FAM CONFERENCE 2026

Building A Docent Program For The Next Generation

Lessons from two years of The FHM's Student Docent and Ambassador Corps.

THE FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

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GENSPIRATION FOUNDATION

01

DOCENT

Students lead tours and educational experiences for visitors.

02

AMBASSADOR

Students carry the mission to campus and the wider community.

03

ALUMNI

Students return as a volunteer, member, or employee.

Program Goal: Developing student leaders, docents, and ambassadors.

Internship timeline

1

RECRUITMENT

April to July: College outreach, application period, interviews

2

TRAINING

August to October: Learning Holocaust history, about the institution, and how to lead effective tours

3

INTERNSHIP

October to May: Leading tours, participate in campus activity, submit regular reflections

4

MENTORSHIP

October to May: Regular feedback and check-in meetings, opportunities for inter-department learning, recommendation letters

5

EVALUATION

May to June: Reviews for college requirements, gathering and submitting all data and reflections for grant report

Challenges

01 SCHEDULING

Student schedules regularly change due to school commitments, other jobs, etc. Limited availability extends training and adds staff hours.

Fix: Keeping students as engaged as possible even through stretches of odd schedules. Acceptance.

02 CAMPUS REACH

Moving from museum participation to campus engagement.

Fix: Partnership with campus engagement departments and the museum's own public programs department.

03 STAFF CAPACITY & TOOL LIMITATIONS

Staff time needed to recruit, train, mentor, do all the admin, and evaluate. Timekeeping was stressful and complicated.

Fix: Setting clear pay systems. Moving to the same timesheet system as full-time staff.

04 EVALUATION

Evaluating student work regularly and for grants.

Fix: Required monthly reflections and check-ins per their contract. Might add an online submission form for ease.

Growth happens on both sides

01

This program helped me become more confident discussing these topics both on campus and within my community. I found myself carrying the lessons I learned beyond the museum, whether through conversations with peers, academic discussions, or everyday interactions."

DOROTHY JONES

02

"improved my abilities as a public speaker"

JACOB MANDELL

03

"I believe I was able to successfully learn and gain some experience for the field of work I want to pursue during my time as an intern."

JAMIE HAYBERG

WHAT THE MUSEUM GAINS

Fresh docent voices

Campus & reach

A talent pipeline

Intern → volunteer → member → employee

Lessons learned & recommendations

1

PARTNERSHIPS

Create a partnership with local universities and schools. Directly contact professors & major advisors. Use university provided student job boards (Handshake USF+, Triton - Eckerd) Think outside the box for what departments to target.

2

DEFINING THE ROLE

What does successful participation look like? What is the benefit to the student?

3

FUNDING

Budget both paid student time and protected staff time. If grants or museum funds are not available for student pay, start small. Use the simplest timekeeping system possible and stick to it.

4

TRAINING & EXPERIENCE

Establish a clear timeline from onboarding to the first tour. Start with a firm schedule before you are flexible.

5

EVALUATION

Keep record of everything, especially for grant opportunities. Build reflection and reviews into the calendar.

6

CREATE A NETWORK

Invite alumni to remain volunteers, members and keep them in mind for job opportunities.