New York City, February 9, 2017 — For two weeks in January, the Center for Curatorial Leadership (CCL) hosted its tenth class of Fellows for their leadership intensive in New York City. A cohort of twelve curators from institutions across North America came together for the first segment of their CCL fellowships and took part in a rigorous schedule of coursework, assignments, workshops, and meetings with museum directors and cultural leaders. Throughout the intensive, the group formed a close rapport that set the course for a challenging, meaningful, and transformative fellowship experience.

Highlights from the January program include:

REFLECTION ON THE STATE & FUTURE OF MUSEUMS

A newfound urgency underscored this year’s conversations, which—through the unique opportunity for time, space, and a sounding board of new colleagues—raised challenging questions and allowed the cohort to think of their roles and responsibilities in expanded ways. CCL is committed to fostering greater diversity within museums and the curatorial field and questions of inclusion and representation were chief among the issues raised. Across all levels of the museum including audiences, staffs, and boards, the curators grappled with tangible actions to ensure the relevance and impact of museums well into the future. Speakers were keen to note the markedly charged social and political moment, which positioned the Fellows to re-examine their institutions’ missions and their own responsibilities thoughtfully and responsively upon returning to work after the January program.

COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL CURRICULUM

A custom designed schedule of Columbia Business School instruction grounds the fellowship in the acquisition of practical skills and critical approaches to management. This year featured a range of coursework including organizational alignment, strategy, teams, and negotiation, among many others. Various modules encouraged the curators to draw from their own professional situations and pressing inquiries as a means of situating the lessons within their day-to-day responsibilities. In one cohort favorite,
professor Valerie Purdie-Vaughns led the curators through a strategic group exercise that highlighted principles of collective intelligence in team settings. This course’s combination of lecture, theory, and demonstration—a key characteristic of many of the Columbia Business School units—resulted in an engaging and impactful session that many of the Fellows reported will remain with them in their professional practices.

LEADERSHIP, VISION & SELF-KNOWLEDGE

A standout of this year’s January intensive was the candor with which the cohort explored notions of leadership through the lens of individual self-knowledge. The program curriculum tethered this concept through its signature instruction addressing both the conceptual tenets of leadership and the obtainment of tangible skills. Prior to their arrival in New York and with subsequent on-site reflection, Fellows completed a “360-degree feedback” exercise, which captured performance, peer expectations, and impressions from supervisors and direct reports. Dr. Bernard Steinberg, Director Emeritus of Harvard Hillel, taught the daylong course “Moral Leadership,” which strikes at the core of guiding and directing teams through a clarity of one’s own values. In a newly introduced module, Walton Wilson, Chair of the Acting Department at Yale Drama School, led the curators through a voice workshop focused on public speaking and presentation. Through this broad swath of activities and in related aspects of the program, Fellows were encouraged to deeply consider their personal visions in the development of greater leadership skills and potential.

Often reinforcing these ideas, an array of presenters—ranging from foundation heads and board chairs to museum directors and leaders of cultural initiatives—met with the Fellows and shared their own visions of leadership. Raymond J. McGuire and Thelma Golden, Chairman and Director & Chief Curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem, respectively, spoke to the importance of maintaining a clear vision as it pertains to growing a culturally-specific institution. Michael Kaiser, Chairman of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland, surfaced the key role of exhibition-planning and relevant programming in cultivating a healthy and sustainable organization.

Having concluded the intensive portion of their CCL fellowships, the curators will now embark on residencies with museum directors around the globe, the development and implementation of Diversity Mentoring Initiatives, and the formation of an individualized Organizational Impact Plan. In May, the Fellows will reconvene for the culminating week of the core CCL program to share their progress and reignite the many conversations that they began in
January.

We look forward to reporting on this year's CCL fellowship as it progresses throughout the year and we extend our many congratulations to the driven and talented 2017 Fellows!

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