

**2026  
SACHS  
PROGRAM  
GRANT  
AWARDS  
CELEBRATION**

**April 27  
5-7 PM  
Annenberg  
Center**

# 2026 GRANT AWARDS

Welcome to our 9th Annual Grant Awards Celebration. On behalf of everyone at The Sachs Program for Arts Innovation, it is my great pleasure to share with you our 2026 grant awards in support of artistic production and creative practice at the University of Pennsylvania and in the wider Philadelphia community.

These thirty-seven awards support Penn students, faculty, staff, departments, programs, centers, and community partners embracing a diverse range of fields and modalities including playwriting, filmmaking, calligraphy, creative writing, music, poetry, photography, and more.

Collectively, they respond to the many voices, cultures, and histories that make up our world—hidden rituals and practices of Iranian women, the fight for Indigenous rights, the artistic traditions of the Arctic Circle, Korean gender culture, the lives of immigrants, war propaganda, the history of slavery, to name but a few.

We are humbled and honored by the depths of creativity these grants represent, and the commitments demonstrated by the grantees to the many communities they care so deeply about.

We remain ever grateful to Keith and Kathy Sachs for having the vision to provide such generous and ongoing support for the arts at Penn. I'd also like to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in making these awards possible, including the many evaluation committee members who reviewed the applications, the Sachs Program Board of Advisors, and our incredible staff. We also want to acknowledge the record number of individuals who applied this year. The decisions made about what to support were difficult and not taken lightly.

Thank you for joining us tonight and for your continued support and commitment to the arts. Congratulations to all the grantees, and we hope you enjoy the celebration!

**John McInerney**  
Executive Director  
The Sachs Program for Arts Innovation

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# ARTIST RESIDENCY

up to \$25,000 to bring artists, curators, and collectives (formal or informal) to Penn as Artists- or Curators-in-Residence.

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## Theatre Arts Program

### **Amanda Horowitz Residency in Theatre Arts**

The University of Pennsylvania's Theatre Arts Program will bring playwright, director and visual artist Amanda Horowitz to work in residence at Penn to write, direct, and devise an original play for and with students, culminating in a fully staged production.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

up to \$15,000 to support collaborations between Penn community members and community arts and civic organizers and non-profit organizations.

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## **Musica Practica/Elettronica Viva and One Art Community Center**

### **Another System, Another Sound**

Another System, Another Sound is a partnership between Musica Practica/Elettronica Viva and One Art Community Center to empower shared constituencies, amplify collective voices, and develop grassroots support networks by collaboratively designing and building a sound system to counter embedded power structures.

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## **Jamal J. Elias and Twelve Gates Arts**

### **Unbroken Lineages: Traditional & Contemporary Practice of the Islamic Book Arts**

Jamal J. Elias and Twelve Gates Arts will bring three respected artists to Philadelphia for an exhibition-workshop series highlighting the foundations of Islamic book arts: calligraphy, illumination, and manuscript painting.

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## **Natacha Diels, Andrew Burke, and The Perch Music & Arts Workshop**

### **Wavy Movy Festival**

Wavy Movy Festival is a four-day festival for experimental and new classical music in Philadelphia, presenting both local and out-of-town artists operating in this field.

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## **Netter Center for Community Partnerships and The City Root Media Group**

### **A Summer in West**

The Netter Center and The City Root will offer a media summer program for West Philadelphia teens, creating articles, short-form videos, and a long-form documentary under the banner of A Summer in West.

# PROJECT SUPPORT

up to \$7,500 to support engagement with the arts and humanities through projects directed towards the Penn community or broader public.

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**Center for East Asian Studies,  
the Office of Social Equity & Community,  
and the Asian American Studies Program**

### **RAPtivism and the Future of the Present**

Activist, singer, and songwriter Aisha Fukushima will serve as the Equity in Action Visiting Scholar at Penn for the 2026-27 academic year, a position which focuses on the medium of arts and creativity as a vehicle to shine a light on issues of justice and equity.

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**History of Art Department with Marina George  
and Jessica L. Horton**

### **Pomo Baskets, Woven Futures**

Hosting the Pomo Weavers Society, an Indigenous artist's collective, for a three-day series of campus events designed to generate and share new collaborative research into Penn's extraordinary turn-of-the-twentieth-century Pomo basket collection.

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**Isaac Shalit and Sam Tate**

### **Bugsounds**

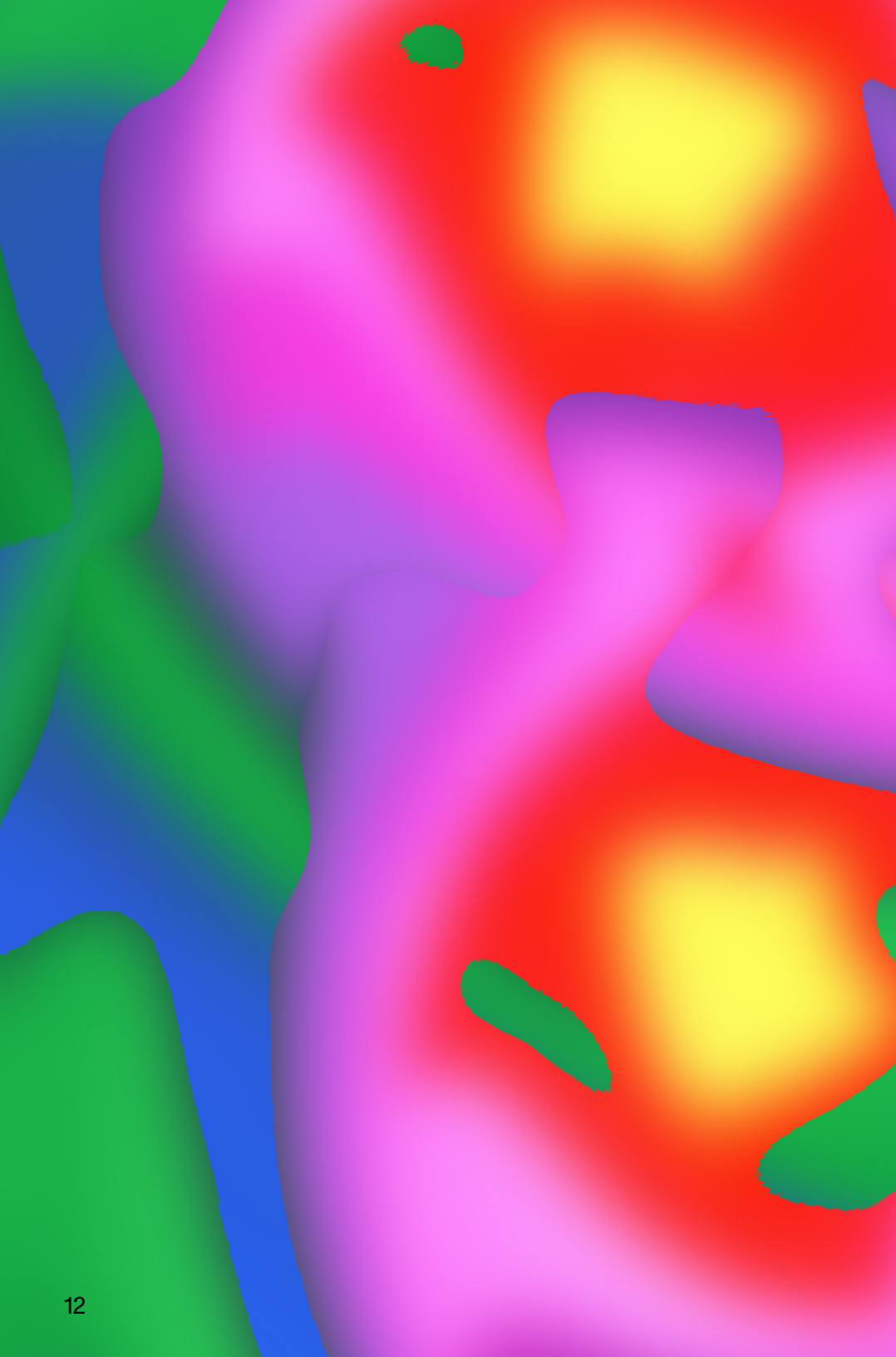
Bugsounds offers free professional recording to local artists and bands to create a digital archive of the West Philly music scene.

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**Penn Museum and Tukufu Zuberi**

### **Fighting for Freedom in an Era of Race and Colonialism**

An exhibition of U.S. and global war propaganda posters that examines how Black bodies were depicted and mobilized for democracy amid inequality.



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**Ranim Albarkawi and the  
Greenfield Intercultural Center**

**Southwest Asian, North African (SWANA) Arts  
at Penn**

A series of workshops and film-centered events highlighting the cultural heritage and artistic practices of Southwest Asian, North African (SWANA) communities.

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**Penn Cultural Heritage Center**

**Suzan Shown Harjo: An Oral History**

A comprehensive oral historic record, in her own words, of the life and work of Suzan Shown Harjo, one of the strongest advocates for Native Rights in the last century.

# INDEPENDENT CREATIVE PRODUCTION

up to \$7,500 to support faculty and staff in the production of their own artistic work.

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**Ana Carolina  
Estarita Guerrero**

**Otherwhere**

A series of installations and interactive objects that problematize the experience of immigration as a constant tension between the gaze of the immigrant on the landscape, and the gaze of others on the immigrant.

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**Emmanuela N Soria Ruiz**

**Llueve: Stage Directions for  
Collective Processing**

Organized as communal research workshops, Llueve investigates how environmental disasters (such as floods and extreme weather events) can be collectively processed through scenographic and spatial conditions, using set design, sound, and light.

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**Eshani Surya**

**Gift Horse**

Surya's sophomore novel, *Gift Horse*, investigates the beloved Americana narrative of "wild" Chincoteague ponies, recontextualizing it through a chronically ill narrator and reconsidering its relationship to the nation's community caretaking practices.

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**Julia Alekseyeva**

**The Great North: Life at the  
Edge of the World**

A non-fiction graphic novel that immerses the reader in Arctic

regions, interviewing artists of the Far North (the Sámi, Ainu, Inuit, Métis, and First Nations communities) while also investigating the appeal of the Far North during eras of tremendous political change.

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**Keisha-Khan Perry**

**Gamboa: An Ethnographic  
Novel of a Coveted Paradise**

This collaborative project continues the work toward the creation of a graphic novel that provides a visual depiction of the last three decades of Black women-led grassroots activism in Gamboa de Baixo in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, against the violence of urban redevelopment and displacement.

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**Minnie Kim**

**What the Body Owes**

An animated short film that examines Korean gender politics from the Chosŏn dynasty to the present, situating contemporary fertility policies within a longer history of state control over women's bodies.

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**Simone White**

**MOM PUTT PUTT**

A visual art project featuring a miniature, mechanized vehicle that runs a timed route through a poetically dramatized Los Angeles.

# CURRICULAR SUPPORT

up to \$3,500 for non-standing faculty, for the implementation of arts-based activities in a course that is currently running or expected to run, or for research and professional development related to a course they are teaching.

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## Marie-Claude Boileau

### CLAY: Past and Present

CLAY: Past and Present aims to connect the study of archaeological ceramics—whether in the field, laboratory, or museum—with contemporary ceramic practices by incorporating field trips and hands-on learning opportunities with local artists and craftspeople.

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## Yadan Luo

### Designing Play

Designing Play is an advanced arts-based design course in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, which explores play as a cultural, spatial, and social force.

# STUDENT

up to \$3,500 to support creative practice, from independent projects to thesis and dissertation-related work, to programs and initiatives intended to engage the student body or broader public.

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**Aliyah Dominique Jefferies**  
*Weitzman School of Design,  
Graduate Fine Arts,  
MFA candidate*

**Saman Enn Og Aftur  
(Together Once Again)**

A short film intertwining the lives of a Black man and woman, anchored in the past and present, attempting to survive impossible conditions.

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**Allison Li**  
*College of Arts & Sciences,  
Neuroscience, C'26*

**Stories of the Avenue**

A narrative nonfiction project that portrays the resilience of patients, providers, and outreach workers responding to the overdose crisis across Philadelphia.

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**Armaghan Fakhraeirad**  
*School of Arts & Sciences,  
Ethnomusicology,  
PhD candidate*

**Listen! Something Still  
Hanging from the Tree**

A collaborative experimental film that moves between public mourning drums and private healing rituals in southern Iran.

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**BioArt Lab at Penn (Jenny Li)**  
*College of Arts & Sciences,  
Computational Biology; minors  
in design, computer science,  
and chemistry, C'26; submatric-  
ulated for a master's in biology*

**BioArt Lab: Art of Science  
Symposium**

A symposium featuring student work from art-science workshops at Philadelphia schools, pioneering speakers, and pieces from a community call for submissions to highlight art as a tool for scientific visualization and public engagement.

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**Cacie Rosario Jackson**  
*Weitzman School of Design,  
Graduate Fine Arts,  
MFA candidate*

**Envelope**

A body of artworks exploring histories of Black cultural production, the limitations of the archive, and strategies for making sonic and sensory legacies visible.

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**Dagny Elise Carlsson**  
*Weitzman School of Design,  
Graduate Architecture and  
Landscape Architecture, MLA  
and MArch Candidate*

**In Their Own Dreams: Archi-  
tectural Process through the  
National Museum of the Ameri-  
can Indian**

An interview project highlighting the profound role Indigenous communities played in reshaping both architectural practice and museology through their involvement in the National Museum of the American Indian.

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**Enne Kim and Trisha Bheemanathini**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, International Relations and English, C'26; College of Arts & Sciences, Sociology, C'26*

**GRAIN Film Festival: Gathering Rising Asian-American Imagination Narratives**

An AAPI film festival centering underrepresented student filmmakers through screenings, shared meals, and public dialogue, fostering community and creative resistance.

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**Gevorg Ghazaryan**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, C'27*

**The Real Cost of Development: Communities and the Environment at Risk**

A mini-documentary film examining how data centers in Loudoun County, Virginia, impact nearby communities and the environment.

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**Jai Ausir Vinson-Scott**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, Law and Society, Cinema and Media Studies, C'29*

**The Boy Who Couldn't Hold What He Broke**

A multimodal project exploring Jai Ausir Vinson-Scott's formative years as an African American, queer man.

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**Juliana Li**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, Comparative Literature and Economics, C'28*

**Criss Cross**

A student-run print art publication offering a site for cross-disciplinary collaboration and exchange.

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**Latoya Brisco**  
*School of Arts & Sciences, Anthropology, PhD candidate*

**Stilted Ground**

Working with a queer women-led stilt-walking group in Kingston, Jamaica, this experimental audio-visual work explores urban design, political belonging, and social reproduction of space through embodied performance.

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**Maya Yu Zhang**  
*Weitzman School of Design, Graduate Fine Arts, MFA candidate*

**(un)known address**

A performance where diasporic longing shifts into a tale of becoming, excavating the fraught terrain between mothers and daughters, home and exile.

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**Noa Mori Machover**  
*Weitzman School of Design, Graduate Fine Arts and Landscape Architecture, MFA and MLA candidate*

**After Market**

An interdisciplinary artistic research project tracing platinum-group metals through informal and formal economies.

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**Sol Kim**  
*Weitzman School of Design, Graduate Fine Arts, MFA candidate*

**Human Condition**

A photographic work that investigates and subverts the algorithms through which computer vision detects and categorizes humans.

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**Timmy Straw and Julieta Vittore Dutto**  
*School of Arts & Sciences, Comparative Literature, PhD candidate; School of Arts & Sciences, Classics, PhD candidate*

**Poets Who Translate**

A community-centered reading series that brings together poets working and translating across a diversity of languages.

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**Vivian Bi**  
*School of Arts & Sciences, Anthropology, PhD candidate*

**A Ceremony Without Walls: The Reparative Politics of Arts Innovation after Capitalist Transformation**

A collaborative exhibition and panel on the Second Annual Art Junpo, a Hainan-based arts festival experimenting with new forms of spiritual & social life in a Chinese special economic zone.

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**WriteMinds**

**Michelle Lu**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, English, C'27*

**Grace Haeun Lee**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, Health and Societies, C'28*

**Emily Ng**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, Neuroscience, C'25*

**Jillian Troth**  
*College of Arts & Sciences, Neuroscience, C'25*

**WriteMinds**

A creative writing initiative that brings accessible, imaginative workshops to all older adults, particularly individuals experiencing memory loss or cognitive decline.

## About the Review Process

The decisions around what to fund each year are extremely difficult and not taken lightly. During our 2026 grant cycle, applications were peer-reviewed by twelve different committees, reflecting a range of expertise. Committee members included former grantees, Penn students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as Philadelphia community members and colleagues within the arts.

A complete list of the 2026 Sachs Program Grants Evaluation Committee Members will be shared with the online public announcement of the 2026 Sachs Program Grant Awards on [sachsarts.org](http://sachsarts.org). We would like to extend a warm thanks to those committee members for the time and thought they dedicated to this year's grants evaluation process.

## About the Sachs Program

The Sachs Program for Arts Innovation supports artistic production and creative practice through grantmaking, exhibitions and programming, and community-engaged initiatives, with a focus on the University of Pennsylvania and adjacent communities of West Philadelphia.

## Sachs Program Staff

**John McInerney**  
Executive Director

**Chloe Reison**  
Associate Director

**Elizabeth Shaw**  
Grants & Administrative Coordinator

**Cindy Stockon Moore**  
Temporary Grants Specialist

## Sachs Program Advisory Board

**Josephine Park, Co-Chair**  
Associate Dean for Arts & Letters  
President's Distinguished Professor of English

**Matt Neff, Co-Chair**  
Director of Undergraduate Fine Arts and Design

**Al Filreis**  
Director, Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing  
Faculty Director, Kelly Writers House  
Kelly Family Professor of English

**Christopher A. Gruits**  
Executive & Artistic Director, Penn Live Arts

**Deborah A. Thomas**  
Professor and Chair of Anthropology  
Director, Center for Experimental Ethnography

**Heather Love**  
Professor of English  
Co-Director of Theatre Arts

**Jasmine Elizabeth Johnson**  
Assistant Professor of Africana Studies

**Johanna Burton**  
Daniel W. Dietrich II, Director,  
Institute of Contemporary Art

**Michelle Lopez**  
Associate Professor of Fine Arts

**Sharon Hayes**  
Professor and Chair of Fine Arts

**Sonal Khullar**  
W. Norman Brown Associate  
Professor of South Asian Studies

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Design by Elaine Lopez.

Event photography by Jaime Alvarez.

Food by Korea Taqueria.

Currently on view in the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts: in case of fire, speak (main lobby); Allison Zuckerman: Remixed and Reclaimed (upper ambulatory); selected works from Betty Gold (lower ambulatory). Other permanent installations on view include work by: Frank Stella, Isaac Tin Wei Lin and Jayson Musson.

**THE SACHS  
PROGRAM  
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UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

# AGENDA



THE SACHS  
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## **5:00 PM**

Open Reception with food by Korea Taqueria and music by DJ Robert Botto (Wishniak Soundsystem)

## **5:15 PM**

Grant Awards Program

- Welcome Remarks by Vice Provost for the Arts, Timothy Rommen
- Program Remarks by Sachs Program Advisory Board Co-Chairs, Josephine Park and Matt Neff
- 2026 Grant Awards Announcements by Sachs Program Staff and Advisory Board Members

## **6:00 PM**

Reception continues.  
Enjoy the celebration!