

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Affinity Group Task Force Minutes  
The Amuse Private Dining Room  
Tuesday, 17 July 2012, 4:30 pm

There were present:

Thurston R. Moore, Chairman  
Dr. Mary Ann Frable  
Ivan P. Jecklin  
Jane Joel Knox  
Dr. Lindley T. Smith  
Dr. Shantaram K. Talegaonkar

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges, Director  
Ms. Suzanne Broyles  
Linda Lipscomb  
Ms. Katie Merritt  
Ms. Jayne Shaw  
Tom Zydel

Absent:

Keith R. Kisse  
Charles H. Seilheimer, Jr.

**I. Call to Order – Thurston R. Moore**

Chairman, Thurston Moore, called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm, and welcomed the group. He stated that this is a great opportunity for the Task Force to review the affinity group restructure plan and the materials to be used in rolling out the new collection interest groups.

**II. Opening Remarks on Role of Task Force – Thurston R. Moore**

President Moore told the group that he feels that the restructuring of the support groups makes sense as it will make VMFA membership more worthwhile and attractive to people. He asked the Task Force members to listen to the roll out plan, ask questions and make suggestions for each focus group so that this program can be implemented in the most effective manner.

Director, Alex Nyerges said a lot of time and thought went in to this concept. The goal is to preserve the best and most popular aspects of the current groups while providing opportunities to attract more members at the higher membership levels. The same type of activities and events enjoyed by the support groups will be offered. The restructure will result in more effective and efficient operations as outlined in the Strategic Plan. It is our opportunity to serve more members with the same amount of resources.

### III. Overview of the Restructure and Program – Linda Lipscomb

Linda Lipscomb, Deputy Director for Advancement, remarked that the growth in the membership base has afforded us new opportunities and challenges. The new program gives us the opportunity to build a loyal membership base from newly acquired members therefore gaining members for life. The restructure provides a vehicle to engage the already loyal, upper level membership in between exhibitions. She noted that currently there are 1,200 members above the \$250 level and it is important that they visit VMFA two to three times per year to ensure maximum renewal rates. The new structure allows for marketing of the benefits to the membership to increase the groups' members and the resources will be reallocated to support and sustain the new structure.

Ms. Lipscomb explained that the number one priority of the restructure is to incorporate and preserve the successful aspects and contributions of the support groups into a more effective structure which includes social opportunities with receptions following programs, curatorial input and involvement, and unique experiences such as off-site collection and gallery visits. The program will be actively marketed to VMFA members with the new materials and a transition strategy to encourage participation. All current members of all support groups will be given complimentary membership at the \$300 or \$600 level through June 2013, regardless of the level of dues currently being paid.

She added that this first communication is not the final one, more will be sent out to provide a route for greater involvement. The Development department will be present at all events to identify and connect with those interested in more involvement. They will listen to members' comments and collect qualitative and quantitative information. Ms. Lipscomb took questions from the Task Force. Members discussed whether additional meetings with certain support groups were needed to allow them to feel comfortable with the new plan. Katie Merritt mentioned that a fall event on the *Raj Silver* exhibition has been planned for the Friends of Indian Art with John Henry Rice giving a tour followed by an open forum on the new format. Dr. Talegaonkar noted that Dr. Joseph Dye had planned a program to showcase the Friends of Indian Art's gifts to the collection showing where the pieces are located in the galleries and he hoped that could be included in the event.

### IV. Review of Actual Samples of Materials and Plan for Introduction –

Katie Merritt, Donor Programs & Events Manager and Tom Zydel,  
Membership Manager

Tom Zydel, Membership Manager, reviewed the distributed brochure showing the new landmark membership program levels which give more members more access to our collection and our curators. He plans a direct mail campaign with a letter that will be sent to constituents and he asked the Task Force to review the letters, make suggestions, or approve them for distribution to their groups. The Friends \$150 level offers a Focus Series of specialized lectures and receptions throughout the year on one of the eight focus areas of the collection. Mr. Zydel said three of the lectures have been planned for the fall: September 20 European with Stephen Campbell, November 14 Ancient Art with Dr. Helen Evans, and January 10 American with Dr. Daniel Schulman. He explained that the

Supporters \$300 level gets the \$150 level benefits plus two additional programs tailored to their chosen area. The \$600 Partners level receives the benefits of the two lower levels with additional events such as a reception and a tour.

Katie Merritt reported that she is responsible for the master calendar for all eight of the Focus Series areas and works with education and the curators to plan these events. Ms. Merritt noted that feedback from the members is welcome so that the program can be molded to their liking.

**V. Other Business/Adjournment**

The staff took questions from the Task Force members. No other business was brought before the Task Force and the meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Suzanne Broyles  
Secretary of the Museum