

## **Conservation Internship Program Description**

**The Mission:** The Center of the West's Conservation Internship Program mission is to mentor young professionals in the field of conservation, and young people in the field of growing into themselves.

**The Selection Process:**

In any given year the Center of the West might receive over 50 applications for the Center's conservation internship. Applications have come from most American states and from eight foreign countries.

The applicants are reviewed for academic excellence, interest in conservation, and unique skills and interests. Advanced applicants' experience in some of the world's leading conservation laboratories before coming to the Center is highly prized. The Center hosts 6 or 7 interns every summer. An attempt is made to put together a successful mix of skills, interests, and experience. The advanced students are called upon to mentor other interns and lead projects. An important part of that mentoring is sharing experience about applying to conservation programs. Advanced students will present their application portfolios, counsel students on gaining experience, and even carry out mock interviews. A typical summer intern slate will consist of a student from a graduate program, three pre-program students, a college student, a high school student, and one candidate who is interested but unsure about the field of conservation and museums.

The applications are all reviewed by the Chief Conservator. Upcoming projects are considered when reviewing applicants. Some students may need experience with a certain material or type of project. One summer we worked under the supervision of the staff at the Bureau of Land Management and The Tate Geological Museum that serves as a state repository for fossils. Work to remove a 150-million-year-old ichthyosaur fossil from its stone matrix was carried out. That same summer, one of the interns was attending a two-year college course on creating firearms. This student was given special projects with the Cody Firearms Museum collection as well as instruction on basic conservation ethics and skills. Some students needed experience with paper treatments. The Center hired a former graduate who had gone on to attend the Buffalo graduate program and then work in one of the most prestigious private labs in America, to come and teach the students for a week. That same summer the scientist who developed the portable X-Ray Fluoroscope came to teach about the use of the XRF and to involve the students in the comparative analysis of American bronzes.

Most applicants are university graduates who are seeking conservation experience in order to be accepted into one of the four graduate programs in conservation in the United States. The four American programs granting an M.S., C.A.S., and/or M.A. are: New York University in New York City, Winterthur/University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, Buffalo State University in Buffalo, New York, and UCLA/Getty in Los Angeles. These programs are highly competitive, taking only 5 or ten students a year—17 of the Center's pre-program interns have taken a place in one of these programs.

The next largest constituent of conservation interns comes from the graduate programs themselves. The Center has hosted interns from all four of the graduate programs in the United States, as well as from programs in the United Kingdom, Egypt, France, Spain, Germany, Canada, Peru, and Finland.

Because entry into the field is so competitive, very few university students, and even fewer high school students are able to obtain internships in a conservation lab. The Center's lab has made it a mission to accept at least one high school student and/or one university student every year.

The Center's conservation Internship program has been highly successful in helping pre-program interns gain entry into one of the graduate programs. We also have a high rate of success moving students on to the most prestigious labs in the United States for more experience. Equally rewarding is working with a high school student who gains entry into an accelerated program in pharmacy, and then goes on to medical school. Or working with a shy Cody High School student who has come back for four summers, grown to be an amazing woman, Valedictorian, and incoming freshman at Vassar.

The Chief Conservator is uniquely placed to mentor students seeking acceptance in a program. She graduated from Buffalo, worked at Winterthur, mentored NYU students during her tenure at The Brooklyn Museum, and is strongly connected to the founding professor of the UCLA/Getty. Ms. Perkins has hosted close to one hundred interns in her 12 years at the Center of the West. Mentoring and teaching is her mission and the Center of the West has strongly encouraged her. She was awarded the prestigious Sheldon and Carolyn Keck Award for Excellence in the Education and Training of Conservation Professionals by the American Institute for Conservation.

### **Some highlights from careers of graduates from the Center's Conservation Internship Program**

**Allison Holcomb, 2008–2009:** Allison was hired to work in the conservation lab at the Center after her summer internship. She was accepted to the Winterthur/University of Delaware graduate program and is now Paper Conservator at the National Park Service.

**Fran Ritchie, 2012:** Fran carried out research on the adhesives and carriers used in the conservation of leather during her internship at the Center. She graduated from the Buffalo State Program, worked as a Conservator at the Natural History Museum in New York City, and is now the Conservator of Ethnographic Materials, Natural Science, and Decorative Arts Objects at the National Park Service. Ms. Ritchie has become the national (and perhaps international) expert in the conservation of leather and fur.

**Evan Knight, 2010:** Evan graduated from the University of Texas at Austin Book Conservation Program, worked as a conservator at the Boston Athenaeum, and is now the Collections Preservation Officer for Massachusetts Libraries.

**Katrina Zacharius, 2014:** Katrina graduated from the Buffalo State Program, worked at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art, and is now Conservator of Arms and Armor at the Metropolitan Museum.

**Daniel Kaping, 2017:** Daniel graduated with an M.S., C.A.S from the Buffalo State Program, did his third-year internship at the Field Museum in Chicago and was hired by The Field Museum as Assistant Conservator. Daniel and another former intern, graduate from Buffalo, Kaitlin Wright return to the Center every year to carry out conservation treatments on the outdoor bronzes.

**Jennifer McGlinchey Sexton, 2008:** Jennifer graduated from the Buffalo State Program as a specialist in photo conservation. Jennifer is the international expert and developer of the standards used in Ultraviolet light photography for the documentation of the condition of cultural collections.

Conservators often move from lab to lab, gaining experience through fellowships. Jennifer has held conservation positions at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Menil Collection, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, the Alaska State Library, and most recently, at Paul Messier LLC in Boston, MA, where she continues to consult. Jennifer is now the owner of McGlinchey Sexton Art Conservation in Boulder, Colorado. Jennifer continues to contract with the Center of the West to work on our collections, and lead projects involving the conservation of paper and the Center's Conservation Interns.

Jennifer's selected institutional clients include: Buffalo Bill Center of the West; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center; Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum; Colorado State University; Denver Art Museum; Georgia O'Keeffe Museum; History Colorado; Menil Collection; Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Portland Art Museum, Saint Louis Art Museum; University of Denver; US Air Force Academy, US Olympic Committee; Weissman Preservation Center at Harvard University; Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage at Yale University

**Effie Clark, 2015, 2016, 2017:** Effie graduated from Cody High School, and obtained an Associate Degree from Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming. Effie was always interested in the arts and hovered between, printmaking, conservation, and design. This summer, Effie is working as many jobs as possible to earn money. In fall 2019, Effie planned to attend RIT in Rochester, NY, seeking a degree in design.