\$25,000**

Postage and Printing: \$1,000

Speakers’ Honoraria: \$2,000

Travel: \$2,000

Equipment: \$10,000

Supplies/Materials: \$10,000

Additional information to explain or expand on budgetary needs:

We are treating this project as a proof-of-concept effort that will not only help us engage communities in, through, with, and around the arts and design, but also lead to external funding support for a larger vehicle. We request \$10,000 to rent appropriate vehicles (e.g., box truck, panel van), \$10,000 to purchase supplies and materials for arts experiences, \$2,000 for community artists collaboration honoraria, \$2,000 to support travel to a series of pilot engagements in the Shenandoah Valley, \$1,000 for advertisements (postage and printing). Faculty, staff, and students are providing their effort as in-kind contributions within their JMU workload. Paula Polglase (CVPA’s Director of Development) has also joined our team to help us position funding for this pilot project within a larger long-term plan.

Actual expenses will vary based on a tiered system transitioning from a budget-conscious renting model to an independent ownership model. With partial funding, we would begin this project in whatever way(s) funding allows. For example, we may start off with smaller events, renting our equipment per engagement with limited supplies. With additional funding, we can produce higher quality events, purchase our own supplies, and acquire a vehicle, where we would design/build renovations, per our multidisciplinary needs.