CULTURE CORPS
2021-2022
Program Report
The first cohort of students just completed the inaugural round of summer internships. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we were able to get the program off the ground very quickly. Students reported having deeply valuable experiences, and noted how important the program's financial support was to them. The host organizations described a real increase in their own capacity because of both the interns' work, and the support and guidance the program offered in mentoring the students.

We placed nine undergraduate students representing a range of backgrounds and areas of study at seven arts and culture organizations in the region. The students completed a 2-credit preparation course, where they got to know each other, and met regularly over the summer as a group and individually with the course instructor, who is also the program lead. Across their experiences, they had opportunities to gain experience in communications, arts administration, donor relations, research about the economic impacts of the arts sector, and how to design art instruction for children.

Most importantly, the unique design of the Culture Corps program removed barriers to these opportunities, by not only ensuring a livable wage, but also providing transportation assistance, and the feeling of belonging through the cohort-based model.

Culture Corps ensured that we could be responsive to the pressing need of opening pathways to students to see themselves as contributors to the field of arts and culture. Culture Corps represents one important step toward strengthening arts and culture organizations in the long term, while integrating hands-on arts experiences into the education of the undergraduates at the University of Michigan.

We are already hard at work recruiting more students and mentor organizations for our upcoming second year of the program, and look forward to growing the program to increase access to valuable Culture Corps internship experiences. We are grateful to everyone who made the first year of the program possible.

Christina Olsen,
Co-Chair of the Arts Initiative, and Director, University of Michigan Museum of Art
RESEARCH FINDINGS
Start-Up Guide

The research phase of the program examined the current landscape of internships, reviewed scholarly work, and conducted primary research about how to best design an impactful experience to introduce career pathways to a diverse group of undergraduate students through regional arts & culture organizations.

Build on existing infrastructure.
Culture Corps should begin with key partners at UM and in the region whose expertise and existing relationships can facilitate a pilot and help to develop a sustainable program. Given the Culture Corps’ focus on BA and BS degree students, we recommend that it be based in LSA and work closely with programs serving first-gen, community college transfer students, and other historically excluded student groups. Our research uncovered strong interest among arts and culture organizations in SE Michigan, many led by people from historically excluded populations, to engage in a meaningful way with an internship program.

Start small, go deep.
Culture Corps has tremendous potential: to have a lasting impact on student learning and career choices, to increase capacity in arts and culture orgs in SE Michigan, and to serve as a model for collaborative arts internship programs in similar geographic contexts. The success of the program will rely on thoughtfully developed pedagogical structures, logistical supports and trusting relationships that can support the matching process and high-touch mentorship that ultimately creates meaningful change. The program director is the administrative head, with a focus on a small, strategic starting point, then expanding into a full pilot once relationships are in place.

Find partners.
Growth for this program should be predicated on finding partners — to further enmesh the program in existing structures and ecologies, and to make the program sustainable for a longer period of time. The priorities identified in this report suggest Culture Corps aligns with many regional and national funders current foci: supporting capacity building in the arts, developing meaningful relationships across Detroit, and re-imagining structures to create a more inclusive and welcoming arts and culture sector.
Interconnection [who]
Cultures Corp is based on an idea of shared responsibility and mutual benefits. The program should be designed to focus equally on the needs of three partners: the University, arts and culture organizations located in SE Michigan, and BA/BS students, particularly students from historically excluded groups, such as racial/ethnic minority students and first-gen, transfer, and returning students.

Co-creation [how]
Cultures Corp should be built through collaboration. An ongoing approach that welcomes the distinct perspectives, knowledge and strengths of all three partners will be invaluable to Cultures Corp’s success and evolution. The University plays a pivotal role in facilitating communication, building trust and meaningful relationships among students, arts organizations and artists.

Pathways [when]
The Cultures Corp program is envisioned as an ongoing yearly cycle. How all partners enter and exit the internship is as important as the internship itself. The program guarantees a placement for each student and creates structures to guide them into and out from the internship. The student experience unfolds across the year: students first encounter the program, enter a cohort, and prepare together in an experiential learning course, and then they engage in their internships.

Belonging [why]
Relationship-building is central to forging a program where all students feel at home. Cultures Corp will create structures that help students navigate logistical and cultural barriers, connecting them with mentors who offer concrete examples of the roles and career possibilities within the arts and culture sector and, whenever possible, share and/or understand the students’ identity.
The goals of Culture Corps are to expose undergraduate students to career pathways in arts and culture, encourage students who might not know how to get started in these careers, and to support a breadth of Southeast Michigan art and culture organizations.

**Student Interns**
- UM-Ann Arbor
  - LSA (5)
  - Engineering (1)
  - Art & Design (1)
- UM-Dearborn
  - Journalism and Media Production (2)

**Arts & Culture Organizations**
- Arab American National Museum
- The Charles Wright Museum, Detroit
- Creative Washtenaw, Ann Arbor
- CultureSource, Detroit
- Detroit Public Theatre
- InsideOut Literary Arts, Detroit
- Living Arts, Detroit

**Key Program Elements**
- Paid internship & transportation assistance
- Intern cohort community
- Preparation through mini-course
- Students and organizations matched – all guaranteed a position
- Consistent contact with program instructor-director
**CULTURE CORPS**

**PROGRAM CYCLE TIMELINE**

**Fall ‘22**
- **Celebrate, Assess, & Recruit**
  Convene interns and mentors for a celebratory luncheon, send feedback forms, and prepare materials for the next cohort.

**May-August ‘22**
- **Mini-Course**
  Students read about the cultural history of arts organizations, worked on hands-on arts administration, and met the mentors of the host organizations.

**March-April ‘22**
- **Internships**
  Students intern up to 20 hours per week for 15-16 weeks. They meet monthly as a cohort and individually with the program manager.

**Fall ‘21**
- **Recruit Students & Mentor Organizations**
  Culture Corps partnered with the Department of American Culture to ensure that all interested students can register for the course, leading to an internship.
- **Research & Program Design**
  U-M faculty, graduate students, and staff conducted focus groups and surveys to determine the best way to overcome barriers to arts and culture careers.

**Summer ‘21**
I became interested in an internship related to arts and culture because I'm passionate about the arts and wanted to learn more about Detroit.

Besides having an interest in a career in STEM, I am also an artist. I have found it difficult to balance these completely opposite paths, but this program allowed me to have a set time to get creative!

I've always found joy in creating art and studying arts and culture, but my skills have always been in computation/engineering. My new skill is virtual map-making! I'm programming a set of data to tell us which zip codes are more likely to respond to our development mailings.

"I'm a computer science major, and I've always found joy in creating art and studying arts and culture."

-Caitlin Henning, Culture Corps Intern
This mini course guided me to look at art spaces and organizations with a more critical lens, and later be able to experience first hand the work that happens behind the scenes of art and creative organizations.

-Andrea Medina, Culture Corps Intern
LAUREN MILLS
STAMPS '23 Art & Design
Living Arts, Detroit

In my internship, I developed an annual summer program for the kids we serve. This program was my idea, with the help and wisdom of my supervisors. Skills required include creative strategy, effective communication, event planning, and an openness to learning and change.

ANNA STANFIELD
LSA '25 History
Detroit Public Theatre

I was interested in an arts and culture internship because I love the arts and am very interested in the way arts as an industry is evolving and adapting in the modern world.

JAMILAH WILLIS
LSA '22 General Studies
Living Arts, Detroit

I’m grateful for the fact that I get to participate in a program that’s streamlining me into exactly what I’m interested in doing. I get more direction in my career as an artist.

I'm in Detroit working with the funniest and most creative kids and colleagues ever!

-Lauren Mills, Culture Corps Intern
Culture Corps encourages students to see themselves in arts and culture careers.

Students are more likely to pursue jobs in arts and culture careers after completing the Culture Corps program.

Are you more likely to consider a career or job in the arts and culture sector after your Culture Corps experience?
In an exit survey, student-interns provided feedback about which Culture Corps program features most contributed to their success.

Which of the following Culture Corps program features was most valuable to you?

- Pay rate & transportation assistance 33.3%
- Matching process/ All guaranteed a position 50%
- Consistent contact person 16.7%

Which of the following Culture Corps program features was second most valuable to you?

- Community of the cohort of interns 33.3%
- Preparation for internship through the class
- Quality of the position 33.3%
- Small cohort size
- Matching process/ All guaranteed a position 16.7%
- Pay rate & transportation assistance
- Consistent contact person (instructor is also program manager) 16.7%

“The transportation assistance was incredibly helpful!!! I don’t know what I would’ve done without it.”
I really appreciated the matching process. For a student’s first job/internship, it can be really difficult to apply without prior experience. Having a matching system is a great transition into applying for jobs.

I think if Covid restrictions lessen, it would be nice to have the presenters for each program come in person if they’re able.

This wasn’t so much on the university program side of things, but I wish I had more tasks to accomplish through my internship.

The mini course provided a good introduction and general overview of how art museums and art organizations function. The more practical assignment/project at the end was really helpful too. I think it was a good mix of academic readings and practical advice!
MENTORS & HOST ORGANIZATIONS


100%

Yes
Are you and your organization interested in having another Culture Corps intern next year?

“The recruitment of students saved a great deal of time for the museum.”

“This is a great program. Thank you.”

Which of the following program features is most valuable to you and your organization?

- Interns’ wages paid
- Mentoring stipend provided to each organization
- Students come with preparation and context for internships through the mini-course
I loved it, top to bottom. Both of our interns are wonderful and so excited to get their hands dirty. This is the ideal experience for us, because of the fact that they already have an interest and are prepared to get the most out of the experience.

I think the amount of hours and the length are great. It would be amazing to see it happen twice a year, for the students whose schedules don’t allow availability over the summer.

The stipend acknowledges the work of managing an intern on the organization side, which is fairly significant. Knowing that students are also compensated helps us to create valuable work opportunities and know that they are being compensated equitably and are trained adequately to navigate the relationship.

I loved our wrap up lunch, but I think it would have been great to meet up at the start. I think it could lead to fun partnerships with the other orgs and maybe intern projects that cross the aisle.
Thank you to the individuals, organizations, and units that made the pilot of the Culture Corps program a success!

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- Wolverine Pathways

U-M consultants
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- EXCEL
- Ginsburg Center
- Opportunity Hub
- OptiMIZE
- Rackham Program in Public Engagement
- Semester in Detroit
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- Matt Stiffler
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“I really appreciated the matching process. For a student’s first job or internship, it can be really difficult to apply without prior experience. Having a matching system is a great transition into applying for jobs.”

—Elizabeth Cervantes, Culture Corps Intern