USU ArtsBridge Program receives federal grant

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USU's ArtsBridge Program and Fine Arts Museum received a federal grant for just under $150,000, said Laurie Baefsky, USU ArtsBridge Program director.

"This grant is really important to our survival," Baefsky said.

Baefsky said the University of Utah, Brigham Young University and Southern Utah University also have ArtsBridge programs but USU is the only Utah school whose program relies completely on federal funding.

"It's embarrassing," said Nadra Haffar, assistant curator of education for the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art.

There is no way to determine if USU will receive future funding for the program, said Jeannine Mjoseth, public affairs officer of the Institute of Museum and Library Services which issued the grant.

"It all depends on the quality of the proposal and how it compares and competes with other submitted grant proposals," Mjoseth said.

Baefsky said the grant will provide support to the ArtsBridge program as well as expand education at the museum.

Haffar said the library is currently developing a program called the Spiraled Learning Project which uses the arts to teach math and geometry. The new program invites K-12 students to visit the art museum on campus, she said, and also works with teachers after the visit to continue learning back to the classroom.

"Things like prealgebra and calculus and geometry deal with shapes and patterning," Haffar said. "Much artwork has these things in it. If students view artwork that demonstrates a concept they will apply that knowledge. It's adding practicality to math concepts."

Baefsky said the ArtsBridge and SLP programs are helping teachers create their core curriculum. She also said the programs help raise test results in the core subjects.

"The kids learned math in a really cool way, without even saying the 'M'-word," Baefsky said. "When testing came around they did great. They flourished."

The programs also take some pressure off teachers who might be afraid to use art as a teaching tool or don't know how incorporate art into their teaching methods, Baefsky said.

"I think this is the new wave of Utah education," she said.

Baefsky said the ArtsBridge Program is currently taking applications for student mentors for spring semester. Interested students should go to the program's Web site at www.usu.edu/artmuseum/artsbridge.html. She said all USU students are OK to apply to the program.

"They don't have to have an education background or arts training," Baefsky said.

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