*This month's Muse-ing comes from University of Delaware History and Museum Studies student Lauren Tineo. Lauren reflects on the value of taking administrative courses that focus on building practical skills such as budgeting, fundraising, and grant writing necessary for a successful career in the GLAM field.*

I have never considered myself good with numbers. It’s practically the reason I’m going into a career in the humanities. Though I was reluctant about my math skills, this semester I signed up for a series of three different, 5-week-long, 1 credit courses, focused on budgeting and finance, grant writing, and fundraising, respectively. I knew I would not be able to avoid math forever, so I wanted to take this course to grow my confidence and have a sense of financial literacy in professional settings.

The Museum Budgets and Finance course taught us to dissect IRS990 forms and financial statements to the point that we understood each line item and could make comparisons across institutions. I also learned how to analyze a financial statement to see how budget priorities matched with an institution’s mission, which is so important because institutions exist to serve their mission and large deviations from that could indicate other issues.  For my final project, I created a budget for a special exhibition at a historical society that would include a lecture series and light reception. I had to account for converting an old office space into a gallery by replacing carpet, installing lighting, painting, installing hanging systems, copying and framing photographs, and writing label and wall text. In the process, I learned to scour the web to price and source wall text and marketing materials, gallery hanging systems, and much more. These exercises helped me understand the countless details that go into creating an exhibition, beyond collections and interpretation.

I’ve been amazed that I did not have to wait long to find out just how applicable this kind of class is. Just two weeks after the course concluded, I was asked to create a blank budget template for prospective guest curators at The Delaware Contemporary, where I am currently a Curatorial/ Exhibitions Intern. A month ago, I would not have been able to create any sort of budget, especially not one distributed for public use. Now, I not only feel knowledgeable about what information a specific budget might include, but also can create a cohesive and understandable spreadsheet template. Microsoft Excel skills are helpful in a range of museum jobs, and too many art history, anthropology, and history majors, like myself, never really learned to use Excel in our courses, and I’ve always felt like learning as you go in a professional setting isn’t the most efficient way to develop these skills. Understanding the way financial and statistical information is organized and communicated is a lesson that translates to all aspects of my professional life. I would urge any undergraduate in the humanities to take these kinds of administrative courses, because they teach skills that are clearly valuable in so many professions.