# **Putting History to Work: Expanding Skill Development and Career Pathways for History and Art History Majors across the University of Maine System**

**Libby Bischof, Associate Professor of History and Director, Center for Collaboration and Development, University of Southern Maine**

## **Proposed Program Description**

**“Putting History to Work: Expanding Skill Development and Career Pathways for History and Art History Majors across the University of Maine System”** is a forward-thinking, multi-stage, collaborative and interdisciplinary program innovation designed to bring History and Art History/History of Art faculty across the University of Maine System (UMS) together to identify and develop key common skill sets to foster within our programs in order to better prepare our majors for meaningful careers after graduation and to better serve Maine’s diverse workforce needs. The future success of this program innovation initiative rests upon these pillars: supporting student and faculty development around career preparation and career diversity in equal measure, respecting the integrity of individual programs within and among the UMS campuses, building the good will and trust needed for any successful collaborative venture, and ensuring that a support structure is put into place to move the proposed outcomes from ideation to action.

The American Historical Association (AHA), the largest professional organization serving historians in all fields and professions, has recently launched a variety of initiatives to assist undergraduate and graduate History programs throughout the country with developing and assessing skill sets for their majors—fundamentally, what all History majors should be able to do and understand (see the [Tuning Project here](https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning-the-history-discipline))—as well as more adequately preparing both undergraduate and graduate students for meaningful careers both inside and outside the discipline. The data and outcome driven nature of this work serves to help faculty (and students) in the Humanities combat oft repeated platitudes about their chosen disciplines and the lack of career preparation or underemployment.[[1]](#footnote-1) Recently, as the AHA has begun to invest in the likely employment of History PhD students outside of academia, the AHA has championed five core skills for Career Diversity—relevant for students at the undergraduate and graduate levels:[[2]](#footnote-2)

**COMMUNICATION:** in a variety of media and to a variety of audiences.

**COLLABORATION:** especially with people who might not share your worldview.

**QUANTITATIVE LITERACY:** a basic ability to understand and communicate information presented in quantitative form, i.e., understanding that numbers tell a story the same way words, images, and artifacts do.

[**INTELLECTUAL SELF-CONFIDENCE**](https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/career-diversity-for-historians/career-diversity-resources/five-skills/intellectual-self-confidence)**:** the ability to work beyond subject matter expertise, to be nimble and imaginative in projects and plans.

**DIGITAL LITERACY:** a basic familiarity with digital tools and platforms.

Taking the aforementioned skill sets as a guide for our work, here are the **desired outcomes** of this proposed program innovation:

(1) Increased digital literacy among History and Art History faculty, staff, and students.

(2) A subset of program faculty who serve as career pathway mentors for students and set up professional networking opportunities and experiences for students and faculty.

(3) Multi-campus career fairs and career panels geared towards students in the Liberal Arts with opportunities to network with program alumni.

(4) Comprehensive career planning materials (accessible online) customizable to each campus (see [UT Austin Art History Career Planning Sheet example here](https://finearts.utexas.edu/sites/files/cofa/art_history_career_guide_july_2015.pdf), and [UCDavis Art History Careers here](https://arts.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/ahi_career_booklet_2015-16.pdf)) and delivered to students in the early stages of their major coursework.[[3]](#footnote-3)

(5) A more robust internship program for History and Art History majors across the system, which would include funded internships in a variety of fields as well as allow students to travel among UMS campuses for unique semester-long opportunities that utilize unique resources such as the Osher Map Library (USM) or the Maine Folklife Center and University of Maine Museum of Art (UM), the Holocaust and Human Rights Center (UMA), as well as take advantage of courses unique to various campuses.

(6) Curricular innovations to include professional tracks within the History and Art History Majors along the lines of existing K-12 education pathways (e.g. Public Humanities, Grant Writing, Museum Studies, Digital Humanities and Humanities Computing, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Library Science and Archives, Professional Writing, Data Visualization, Arts Administration, Oral History, GIS and Digital Mapping, etc.).

(7) Individualized career counseling that takes into account the diverse needs of our non-traditional as well as our traditional students.

(8) Committed Community partners in for-profit and non-profit organizations willing to provide co-curricular experiences to our majors and to model the five core skills for career diversity.

(9) Targeted outreach to our colleagues in fields such as Computer Science, Math, Business, and more heavily Quantitative Social Sciences to think about how curricular intersections among our disciplines would help students to better prepare for their future careers.

(10) Dynamic partnerships between UMS faculty and students and K-12 faculty and students in Social Studies and the Arts to foster early interest in History, Art History, and the Liberal Arts.

This cross-campus, cross-disciplinary collaboration will serve as a model for increased career preparation in the Liberal Arts and Humanities in Maine.

## **Enrollment Demand/Growth**

The University of Southern Maine is proud to have a robust cohort of History majors (average active enrollment fall 2015, 2016, and 2017=120.7).[[4]](#footnote-4) We have, by and large, managed to avoid the precipitous decline in History majors that colleges and universities—both public and private—around the country have been experiencing over the past decade. For USM, much of this can be attributed to intensive advising, expansion and growth of teacher preparation tracks, and student and faculty engagement. We can, however, do better—especially in terms of preparing students for the transitions into the workforce after their degree attainment. An increased emphasis on skill acquisition and meaningful career preparation will serve as a powerful recruitment tool for in-state and out-of-state students. We will deploy our newly prepared career materials at AY 2019 Open Houses, Accepted Student Days, and with Admissions Counselors throughout the system.

## **Curriculum Overview/Outline**

This program requires a variety of diverse but interrelated curricular innovations, some of which will be piloted and assessed at the University of Southern Maine initially, and will concurrently/subsequently be made available to any interested UMS campus who wishes to adopt them. *Funding to support a more robust internship experience for students will be shared across all campuses.*

**(1) (Additional) Career Tracks within Existing History Majors**

One of the aspects of this pilot program is the development of “career tracks” within the major, akin to USM’s current educational pathway concentration in K-8 and 7-12 teacher education, and already extant career preparation pathways such as the 3 + 3 degree with Maine Law. Over the course of 2018-2019, History faculty at USM will work to develop and pilot a new track within the major: Museums, Libraries, and Public Humanities. This pilot track will include a variety of skills based courses including Grant Writing, Non-Profit Management, and intensive internship experiences (see below).

**(2) A more robust internship program that meets the needs of *all* students (traditional, non-traditional, first generation, etc.)**

One of the hurdles consistently faced in recruiting History majors for internships is the inability of many students at USM (and elsewhere within the system) to essentially pay for work experience when they are already struggling to make ends meet (and often working multiple jobs while going to school full and part-time). To this end, many students are unable to afford to do unpaid internships in non-profits because a) the non-profit can’t afford to pay a stipend, and, on top of that, b) students are paying tuition for the three credit internships. To aid in the recruitment and viability of a more robust internship program, the Program Innovation investment will provide for the creation of paid internships at non-profits by subsidizing tuition (roughly $950/three credits) and offering students a $500 stipend for the semester long internship experience (8-12 hours/week).

The following internal (to the system) and external (community) partners have committed to hosting UMS History and Art History majors as interns in 2018-2019 (fall, spring and summer):

**Host Site Number of Interns they can place in 2018-2019**

The Maine Historical Society (4)

The Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education (USM) (4-5)

The University of Maine Museum of Art (UM) (2)

Greater Portland Landmarks (2)

The Maine Folklife Center (UM) (2)

The Margaret Chase Smith Library (UM) (2)

National History Day (run out of MCSL) (2)

The Holocaust and Human Rights Center (UMA) (2)

Special Collections and the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine (USM) (2)

The Maine State Museum (4)

The Penobscot Marine Museum (2)

Franco Archives across the UMS (2-4)

The Maine Humanities Council (1)

While the partner sites do not have to invest their own funding, they will be investing a great deal of time and effort in the training and supervision of our UMS students. If this initial pilot funded internship program is successful, then the next step would be to ask some of the larger non-profits to commit to subsidizing one or more internships for UMS students per academic year.

Additionally, one of the desired outcomes from these funded internships are internal UMS exchange opportunities for History and Art History students, who might spend a semester interning and taking courses at a campus other than their own. For instance, a University of Maine student might spend a semester in Portland taking History classes and interning at the Osher Map Library, while a USM student might spend a semester in Orono taking History classes and interning at the Maine Folklife Center. These opportunities will require a great deal of collaboration, but I am confident we can move these initiatives forward.

Note: In addition to placing students in non-profit sector internships, a second objective of the funded internship growth is to encourage and facilitate the placement of History and Art History majors into a variety of for-profit sector internships as part of diversifying how students think about the value and potential of their degrees. Funded internships in such areas are already available at USM through the [Canis Major initiative](https://usm.maine.edu/career-and-employment-hub/canis-major-student-application), and the [UNUM Scholars](https://usm.maine.edu/publicaffairs/unum-scholars-program-win-win-students-major-employer) program, etc. These internship opportunities, however, tend to be marketed to STEM or Business students, and faculty in the humanities often lack the knowledge or awareness about such opportunities. Awareness of extant programs and opportunities across the UMS is an essential part of faculty development around career preparation.

**(3) The creation of two one-credit career exploration and discernment courses to be taken in the Sophomore year, and then added on to a student’s disciplinary Capstone experience during the Junior or Senior year.** Increased career preparation is a priority in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at USM (see attached memo of support from Dean Adam Tuchinsky), and, as such, the college has, in partnership with the Career and Employment Hub, developed a one-credit supplementary career preparation course to be offered to students in Spring 2019. This program investment will allow us to flesh out the development of this course, and add an additional one-credit exploratory career preparation course to take place during a student’s first two years of enrollment. Skills developed in these courses will include: skills assessments such as Gallup Strengths and MBTI, resume building, job searching, mock-interviewing, participation in career fairs, job applications, job shadowing, alumni career panels, and more. These courses will also advise students on searching and applying for graduate programs. *Partners from other UMS institutions will be invited to pilot similar courses, tailored to their student body and career services offerings.*

**(4) A more targeted and informed approach to recommending skills-based, professional minors to History and Art History students.** Many students studying History and Art History would benefit from diversifying and augmenting their transcript with the addition of skills-based minors that would help foster, develop, and compliment the deep disciplinary learning already occurring in the major. Faculty and advisors would need training to become better versed in the minors offered by various UMS campuses, as well as how to demonstrate to students the ways in which a professional minor might compliment their degree and enhance their career opportunities post-graduation. For instance, a student majoring in History or Art History, but minoring in Computer Science, would develop a skill set that included coding—opening up a panoply of jobs in industries and fields that meld the two skills. Portland-based international company [History IT](https://historyit.com/) is an excellent local example of the growing employment opportunities at the intersection of History, preservation, and technology. Examples of extant Minors to be promoted to students include: Archaeology, Audio and Video Production, Business Administration, Computer Science, Event Planning and Management, Food Studies, Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship, Digital Media and Design, Game Design, Leadership Studies, Marketing, Planning and GIS, Race and Ethnic Studies, Public and Professional Writing, and Tourism and Hospitality, among others.

**(4) The infusion of more skills-based work within a variety of History and Art History courses across campuses.** One of the key opportunities we can provide to students, is a consistent scaffolding of the ways in which the skills they are gaining in their disciplinary majors (close analysis of visuals and text, bias awareness, evidenced-based analytical writing, problem-solving, critical thinking, group dynamics, project development, among others), can be translated into a variety of careers. Faculty, staff, and students alike need additional training and professional development to be able to clearly articulate how the skills employers are looking for are a natural by-product of the disciplines of History and Art History. This will be a key topic of the first History and Art History Faculty Summit, open to all UMS institutions.

**(5) More robust and distinct partnerships between History and Art History programs and university resources that could help a student’s career discernment and development**. Program innovation partners will work with the Career and Employment Hub on the USM campus and the University of Maine Career Center to offer workshops and alumni networking events specifically targeted at History and Art History majors. USM will begin a History Alumni Lecture Series in AY 2019, where program alumni will be invited back to campus to share their career journeys with current students and faculty.

## **Faculty/Personnel**

As a public Historian, curator, educator, scholar, and Director of the Center for Collaboration and Development at USM, the foundation of my professional life is interdisciplinarity and collaboration. I have, over the course of a decade in Maine, fostered a diverse network of fellow Historians, Art Historians, museum curators and educators, and Humanities professionals across the state. I participated in the APRIP/PI process for History and this proposal is both an extension and a *tangible* expansion of that work.

In support of this proposal, I contacted colleagues around the system and have received commitments to collaborate on this initiative from my History and Art History colleagues at USM (Gary Johnson, Leroy Rowe, Lacey Sparks, Jie Zhao, Donna Cassidy, and Kim Grant) as well as the following individuals: from Orono (Michael Lang, History, and Justin Wolff, History of Art—my co-applicant); Farmington (Chris O’Brien and Alison Hepler, History), Fort Kent (Paul Buck, History and Education); and Presque Isle (John Zaborney, Kimberly Sebold, and John Defelice, History). UMA and UMM do not have History majors, though I welcome the chance to collaborate with my colleagues at those institutions. Additionally, I have partnered with Alexandra Platts, a Career Counselor at USM’s Career and Employment Hub, to assist with internship placement and the development of career workshops and materials specifically tailored to these majors.

*Should this proposal receive funding, I will extend an invitation to collaborate to all faculty teaching in History and Art History within the UMS, including secondary educators partnering with UMS campuses on dual-enrollment initiatives*. Piloting this project in the disciplines of History and Art History can provide a model that could potentially be expanded to other Humanities and Liberal Arts disciplines.

## **Program Assessment**

The assessment of the effectiveness of the Program Innovation Fund investment will be both qualitative and quantitative and will occur throughout the term of the investment (and beyond). Assessment will begin with student focus groups on a variety of UMS partner campuses to assess a student’s career readiness (e.g. to the extent they have thought about the next step after their undergraduate degrees), as well as their awareness of the extant centers on campus where they can seek career development assistance. We will also develop and implement a faculty survey regarding knowledge and training to support students in their career development. The results of this survey will guide our faculty professional development efforts across campuses.

Furthermore, we will also closely track attendance at all career related events, particularly the metrics involved in determining which method of event promotion and timing are the most effective. Additionally, surveys of event attendees will also assess the relevance of the program to the career exploration and development of the student participants. We will also work with the Office of Academic Assessment and the Office of Informational Research at USM and elsewhere within the system, as needed, to develop and implement effective surveys assessing student needs.

Finally, the proposed funded internship program will also be heavily assessed, and will include surveys to the interns, faculty mentors, site supervisors, and site directors to assess the benefits of these funded internships to all parties. Long term, we would also want to know the role these internships played in career development and discernment of the students who completed the internships (e.g. if a student who interned in the Brown Library at Maine Historical Society then went to library school to obtain an MLIS, and then returned to the workforce in Maine). All of our institutions need to do a better job of tracking the job placement of our graduates—we would like to flesh out this data at the program level.

## **Budget**

For this round of Program Innovation funding (to be spent during the 2018-2019 academic year and pilot these initiatives), **I respectfully request an investment of $68,500, broken down into the following categories.**  Note: Because this particular program investment request does not seek the creation of a new major or degree offering, but rather looks to support, grow, and expand current programs, I am not including a second budget that envisions future hiring needs and marketing at this time. However, should the funded internships prove to be successful endeavors, I would continue to seek a combination of system funding, MEIF funding, and investments from the external site partners to continue the funded internships. To truly see the impact of this initial investment, it will be essential to continue to deploy the materials, continue the career training and new course offerings continuously over a four+ year period with the cohort of students who enters in AY 2019.

**Internship Funding: $35,000**

This internship funding will support subsidizing the tuition cost of a three-credit internship course (roughly $950 at USM, including credits and associated fees), as well as a $500 per semester stipend for student interns ($1000 in the summer)—significantly reducing the financial burdens that discourage many of our undergraduate students from pursuing internship opportunities, especially in non-profit settings such as museums, historical societies, libraries and archives, etc.

$35k in funding will result in the creation of 20-25 funded internships for History and Art History students across the UMS for 2018-2019 (fall, spring, and summer). See the discussion of internships on pp. 4-5 re: internal and community partners who have already committed to hosting funded interns for 2018-2019.

**Professional Development (Faculty): $20,000**

**$7500:** Attendance at the American Historical Association in Chicago, Illinois, (January 2019) for up to five History faculty members teaching within the UMS.Attendees would participate in seminars, roundtables, workshops, and panels that focus on career preparation for History majors, as well as bring back best practices to their respective campuses.

**$4500:** Funding for two faculty summits (one at USM and one at UM) in 2018-2019 that bring History and Art History faculty from all seven campuses together to discuss collaborative efforts for career preparation and skill-building for our students. Funds would support travel (mileage costs) to summit site, as well as food for participants. One summit will also feature a panel of community partners eager to engage with UMS faculty on career preparation. The other will feature a workshop with a member of the AHA Tuning Grant staff. This funding would support bringing a member of the American Historical Association Tuning Project staff to Maine to give a workshop for History and Art History faculty focused on incorporating skills-based learning objectives and outcomes into individual courses, as well as development around how to talk to current and prospective students about careers.

**$4000:** Funding for up to eight course development grants ($500/each) for individual faculty members from across the UMS who wish to develop or retool a course that places more emphasis on skills acquisition and/or career preparation and development. These grants would also fund the creation of the one-credit career preparation courses mentioned on pg. 6.

**$4000**: Summer stipend to provide the project director with compensation for the initiation, development, and oversight of this work—particularly the multi-campus internship program, two faculty summits and survey design.

**Events/Workshops (for students): $3000**

Funding to support Alumni networking events (that include current majors) as well as career panels featuring History and Art History majors with a variety of different professions. These funds will also be used for student workshops on resume writing, interviewing, and graduate school applications. These events would be open to all interested majors and minors, as well as any other UMS student interested in attending.

**Creation of Career Preparation and Marketing Materials: $5000**

These funds will be utilized to produce a robust set of career preparation and marketing materials that can be utilized across multiple campuses and shared with both current and prospective students. If needed, these funds will also support related costs for website enhancement to feature UMS alumni from History and Art History programs on department and program websites. These materials will be both digital and print, and the initial cost investment should provide materials that are relevant and easily updateable with minimal future costs.

**Surveys and Assessments: $1000**

These funds will support the development and implementation of student surveys and focus groups assessing career goals, career preparation and discernment, and the acquisition of skills that can be deployed in the workforce.

**Graduate Assistant Stipend for 2018-2019: $4500**

This funding will allow Professor Bischof to hire a Graduate Assistant for two semesters to help coordinate workshops, internships, and assessment data related to the larger project.

**Total Request: 68,500.00**

1. See: Paul B. Sturtevant, “History is Not a Useless Major: Fighting Myths with Data,” in *Perspectives on History,* April 2017: <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2017/history-is-not-a-useless-major-fighting-myths-with-data> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. American Historical Association, “The Career Diversity Five Skills,” <https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/career-diversity-for-historians/career-diversity-resources/five-skills> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Current materials](https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/career-and-employment-hub/Major_History_FY15.pdf), while extant, are difficult to access, not consistently updated, and are not comprehensive enough. Part of the work of this investment is a comprehensive overhaul of these materials and then a directed effort to get these materials in the hands of students early and often. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. University of Southern Maine Departmental Performance Indicators, AY 2018: <https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/oir/DPIR_AY2018_Fall2017.pdf>

   For purposes of comparison, the University of Maine History major average undergraduate enrollment over the same period of time was 76 students (see University of Maine Enrollment by College and Major Report, 2017: <https://umaine.edu/oir/wp-content/uploads/sites/205/2017/11/1317_LASmajors.pdf>). In terms of major counts, both History and Art History at the University of Maine have declined by 50% between 2009 and 2017 (see UMaine Undergraduate Majors Fall 2009-Fall 2017: <https://umaine.edu/oir/wp-content/uploads/sites/205/2018/01/UMaine-undergraduate-majors_2009-2017-1.19.18.pdf)>. This Program Innovation investment is both a model for growth, as well as a necessary intervention to stem the decline evidenced in the above reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)