

transformative art + design academy

cultureworks

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

WELCOME!

2024-2025 was a year of new and expanded programs and increased investment in community partnerships and collaboration!

We offered 53% more program hours and saw a 55% growth in enrollments over last year, while launching new initiatives aimed at professional development and career readiness for traditionally underrepresented and under-resourced communities through our Visiting Artist Series.

We're especially proud of the ways in which our Student Advisory Council took on new roles and responsibilities. SAC grew to 15 students and elected a student facilitator to lead meetings and guide direction throughout the year. They hosted world renowned Social Psychologist David Myers for a discussion on the psychology of misinformation, contributed to a community-wide banner project celebrating diversity, and planned a spring traveling exhibit of sculptures based on endangered species made from repurposed and recycled materials.

We're so grateful for new funding from MillerKnoll Foundation, Shine Foundation, and the State of MI, along with increased giving that enabled this significant growth and impact!

Feedback from funders and constituents since November 2024 indicated growing anxiety over the socio-political climate, financial instability, and economic uncertainty. This negatively impacted registration numbers, program income through our pay-what-you-can-afford model, and available grants, sponsorships, & donations.

Given the increased need demonstrated through enrollments and a 269% increase in need for scholarships, we pivoted to a free model of registration at the close of this fiscal year. Increased accessibility has resulted in a stunning 154% increase in summer registrations in 2025!

Many thanks to our growing family of supporters for making all of this possible. We simply could not do this vital work without you!

Emily Christensen
Executive Director

WHO WE ARE

MISSION: TO CULTIVATE CREATIVITY, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND EMPOWER STUDENTS

VISION: IN ORDER TO FOSTER WHOLENESS IN A FRACTURED WORLD.



THROUGH CLASSES, WORKSHOPS, FIELD TRIPS, AND COMMUNITY-WIDE EVENTS, WE CONNECT MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH PROFESSIONAL TEACHING ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS TO INSPIRE CURIOSITY, CULTIVATE COMPASSION, AND DEVELOP 21ST CENTURY SKILLS.



PRIMARY AUDIENCE:

Teens who are creatively inclined but lack access to traditional arts programming because of mental, physical, or social challenges, or geographical, financial, or transportation limitations.

WE OFFER:

Affordable, accessible arts education in the form of after school and summer classes, workshops, community-wide events, field trips, and professional development for young artists and designers.

Free transportation is available from West Ottawa and Holland Public Schools.

LAST YEAR:

55% OF ENROLLED STUDENTS STRUGGLED WITH OR HAD BEEN TREATED FOR ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, OR STRESS OVER THE TWO YEARS - DOWN FROM 74% THE PREVIOUS YEAR (AND OVER 71% OF STUDENTS WERE RETURNING STUDENTS)

88% SAID BEING CREATIVE HELPS THEM FEEL CALMER, HAPPIER, OR MORE JOYFUL



VALUES (WE DEDICATE RESOURCES TO):

- * Accessibility
- * Inclusion and belonging
- * Excellence
- * Holistic growth
- * Ecological sustainability
- * Career advancement and paid opportunities for artists
- * Youth-adult partnerships in leadership
- * Empathy/respect for people and space
- * Creativity and self expression
- * Experimentation
- * Curiosity
- * Wonder





IMPACT: OVERVIEW

CULTUREWORKS PROVIDED HANDS-ON ART EDUCATION TO 1,955 STUDENTS LAST YEAR (46% INCREASE), OF WHOM 239 WERE ENROLLED IN MULTI-WEEK SPRING, SUMMER, AND FALL CLASSES.

Of enrolled students:

- * 30% of households were below the ALICE threshold for income
- * 37% identified as Hispanic/Latino, African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Asian American, or 2+ ethnicities
- * 18 schools represented, with the majority of enrollments from West Ottawa, Holland, and Black River Public Schools.

We network with school counselors, pastors, art teachers, physicians, the juvenile justice system, and therapists to recruit students and we partner with over 20 youth-serving organizations in order to maximize impact and extend resources.

When asked how CultureWorks has impacted their lives, students wrote about

**INCREASED CONFIDENCE,
NEW FRIENDS, & THE
SAFE, WELCOMING COMMUNITY**



WE CONSISTENTLY HEAR FROM STUDENTS, PARENTS, COUNSELORS, AND TEACHERS THAT OUR PROGRAMS ARE AFFORDABLE, WELCOMING, AND ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS WHO RELY ON ARTISTIC EXPRESSION FOR THEIR EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING.

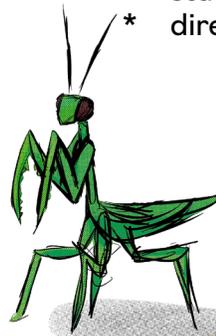
We are a **YOUTH DIRECTED SPACE**

We rely on feedback from our Student Advisory Council as we develop transformative programs aimed at personal & professional growth, academic success, and long-term positive outcomes.

We survey all enrolled students to get feedback on program quality and areas of interest.

CultureWorks **ALUMNI** serve as leaders in all levels of our organization as

- * paid interns,
- * contracted educators,
- * studio/admin assistants, and
- * directors of our board.



IMPACT: PROGRAMS

At the heart of our programming, **multi-week classes** offer opportunities for long-term mentoring, career connections, and personal/professional growth.

- Students enrolled in multi-week classes: 239 (55% growth)
- Total amount of scholarships provided: \$35,128 (269% growth)
- Schools represented: 18
- % of returning students: 73%
- # of employees: 8 (6FTE)
- # of contracted professional teaching artists: 19
- \$ amount paid in fair wages for artists/designers: \$180,216 (56% of total expenses)



We expanded digital art classes in animation & graphic design, thanks to State funding for new laptops & Wacom tablets, and we launched Bookish, a book/art club, by student request. In Open Studio, students had access to industry-standard supplies & equipment plus guidance from our staff & interns. Many classes were at (or beyond) capacity, including Ceramics, Open Studio, Drawing Club, Character Design, Animation & Advanced Animation.

Total number of program hours increased by 53% and new grant

funding through MiLEAP OST enabled significant program expansion with additional services, career exploration opportunities, free workshops, civic engagement, and extended mentoring through SAC.

In addition to multi-week classes, we provided:

- 7 free **workshops** in collaboration with partner organizations
- hands-on art education at 7 **community-wide special events**
- 13 **outreach** events
- 13 **school visits**
- 11 events focused on **leadership development and career readiness**

New **VISITING ARTIST SERIES**

This comprehensive series elevates and celebrates the work of artists from diverse backgrounds and experiences while connecting students to career pathways in art and design fields.

- 3-DAY FIELD TRIP TO CHICAGO HIGHLIGHTING VISITING ARTIST, SALVADOR JIMÉNEZ-FLORES AND GRABADOLANDIA PRINT FESTIVAL

- VISITING ARTIST WORKSHOP AND PUBLIC EVENT IN SEPT 2025

- ARTIST IN RESIDENCY PROGRAM & EXHIBIT, EL NORTE AZUL, WITH JAER MEDINA

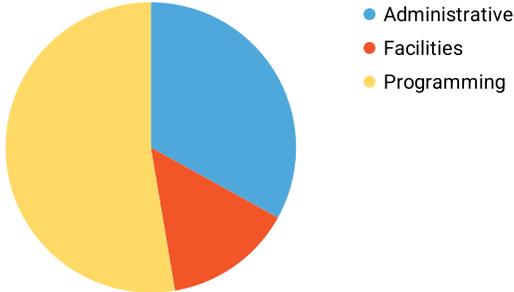
- 2 CAREER EXPLORATION PANELS: FILM & VIDEOGRAPHY AND GRAPHIC DESIGN



FINANCIALS

TOTAL BUDGET:
\$271,500

2024-2025 Budget



TOTAL EXPENSES:
\$319,996

Increased State funding enabled significant growth in programs and the budget deficit was covered by the previous years' surplus.

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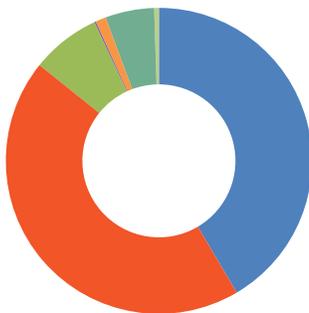


89
FULL
SCHOLARSHIPS
(compared to 48 last year)

64
PARTIAL
SCHOLARSHIPS
(compared to 55 last year)

TOTAL REVENUE:
\$305,229

- Contributions
- Grants and Bequests
- Program Income
- Facility Rental Fees
- Sales
- Sponsorships
- In Kind



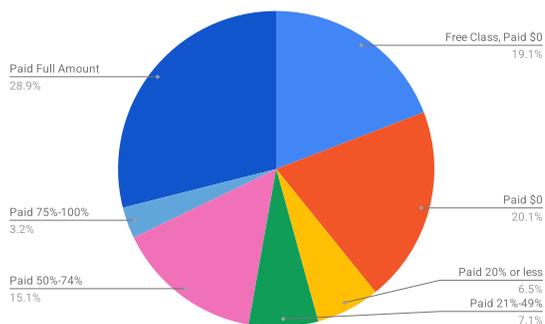
Over 85% of CultureWorks' revenue was contributed, and **about half of all contributions came from individual donors and family foundations.**

Over the past 2 years, we've strategically diversified our revenue and increased grant funding by 75%!

FOR OUR MULTI-WEEK CLASSES WE PROVIDED:

\$35,128
TOTAL IN
SCHOLARSHIPS
(compared to \$9,519 last year)

BREAKDOWN OF WHAT STUDENTS PAID:



PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR MISSION & IMPACT!

We provided free hands-on art activities for 1,800+ participants of all ages at **community-wide special events**, including:

- ~ PRIDE FEST
- ~ JUNETEENTH
- ~ LAUP FIESTA
- ~ UNITY MARCH
- ~ TULIP CITY WALLS MURAL FESTIVAL
- ~ MACATAWA WATER FESTIVAL
- ~ INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
- ~ DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

These events support partner nonprofits, build community, & empower students/interns with skills in curriculum development and leadership. We invest \$1000-\$1500 for each event through staffing, curriculum development, and materials.

We also provided free or subsidized **workshops** in collaboration with partner organizations, including:

- ~ AWAKENING AT HOPE COLLEGE
- ~ BLACK RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOL
- ~ I AM ACADEMY
- ~ TRIO UPWARD BOUND
- ~ OAISD
- ~ HEIGHTS OF HOPE
- ~ HOPE CHURCH
- ~ CAREERLINE TECH CENTER
- ~ OUTDOOR DISCOVERY CENTER
- ~ FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
- ~ DISABILITY NETWORK
- ~ HOLLAND MUSEUM
- ~ HOLLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
- ~ HOLLAND AREA ARTS COUNCIL
- ~ OUT ON THE LAKESHORE
- ~ WEST OTTAWA SUMMER MIGRANT ED PROGRAM

We meet regularly with community partners to share knowledge, data, & expertise in regard to youth development, and we actively collaborate to maximize impact through shared resources.



FROM THE STUDENTS



"WE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT **DIFFERENT ARTISTS** WHO CREATED ART BASED ON THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES, WHICH IN TURN HELPED ME LEARN ABOUT THEIR **LIVES.**"

"THE TEACHER & CLASS **SYNERGY** WAS AMAZING, IT WAS A NICE & COMFORTING **CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT.**"

"CULTUREWORKS HAS GIVEN ME A **SAFE SPACE** TO ESCAPE FROM THE STRESS OF SCHOOL, & I OFTEN FEEL CALMED BY COMING HERE."



"I HAVE TROUBLE **PROCESSING EMOTIONS** AND COMPLICATED STUFF LIKE THAT AND CULTUREWORKS HAS HELPED ME SO MUCH WITH EVERYTHING. I GENUINELY **DON'T THINK I WOULD STILL BE HERE** IF NOT FOR CULTUREWORKS."

"I WOULD LOVE TO BE A WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST IN THE FUTURE. CULTUREWORKS CLASSES CAN HELP ME WITH **OBSERVATION & REFLECTION** SKILLS."

"CULTUREWORKS HAS HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT IN MY LIFE. I'M SO MUCH MORE **CONFIDENT, HAPPY,** & THE **COMMUNITY** I'VE DEVELOPED HERE IS SO <3 <3 <3."

