

2025-2026

GUIDE TO

# Performing & Visual Arts



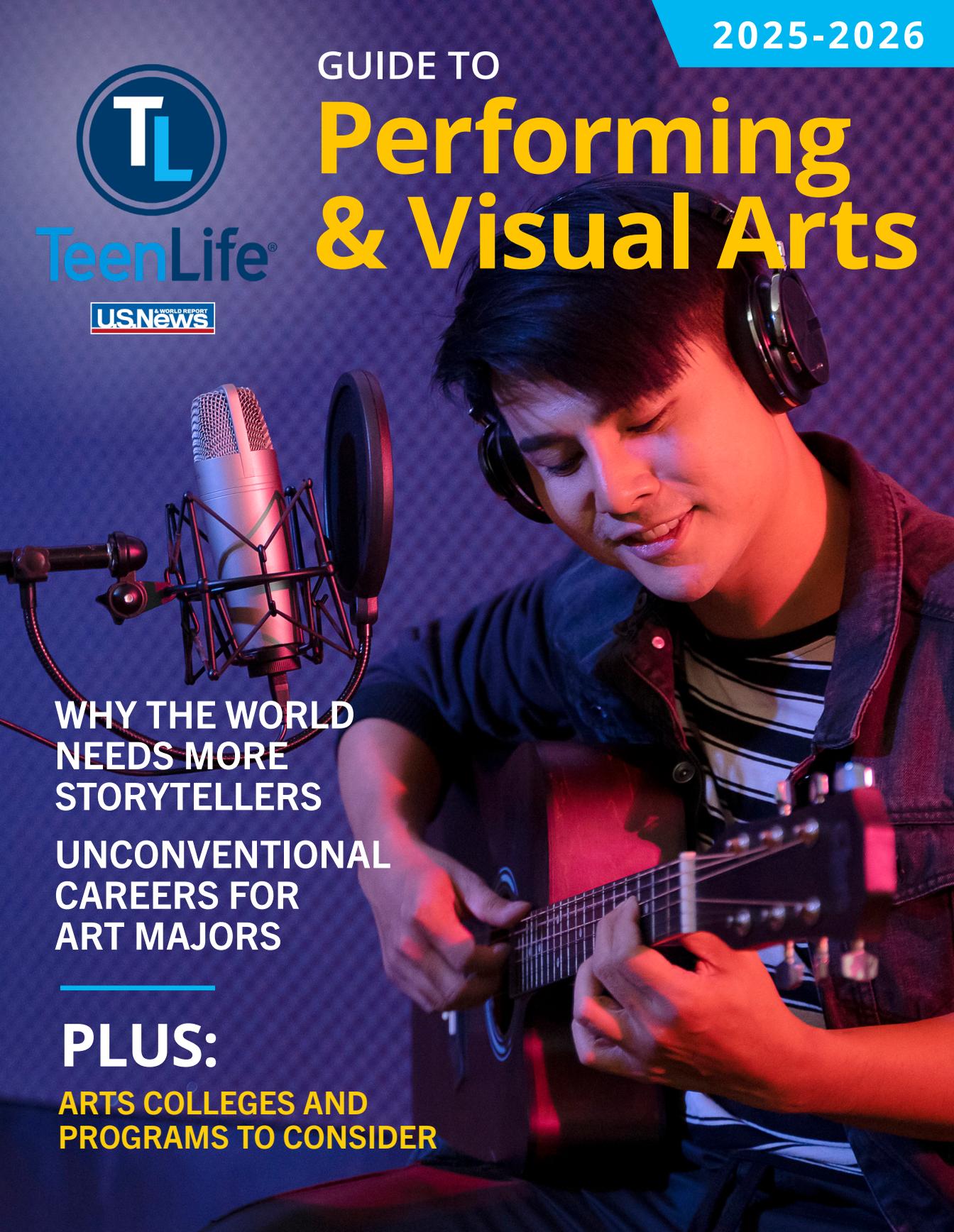
WHY THE WORLD  
NEEDS MORE  
STORYTELLERS

UNCONVENTIONAL  
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The power to innovate, express with depth, and embrace diverse viewpoints is more important than ever. Graduates in the arts embody these strengths, bringing skill, intellect, and emotional insight that position them to shape the future.

This year's Guide to Performing & Visual Arts is your essential tool for discovering and amplifying your talents. Inside, you'll find information about scholarships and what you can earn with a performing and visual arts degree, unconventional careers for art majors, and proof that the world needs more storytellers. This guide also includes opportunities for a variety of performing and visual arts colleges and universities, programs, schools and services. Click on each organization's name or **this handy form** to connect. Use this guide as your roadmap to discovering the possibilities for anyone who loves the performing and visual arts!



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US News

# GUIDE TO PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS

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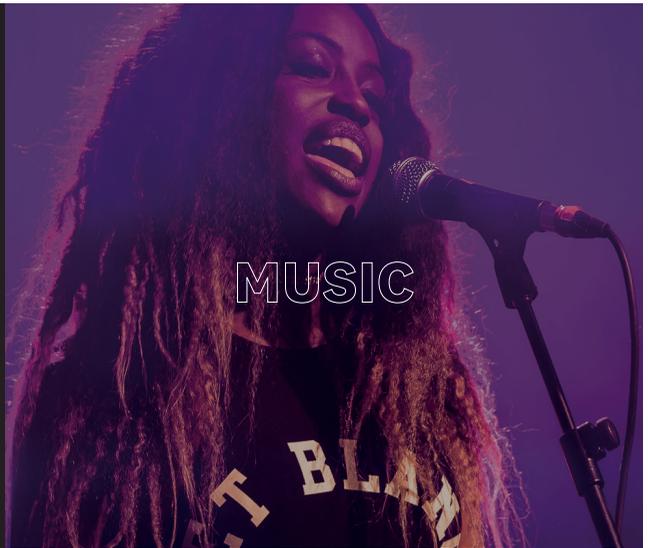


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**PERFORMING ARTS**



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University of North Carolina  
School of the Arts

## AMANDA OVITT

I started dancing at a really young age. My parents put me in dance, and it became something that I loved. Growing up, I focused on dance and gymnastics, but they both got so time-consuming that I had to choose between one and the other. By the end of elementary school, I had made my decision: I started dancing all day, every day.

I applied for both the summer intensive and the high school program at UNCSA for my senior year. When I was accepted into the program, I loved it so much that I wanted to continue and finish through undergrad. Coming in, I sought comprehensive training and performance opportunities. I've had ample opportunities to perform, and I've performed Balanchine, classical ballet, neoclassical work — it's a wide variety that I don't think you can get just anywhere.

My very first "Nutcracker" at UNCSA, during senior year, I danced in both Flowers and Snow. Then I worked my way up and danced the Sugar Plum Fairy, followed

by the Dew Drop. It's been a fun experience dancing different roles. One of my most memorable and favorite experiences was performing as Swanilda in the "Coppélia" suite. Miss [Jen-net] Zerbe coached me on the variation, and I really enjoyed working with her one-on-one. I also worked with Misha Tchoupakov on the pas de deux. That whole experience was incredible.

I've been in Miss Zerbe's class for three years now. She's helped me grow so much in my technique and confidence. Just the transformation from when I started in her class to now—it's been tremendous. I also found value in my academic classes, particularly through the Division of Liberal Arts. I recall a favorite class, Paths to the Present with Reagan Mitchell. I enjoyed the environment and the group projects, especially because they allowed me to work with students outside the School of Dance. It was really interesting to hear different perspectives and creative approaches from students in other conservatories.

I feel like UNCSA has helped me get to where I am and has prepared me for my next step. I recently signed my first professional contract and will join Richmond Ballet's studio company in June. It'll be very exciting!

For those following in my footsteps, I offer this advice: Be confident in yourself. Once I really believed in my technical abilities and capabilities, I grew as a dancer and a human. Don't let the negative talk get in your way — just go for it. And if I could speak to my younger self at the start of this journey? I'd tell her that the time will absolutely fly by. Someone told me that before, but I didn't believe it. I thought, "Oh, I have four years ahead of me." But those years pass in a blink. Take in every moment — whether you're in the studio or hanging out with your friends on campus. Enjoy everything while you can.

I'm ready to move on to the next chapter and the next adventure in my life; my time at UNCSA has been a LOT, but in the BEST way!



# WHY THE WORLD NEEDS MORE STORYTELLERS

BY STEFANIE TEDARDS

**A**t its core, every form of artistic expression, from the written word to visual and performance art, is rooted in storytelling. Paintings capture a single still image with the strokes of a brush. Dance speaks through movement and bodies. Movies unfold a story over several hours. A great song can say everything in just a few minutes.

From sculpture to street art, artists find countless ways to share their unique stories and interact with the world. And, with technological advancements redefining how we create and consume art, new opportunities to explore digital tools and connect with global audiences arise every day.

## STORYTELLING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Thirty years ago, Pixar Animation Studios revolutionized the entire medium of computer-animated films. For decades, the studio has delighted us with impactful stories about rats who can cook, the secret lives of toys, and the emotions living inside our heads —

movies that have deeply resonated with audiences around the world.

Artists continuously explore new digital mediums for storytelling, like projection mapping and virtual reality art. The internet has changed how people share their art, allowing creators like writer and photographer Brandon Stanton to build a massive social media following for his portrait series Humans of New York.

We have access to more books, movies, television shows, music, and digital recreations of art than we could possibly consume in one lifetime, which begs the question, does the world really need more storytellers? In a word: Yes.

## HOW STORIES SHAPE OUR LIVES

Artists and novelists don't corner the market on storytelling; it's fundamental to the human experience. From ancient myths shared around fires to TikToks, tweets, and late-night texts to your

best friend, storytelling helps us make sense of our surroundings. Stories empower us to communicate what matters, including the feelings, hopes, dreams, and experiences that make us human.

Ancient societies like the Agta in the Philippines used stories to convey themes of cooperation and collaboration. Central to survival, many societies valued their storytellers' skills as much as their best hunters' abilities. Author and historian Yuval Noah Harari, who writes about human development throughout history in *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*, offers one hypothesis.

*"Stories are the greatest human invention. People need stories in order to cooperate. [Without them,] people in ancient kingdoms wouldn't have built dikes, reservoirs, and granaries, and today there would be no countries, no schools, and no hospitals. There would be no cars, no airplanes, and no computers. All the big achievements of humankind, such as flying to the moon, were the result of cooperation between hundreds of thousands of people."*

Stories' power is a double-edged sword. They can inspire huge projects and positive change, or subtly influence us to buy certain products, choose specific careers, or form negative narratives about ourselves and others. (Spoiler: Not all the stories we tell ourselves are worth listening to.) Negative stories can push us apart, making us feel isolated, fearful, and at odds. Positive stories, however, can act as grounding forces reminding us of what's most important.

## WHY TELL STORIES?

Today's storytellers explain to:

- **Reflect the times:** Fiber artist [Bisa Butler](#) uses textiles in bold colors and lively patterns to craft her story of African American history and culture. Peek inside her studio: "Now that I'm working full time, I meet a lot of other full-time artists, and I see how much of a responsibility you have as an artist. You are the reflection of our times. So, whether you're a writer, dancer, filmmaker, painter, or sculptor, you're reflecting the times that you live in. And after you're gone, all that is left is that reflection."

- **Express ourselves to the world:** Record producer and co-founder of Def Jam Recordings, Rick Rubin, has produced decades of influential music from Run-DMC, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Lady Gaga, and Travis Scott. His book *The Creative Act* says: "The reason we're alive is to express ourselves in the world. And creating art may be the most effective and beautiful method of doing so. Art goes beyond language, beyond lives. It's a universal way to send messages between each other and through time."

- **Bring people together:** TV titan Shonda Rhimes has captivated audiences with shows like *Grey's Anatomy* and *Bridgerton*. Her TedTalk conversation about "[The Future of Storytelling](#)" shared: "I think good stories are never going to change, the need for people to gather together and exchange their stories and to talk about the things that feel universal, the idea that we all feel a compelling need to watch stories, to tell stories, to share stories — sort of the gathering around the campfire to discuss the things that tell each one of us that we are not alone in the world. Those things to me are never going to change."

## YOUR STORY MATTERS

Think you're not a storyteller? Think again! When you recount a funny experience around the dinner table, write in your journal, document adventures with your phone camera, or pitch yourself in a job interview, you're telling a story — one that only you can tell.

Stories told from diverse perspectives invite us to look beyond our own echo chambers and discover the common ground we share with others: Our capacity to love and hate, to grow and change, to fear and fail, and be brave when facing our toughest challenges.

Whether you consider yourself an artist or not, remember that everyone has a story worth telling. Sharing your story, through art or conversation, or keeping it close, can help you discover more about yourself and deepen your connection to the world around you.

# WHY SUMMER PRE-COLLEGE ART PROGRAMS

## Are Worth the Investment

BY STEFANIE TEDARDS

**A**rt programs offer more than a creative outlet or a fun activity — they provide tangible benefits helping adolescents thrive in high school, college, and beyond. Art classes can reduce stress, enhance focus, memory, and problem-solving, and foster a growth mindset. Summer art programs, in particular, offer a fun and engaging bridge between school years, keeping students motivated and connected to learning.

### WHAT IS A PRE-COLLEGE SUMMER PROGRAM?

Interested in getting a taste of college life *before* graduating from high school? Pre-college programs are your ticket to an incredible summer of learning, growth, and insight about your future educational and career goals.

These short-term academic programs, often hosted by colleges and universities, introduce you to college-level courses and instruction. Programs can vary from one

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week to several months and may be offered online, in person, or in a hybrid format. Summer art programs may also offer flexible programming, with options to enroll in shorter (1-2 week) or longer (4-8 week) sessions.

Many pre-college art programs integrate typical classroom settings with hands-on learning, mentorship, and activities like visiting museums, seeing shows, and meeting with local artists and businesses. Students attending in-person arts programs get to experience living and learning on a college campus.

Residential programs tend to be more involved, with classes, studio time, rehearsals, and performances (whether those you're putting on or going to see) starting at 8 or 9 a.m. and continuing well into the evening. Online arts programs, on the other hand, may occur asynchronously, allowing you to choose when and how long you work each day.

Some pre-college summer programs award college credit. But the true value of a pre-college arts program is the opportunity to hone your craft, build a body of work for your portfolio, and gain confidence in yourself as a student *and* an artist.

## WHAT CAN YOU LEARN AT A SUMMER ARTS PROGRAM?

Summer art programs cover diverse fields, from the performing and visual arts to design.

- Animation
- Architecture
- Ceramics
- Dance
- Drawing
- Fashion design
- Filmmaking
- Game design
- Illustration
- Music
- Musical theatre
- Painting
- Photography
- Sculpture
- Sound design

Unlike casual art classes, where you may only pay for art supplies or basic instruction, pre-college art programs provide a comprehensive classroom experience to improve your technical skills and

creative instincts. Your experience may include critiques, portfolio reviews, faculty feedback, peer discussion, and collaboration.

You'll also improve your soft skills, like time management, interpersonal communication, and public speaking. Depending on the program, you may get career development opportunities, like guest speakers, artist talks, and professional panels. This early exposure can help you imagine what a future working in the arts might entail.

Art programs geared toward upperclassmen may also offer guidance on applying to art schools. Visual arts students should expect to work with instructors to develop meaningful pieces for their application portfolio. Performing arts students enrolled in pre-college programs typically receive audition practice and advice on selecting material that best showcases their strengths.

## 5 BENEFITS OF COMPLETING A SUMMER ARTS PROGRAM

Still not convinced a summer arts program is for you? Here are five reasons to enroll:

1. **Skill advancement.** Few activities develop your artistry more than fully immersing yourself in your craft. The best arts programs blend instruction with hands-on practice, rehearsal, and constructive feedback to help you strengthen your skills.
2. **Portfolio development.** Planning to apply to art school someday? You'll need a strong portfolio showcasing your best work. Many arts programs are designed to guide you through the portfolio process.
3. **Creative community and mentorship.** These programs offer you a valuable chance to connect with peers who share your passion and faculty who can provide meaningful guidance. Working in a collaborative environment can push your creativity further and drive your artistic and personal growth.
4. **Increased confidence and clarity.** For many, art is more than a hobby — it's a calling. A summer arts program can help you develop a stronger artistic identity and a clearer vision for how art will shape your future.

- 5. Exposure to art school life.** Unsure if art school is the right path after high school? A pre-college arts program offers a taste of college life. It's a great opportunity to visit campus, meet faculty, and experience classes and facilities firsthand.
- 3. Choose your ideal setting.** Next, consider program location (and any required housing and travel). For example, if you're in the Midwest but applying to a New York City program, consider the logistics (how you'll get there, where you'll stay, what you'll eat) and the reality of being away from home. Feeling adventurous? Consider studying abroad! Look for accredited art programs and verify the language of instruction (English or a foreign language) before applying. While traveling is exciting, staying close to home has clear benefits: you get to keep up with friends, save on travel, and enroll in commuter-only courses. Check out [TeenLife's summer program listings](#) for ideas.
- 4. Decide on a commitment level.** Committing to a week-long arts camp is a simpler commitment than a two month pre-college arts program; weigh the pros and cons of each before applying. Consider length and the daily time commitment. Do you want to spend 12 hours a day on your art, or would you prefer a program that leaves you plenty of time for other activities? Find a program that balances your goals and lifestyle and make the choice that feels right for you.

## HOW TO CHOOSE AN ART PROGRAM

Kick off your creative journey with these four steps.

- 1. Pick your passion.** Finding the right summer arts camp starts with identifying your interests. You can find art programs in every artistic discipline, from acting and musical theatre to sculpture and photography. Some also cover art history, arts and culture, even art and foreign languages!
- 2. Find the right fit for your skill level.** After choosing your area of study, look for art programs matching your skill level. Art classes range from beginner-friendly classes to advanced courses for students with a stronger background in their discipline. More advanced and selective programs may require an audition or work sample as part of the admissions process.



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IN MY  
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WORDS

## The Blackbird Academy

### DAVID LOY

I graduated from The Blackbird Academy in June of 2015. Thanks to the education and connections I had received in this program, I began touring even prior to graduating. Since graduating, I have mixed for Aubrie Sellers, Sturgill Simpson, Raelynn, and I am currently mixing FOH (Front of House) for Kane Brown. By

using what I learned in lectures and live band rehearsals at The Blackbird Academy, I was able to go out and start working immediately, no matter what equipment I was given. I have been hired by and worked with other Blackbird graduates in the past several years and we are developing an incredible network of engineers and audio professionals across the nation. I would highly recommend anyone that wants to have a great career in audio to come be part of the Blackbird family!

There are so many opportunities for someone in live sound. Many people think it is just touring but it is not. I have friends and classmates who are front of house engineers, monitor engineers, systems engineers and even guitar or drum technicians who have gone on and had wonderful careers in churches, amusement parks, casinos, cruise lines, sporting venues and other large venues. There are many great careers, and not all require travel, which isn't for everyone — although some of us love it. The Blackbird Academy has an amazing placement department; they currently place 95% of the Live Sound graduates and 70% of the Studio graduates. Plus, they will work with you forever.

I chose The Blackbird Academy because it offered a hands-on educational experience; it was the only place industry professionals recommended. A typical Academy day mirrored typical industry days: full-time, working with artists, and learning the gear. Students get 720+ hours of hands-on training in the Live Sound Program's classrooms, rehearsal spaces, and labs. Classes meet five days a week for 30-40 hours total. You can access individual workstations with Focusrite RdNet X2P with Dante and ProTools and audio labs and equipment outside regular hours for working on assignments or practicing recording and mixing. You'll work alongside industry professionals and special guest mentors in the classroom, live rehearsals, and training events. You'll also make on-site visits to Nashville live venues, broadcast outlets, and other audio-related businesses.



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# UNCONVENTIONAL CAREERS FOR ART MAJORS

BY JODI IRELAND

Choosing a college major is a big decision, especially in the arts. A bachelor of arts (BA) degree might conjure up images of the stereotypical “starving artist” barely making ends meet. The pressure to choose a major with a clear, high-paying career path is real, especially with the rising cost of college and the need for a significant return on your investment. The good news? An arts degree is far from a one-way ticket to financial instability.

Your parents might worry that a liberal arts degree won't lead to a stable career, but employers see things differently. They know that while you can learn technical skills on the job, the soft skills gained from a liberal or fine arts education — like communication, critical thinking, ethical judgment, and teamwork — are harder to train.

A BA in art is a gateway to a variety of interesting, challenging, satisfying, lucrative, and even unconventional careers that can feed your soul (and body).

## ALTERNATIVE AND UNCONVENTIONAL CAREERS FOR ARTS MAJORS

### 1. ART DIRECTOR

This creative leader oversees a project's overall visual style and imagery, whether for an advertisement, digital magazine, website, movie, or video game. They may not create the art, but they guide and inspire a team of graphic designers, photographers, illustrators, and other artists to bring a vision to life. Art directors develop the project's look, feel, and aesthetic while managing the team and process to deliver consistent, effective visual elements.

### 2. ART RESTORATION

Art restorers, or conservators, preserve and repair damaged or deteriorating works of art. They ensure that people can enjoy a painting, sculpture, textile, or historical fact for generations to come. They must be part artist, scientist, and detective.

### 3. ART THERAPIST

These mental health professionals use the creative process of making art to help people explore their emotions, resolve conflicts, and improve their well-being. An art therapist focuses on the therapeutic benefits of creation, based on the idea that creative expression can help people communicate feelings and thoughts they might otherwise struggle to put into words. They work with people of all ages and many issues, including trauma, depression, anxiety, and learning disabilities.

### 4. GAME DESIGNER

Game designers are the creative masterminds behind a video game. They're responsible for the game's vision and experience, including the story, characters, rules, and world. Game designers don't typically program or create all the art themselves. As the project lead, they collaborate with artists, writers, and programmers to bring their concept to life.

### 5. INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER

These professionals design the look, feel, and function of manufactured products. They make sure everyday objects, like smartphones, cars, furniture, or kitchen appliances, are appealing to look at and safe, easy to use, and cost-effective to produce. Their work blends art, science, and engineering, mixing creativity with practical problem-solving.

### 6. PRODUCT DESIGNER

These creative problem-solvers design the look, feel, and functionality of physical and digital products.

They combine art, research, strategy, and analysis to create products that are appealing, useful, and fun to use. Product designers are involved in every stage of a product's life cycle, from conceptualization to launch and beyond.

#### 7. PRODUCTION ARTIST

A production artist handles the final, technical steps of a design project before it's printed or digitally published. While a graphic designer or art director comes up with the initial creative concept, a production artist prepares the artwork for production. They're the detail-oriented perfectionists of a creative team.

#### 8. SOUND TECHNICIAN

Sound technicians work with audio equipment to deliver clear, balanced, high-quality sound. They're the behind-the-scenes experts at a concert, in a recording studio, on a movie set, and in the theater, controlling everything from the volume of a singer's mic to a film's audio effects. It's an excellent fit for students with an ear for music and a knack for technology, as the career blends technical expertise with creative problem-solving.

#### 9. UI/UX DESIGNER

A UI/UX designer creates the user experience and user interface for digital products like websites and apps. They make sure the product is easy and intuitive to use (UX) and visually appealing and well-designed (UI). While often grouped, UX and UI are two parts of the same process. Think of a car: A UX designer makes sure the car's controls are logically placed and comfortable to use. A UI designer chooses the colors, fonts, and button styles on the dashboard.

#### 10. VIDEOGRAPHER

A videographer shoots and edits video to tell a story or capture an event. Unlike a director on a big-budget film, a videographer is often a one-person crew, handling everything from setting up the camera and lighting to recording the audio and editing the final product. Videographers create content for weddings, corporate training videos, marketing campaigns, documentaries, museum displays, and more.

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# THE BUSINESS SIDE of the PVA World

BY STEFANIE TEDARDS

**W**hen you think of artists, do you only picture painters, dancers, and musicians? Creating and producing art is a deeply collaborative process.

While the spotlight often finds the “artist,” countless organizational, technical, and managerial roles work behind the scenes to support their creative vision.

Perhaps you’ve dreamed of turning your craft into a career. But not everyone can — or *wants* to — make a living as a creative. Fortunately, many paths lead to a fulfilling career in the arts.

## BEYOND CREATIVITY: LOOKING AT ART AS A BUSINESS

Artists inspire, engage, and entertain us, creating beautiful, meaningful pieces and performances. But they don’t work alone. Art is a business. Every creative project includes budgets, logistics, and more, inextricably linking art and business.

An artist’s vision requires a team effort. From Broadway to the movies, all production levels rely on collaboration from people with diverse skill sets whose roles help breathe life into art.

## 15 BEHIND-THE-SCENES CAREER PATHS IN THE ARTS

- 1. Producer:** This title has many variations: executive producer, line producer, creative producer, field producer. A producer oversees and manages key production elements, guiding creative development, budgeting, and logistics, and keeping projects running smoothly, on schedule, and within budget.
- 2. Casting Director:** These directors find and audition actors for film, TV, or theater roles, working with directors and producers to understand character needs and coordinate the casting process.
- 3. Agent/ Manager:** These interconnected roles represent two distinct sides of talent management. Agents secure auditions, negotiate contracts, and book roles. Managers offer broader career guidance, helping their clients make decisions, build their brand, and navigate long-term goals.
- 4. Company Manager:** A company manager handles a theatrical production or touring company’s practical needs. From managing payroll and housing to coordinating travel and schedules, these professionals get the performers and crew what they need to do their jobs effectively.
- 5. Stage Manager:** Stage managers act as on-the-ground supervisors of live theatrical productions’ rehearsals and performances. They schedule and run rehearsals, record sound, lighting, and set cues, and communicate between the director and designers. Stage managers call technical cues to the crew and ensure the production runs seamlessly.
- 6. Tour Manager:** Tour managers keep tours running smoothly, handling logistics like travel, accommodations, and scheduling as the go-to problem solver on the road.
- 7. Venue Manager:** Venue managers oversee the operations of a performance or event space. They supervise in-house staff, manage payroll, prepare the space, and act as the main point of contact for incoming productions.
- 8. Production/ Post-Production Manager:** These managers keep each step of a project organized

and on track. Production managers coordinate a shoot or show's logistical and technical aspects. Post-production managers oversee editing, sound mixing, visual effects, and final delivery.

9. **Arts Administrator:** These professionals handle the business and operational duties required to run arts organizations. They help the business side of the arts (budgets, fundraising, event planning, community outreach) to support the creative side.
10. **Development Director:** These directors secure essential funding to support the arts. They often work at nonprofits or arts organizations, cultivating donor relationships, planning campaigns and events, writing proposals, and securing funding the organization needs to meet its goals.
11. **Grant Writer:** Winning funding requires strong proposals. Grant writers research opportunities, write applications, and tailor requests to funding sources.
12. **Marketing/ PR Manager:** These professionals find the audience for the artists. Marketing and PR managers promote productions or exhibitions, manage media relations, create campaigns, and use email and social media to engage audiences.
13. **Museum Curator:** A curator acquires art pieces, ensures their preservation and safety, and shapes the public's experience with collections. Museum curators develop exhibitions, write labels and catalogs, and provide context.
14. **Gallery or Museum Registrar:** Registrars handle the behind-the-scenes logistics of caring for art and artifacts. They manage records, oversee shipping and storage, coordinate item loans, and confirm documentation, insurance, and handling.
15. **Art Archivist:** Art archivists organize and maintain records, documents, and media collections, making sure valuable materials are accessible for research and protected for the future.

## ESSENTIAL BUSINESS SKILLS ARTISTS NEED TO SUCCEED

Making art for a living requires wearing creative *and* business professional hats. Transform your art into a full-time career with these skills:

- **Marketing and self-promotion:** Lack an agent, manager, or PR team? Advocate for yourself. Create an online portfolio/website, leverage social media, post flyers, and connect with local businesses and events.
- **Time management and project planning:** To stay productive and avoid burnout (especially if you're balancing multiple things), learn to organize your schedule, set deadlines, and break big projects into smaller steps.
- **Financial literacy:** Managing your finances is key to building a profitable artistic career. Build your financial literacy with a business class or two at a local community college, or connect with a mentor.
- **Networking and relationship-building:** Human connection matters. Being approachable, curious, respectful, and direct can make these interactions feel more natural.
- **Contract and legal basics:** A successful artistic career requires knowing the legal fundamentals, including contracts, copyrights, and intellectual property. A basic understanding of your rights can protect you from costly mistakes.

Because a career in the arts takes time to build, side jobs are often part of the journey. Many artists may start as "artist/ something," balancing creative work with day jobs. When seeking a side hustle or day job, consider if you want it to complement your creative skills (like a painter doing graphic design) or be completely different (like a writer working in a warehouse). The key? Finding work that pays the bills without draining your energy.

Balancing a job with creative pursuits is tricky, but you're in good company. Meghan Markle worked as a calligrapher; Ozzy worked in a slaughterhouse. Who knows! Your day job could be the most surprising twist in *your* creative journey.



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# BRIDGING ARTS & TECHNOLOGY:

## STEAM Education and Other Creative Careers

BY JODI IRELAND

**Y**ou love the stage and engineering. Can you combine them into a creative career? Absolutely! Modern set design relies on more than scenery and scrims. Studying set design could scratch both the creative and technical sides of your brain.

Arts and technology have meshed for centuries. The Roman Colosseum used elevators to raise and lower props, gladiators, and animals. Ancient Egyptians mastered art and engineering, with pyramids showcasing carvings, paintings, and sculptures, plus sophisticated construction techniques.

While these disciplines have evolved, they remain critical for practical living and creating the enriching elements that fulfill our lives.

### STEM VS. STEAM

If you're torn between art and science, don't limit yourself to one or the other. Consider STEAM. Even the most technical careers benefit from creativity.

STEM develops skills in science, technology, engineering, and math to drive progress through analytical and technical expertise. STEAM expands on STEM by integrating the arts, including the humanities, language arts, drama, music, new media, and more.

STEAM's "A" emphasizes the role of creativity, imagination, communication, and design thinking in solving complex problems. A STEAM education fosters artistic skills for innovative thinking and a broader approach to STEM challenges.

### SHAPING ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Technology influences how artists create and share their work, increasing artistic expression's innovation and accessibility. Digital art tools let artists experi-

ment just as they would with pencils and brushes, but with endless color choices, undo buttons, and special effects.

VR and AR have elevated art beyond flat screens and canvases. AR-enabled installations allow digital elements to overlay physical spaces, creating an interactive experience that evolves as viewers move, like Anula Shetty's "Philly Daydreams: Stories in Transit."

Despite these technological advances, creativity begins with human imagination, emotion, and perspective. The heart of creative expression lies in an artist's ability to inspire others, challenge assumptions, and shape shared experiences. The future belongs to artists blending traditional creative skills with digital fluency. Technology amplifies human creativity.

### TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

Technology has changed how we create, experience, and share shows. Modern theater uses advanced lighting systems, automation, and 3D printing to create intricate, dynamic sets and props. Video projections and multimedia integration transform stages into immersive environments, transporting audiences to different worlds.

Sound engineers blend art and science with sophisticated sound design software, online sound effect libraries, and more. Miniature wireless mics allow for crystal-clear vocals, complex soundscapes, and greater freedom of movement for performers.

AR and VR are revolutionizing live performances. AR overlays digital elements on the real world to blend physical and virtual experiences (3D animations during a concert or human actors interacting with holograms, like in Maybe Happy Ending).

## PURSUING STEAM EDUCATION

Many high schools recognize [STEAM's value](#). Some schools partner with companies in STEAM fields to give students hands-on experience solving real-world problems. If your school lacks a STEAM curriculum, seek other opportunities to combine the arts and technology.

Understanding how art and science connect to different STEAM fields can help you choose relevant courses. More universities are offering [interdisciplinary majors or minors](#):

- **Computational media/arts**
- **Game design**
- **Architectural engineering**
- **Bio-art or scientific visualization**
- **Digital humanities**
- **Engineering with a design focus**

Prepare for college by:

- **Cultivating an interdisciplinary mindset**, seeking projects combining STEAM concepts.
- **Taking advanced courses** in STEM subjects (AP physics, calculus, computer science) and arts disciplines (studio art, music theory, drama, design).
- **Joining STEAM-related clubs and activities**, like robotics clubs, design competitions, or school plays with tech elements.
- **Building a diverse portfolio of creative work**, highlighting how you integrate technology or scientific concepts.

## CAREERS COMBINING ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

You've taken art and science classes and looked at colleges with STEAM programs. Still wondering how to turn that dual passion into a paycheck? Check out these [STEAM careers](#).

- **AR/VR designer:** [AR designers](#) overlay digital elements onto the real world (like Snapchat filters) , while VR designers build entirely new virtual environments for gaming, training, theater, and more.
- **Audio engineer/sound designer:** Have an ear for music and sounds? This field uses technology to

record, mix, and master audio for music, movies, video games, and live performances.

- **Game designer:** Love video games? As a [game designer](#), combine creativity, logic, and technology to create concepts, rules, characters, and storylines.
- **Product designer:** Think about all the physical products you use, from your phone to your backpack. [Product designers](#) blend art with engineering and manufacturing principles to create new, functional, and appealing products.

## ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR CREATIVE TECH ROLES

Training for a job that combines science, imagination, and digital know-how helps you develop [key soft skills](#), including creative problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, experimentation, risk-taking, and communication. Other skills include:

- **Digital design and visual creation.** Social media, websites, and other digital media rely on [eye-catching visuals](#). You need knowledge of graphic design, photo editing, and video editing.
- **Digital marketing and audience connection.** Digital marketing skills help you understand how to promote content and connect with online audiences.
- **Data-driven creativity.** Understanding data is critical for analyzing the effectiveness of a marketing campaign, defining a target audience, designing a sustainable environment, and more. Creative tech professionals evaluate content performance and user interaction with designs to uncover emerging trends.
- **Technical proficiency and AI fluency.** While not every STEAM field requires hardcore programming skills, having a grasp of basic coding languages helps if you're interested in web design or interactive experiences.

The fusion of arts and technology isn't a modern phenomenon but a historical constant, essential for practical living and enriching our quality of life. A STEAM education prepares students for a future of new solutions and more creative careers.



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IN MY  
OWN  
WORDS

Dean College

## DYLANA DEIGNAN

**What made you feel, “this is the place,” when choosing your college and major?**

I’m a Musical Theatre major with a Marketing minor, and honestly, I knew Dean was the right fit the very first time I set foot on campus. Everyone was so welcoming, and it just felt like home. I’ve been doing theatre my entire life, so I knew I wanted a program where I could dive right in, push myself, and really experiment with my range. At Dean, you start performing from day one, and the program gives you incredible room to grow. That combination sealed the deal for me.

**What did you hope to gain out of your college experience, and has it lived up to that?**

My biggest hope was to perform right away, and Dean delivered. I was on stage my freshman year. I also wanted a well-rounded education beyond performing. I’ve learned about every aspect of theatre, including technical work, backstage logistics, and costume and makeup design. What surprised me was how much Dean’s holistic approach opened my eyes to new interests, which actually led me to pick up my marketing minor. College is supposed to be about testing new waters, and Dean has given me exactly that space to grow and explore.

**Did you feel prepared for college, or was it more of a learn-as-you-go experience?**

I did prepare in the sense that I went to a performing arts high school, which gave me a solid foundation. But even with all that experience, adjusting to college life and classes was still an entirely new challenge. There’s really no way to prepare for what it feels like to be surrounded by so many talented people. You have to rise to the occasion. What I quickly learned was that success here requires putting in the work and leaning on the amazing support from faculty, staff, and your peers.

**If someone shadowed you for a day, what would your college life look like?**

My days are packed with coursework. Musical Theatre Performance is a favorite, and I love anything marketing-related because it’s so hands-on. I really believe the best way to learn is by doing, and those classes ensure that happens. I also have regular vocal lessons to keep me sharp, and most evenings wrap with rehearsals or a campus activity. I’m also a Dean Ambassador, so I give tours to prospective students. It’s actually one of my favorite things to do, because I get to watch people fall in love with Dean on their tour just like I did.

**What’s been your most memorable moment so far?**

My very first show at Dean, *All Shook Up*, will always stick with me. I remember standing backstage, waiting for my cue to come out and bow. The director gave me the countdown, and as I stepped out, I felt this wave of realization: “Oh my gosh, I’m actually in college. And I’m doing it.”

**What advice would you share with high school students beginning their college search?**

Experience everything. Go into every campus tour with an open heart and an open mind because the right school might surprise you. Dean has been much more than I ever imagined, but I knew immediately it’s where I belonged. That kind of recognition only happens if you allow yourself to be open to it.

# HOW TO CREATE A PORTFOLIO

BY JODI IRELAND

**A**spiring artists transform ideas into tangible pieces of art, but knowing how to create a portfolio is a different skill altogether. A portfolio showcases your best, most representative creations.

This personal highlight reel demonstrates your style, skills, and creative vision. It's crucial for building your career as a writer, visual artist, or designer — and for applying to college.

Artists used to lug big, physical books filled with their art. Today's portfolios primarily live online. Going digital has made it much easier for anyone, wherever they are, to see your work.

## VISUAL ARTISTS

Visual arts portfolios feature a collection of high-

quality images of completed artworks (drawings, paintings, digital art, photography).

Use mixed media or assemblage? Include pictures of your process. If you sculpt, add photos showing your 3D creations' different angles to highlight details and scale.

Many college applications request portfolios that include your sketches and process work. The schools want to see your artistic process, showing how you brainstorm, experiment, and execute your ideas.

## PERFORMERS

Performers have artist portfolios, too, but theirs look different and include materials showcasing their performance abilities and experience.

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- **Actor portfolios:** headshots, resume, demo or size-reel, recorded videos of monologues or scenes.
- **Dancer portfolios:** dynamic shots in various poses or mid-performance, resume, and dance reel.
- **Musician or singer portfolios:** audio recordings/ music tracks, performance videos, resume, and repertoire list.

## PORTFOLIO FROM SCRATCH

It's never too early to create a portfolio, especially if art school is in your future. Prefer YouTube? Check out [this video](#).

### 1. Know your audience and its requirements.

If you're planning to apply to art colleges or specific programs, this is the most important step. Each school has its own set of portfolio requirements:

- Number of pieces
- Type of art (media)
- Finished pieces, planning stages, or both
- Submission instructions

Create a list or spreadsheet to organize the requirements for each school. Attend open days to ask questions and get a feel for the school's expectations. Look for portfolio examples from recent students attending art schools you're targeting to see what each school accepts.

### 2. Curate your best work (think: quality over quantity).

You don't need to include every piece of art you've ever made. Showcase only your best work. Include pieces demonstrating your technical abilities.

Highlight your original ideas and artistic voice. Try to include pieces made with different materials (drawing pencils, acrylics, watercolors, collage, printmaking, digital art) to show your versatility and comfort with various tools and techniques.

### 3. Present your work professionally.

Take clear, well-lit, high-res photos for digital submissions. Aim for consistency when photographing your work. Use good lighting and consider cropping images of the artwork itself —

or showing it in a presentation context, like on a white wall.

Keep the design clean, minimal, and focused on the artwork itself. Organize your pieces chronologically or by different projects/disciplines. If you're emailing or uploading your portfolio, convert it to a PDF. Dedicate a single page per artwork piece with a large, clear image and item description.

Label every piece of work with:

- Your name
- Title
- Creation year
- Medium
- Dimensions

### 4. Request feedback!

Ask your art teacher, mentor, or another artist for input. Register for [National Portfolio Day](#), a series of events where you can meet with representatives from art and design colleges to get honest feedback on your portfolio. These free events are an excellent opportunity to get insights and guidance before applying to college.

## SHOWCASING YOUR STYLE AND SKILLS

As you design your portfolio, remember your goal is to highlight your style and skills. Each piece should:

#### • Demonstrate fundamental skills.

Portfolios often require pieces drawn from direct observation, which shows your ability to accurately depict form, light, shadow, proportion, and composition. Reviewers will assess how well you apply an understanding of concepts like unity, variety, balance, emphasis, rhythm, repetition, proportion, scale, color theory, and composition.

#### • Reveal your personal style and choice.

Include pieces that communicate your artistic identity and reflect your interests, values, and view of the world. Consider pieces inspired by personal experiences or that offer a unique take on a common subject. Assembling a portfolio with a sustained thematic collection shows you can explore a concept in depth and develop an artistic voice. Include pieces showing your willingness to step

outside your comfort zone and explore different mediums, styles, or even non-traditional materials. Choose pieces that tell a story through characters, environments, or specific moments.

- **Showing your creative process.**

Art schools and programs want to see your journey. Include sketchbook pages, preliminary sketches, studies, even “wrong turns.” A written explanation for each piece allows you to articulate your inspiration, artistic decisions, and what you learned as you created.

Check out these examples:

- **Prima Materia Art Institute: College art portfolio examples**
- **Art Prof: Art school portfolio examples**
- **Why is this good? Art school portfolio examples**
- **High School Artist Portfolio examples**

## BUILDING AN ONLINE PORTFOLIO

While many creatives have their own websites, free platforms like [Behance](#) or [Google Sites](#) let you store your portfolio online. Include:

- **A statement of originality**, like “All the artwork in this portfolio is my original creation.”
- **An about me or personal statement.** Use this section to tell your story, explain your passion, and connect with the admissions committee.
- **Previous work** from high school classes, [summer programs](#), or stuff you’ve created for fun. A digital portfolio is dynamic and updatable, so it can evolve as you grow.
- **Contact information** (name, email, phone number). For more inspiration, check out these resources:
  - **Art school portfolio tips**
  - **Adobe: How to make a portfolio**
  - **Top portfolio website builders to design your online portfolio**
  - **Format: How to make a portfolio for college and university**

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## IN MY OWN WORDS

### The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)

## SYLVIA TOURIS

I chose Musical Theatre because theatre has been part of my whole life. I truly believe there is a musical for everyone, and I believe there is a Stephen Sondheim quote for every situation or moment in life. I love every aspect that goes into making a musical, and I want to be part of that in any way that I can. I chose LIPA to help me achieve this because I felt when I first walked into the building that this was a place for artists and creators. LIPA encourages students to explore every aspect of their creative abilities. I also felt that England in general was the best place for me to achieve my goals because of their love for theatre.

When I first applied and got accepted to the BA (Hons) Acting (Musical Theatre) course at LIPA, I hoped that when I graduated that I would have a better

understanding of how to intermingle all three elements of Musical Theatre. While I felt I could hold my own in two of those areas, I knew I needed work in the third. While being at LIPA, I feel like I have grown in that aspect already and that helped solidify that I made the right choice.

I think to one day wake up and go “I want to go to this school for this” without any sort of preparation is a little silly. I’m not saying you need to be an expert by any means, but to have basic understandings of your chosen major is deeply important. When it came to preparing for my audition in general, I took time deciding the best material that showed my current abilities as well as my potential. The school will work with you on the rest. Always remember though, this is your journey – you know what’s best for you. And always be yourself. As always as corny as that sounds, being you is the best thing you can do.

A typical day at LIPA is filled with training and applying everything you have been given. You will explore methods and theories that go into your art, as well as learning about how the world around you will have an impact on your art form, and how you make art. You’ll have days where you work with people from other courses, you’ll have full rehearsal days, and sometimes you’ll have days that feel a little unsure about your journey. Just remember, you’re not alone and you were selected for a reason.

The most memorable moment I have at LIPA so far is when I saw that my plan to get free feminine hygiene products on campus come to fruition. I didn’t do it alone, but I felt like I could do that at this school and not receive any type of backlash from my lecturers or peers. It’s one little step in the right direction. I’m very proud of that.

The biggest advice I could give to any teen looking for the right college is to go with your gut. This is not only a big commitment, but it is supposed to set you up for your goals and dreams. If that means writing a Pro/Con list like Rory Gilmore, do it — just don’t obsess. Don’t be afraid to communicate what you’re feeling to the people close to you as well. As the late and great Sondheim said, “Anything you do, let it come from you, then it will be new, give us more to see.”

# HOW TO HANDLE CRITIQUE

## Without Losing Your Creative Spark

BY JODI IRELAND

**Y**ou've poured your heart and soul into your creation. Your painting, story, song, or design is a piece of you. So when someone offers a critique, it can feel like a direct hit to your confidence, right? It's easy to let that feedback, even if it's meant to be helpful, dim your creative light.

Constructive criticism isn't supposed to be an attack on you as a person, or an attack at all! A critique is feedback on the art you created. Effective, valuable critiques analyze your artistic choices, techniques, and impact of your work. After all, art is subjective, and different opinions contribute to making it rich, thought-provoking, and entertaining.

Throughout your career, many people will offer feedback, including peers, teachers, professors, professionals, and mentors. The value of their constructive criticism? To help you level up by identifying areas of improvement and fresh perspectives you may not have considered, making your art even stronger.

### PREPARING FOR A CRITIQUE

Receiving feedback, even when it's not your first time, can be a little nerve-wracking. Try this mindset. Look at critiques as learning opportunities. Each piece of feedback offers a chance to grow and improve.

Try detaching yourself emotionally from your creation. Imagining it belongs to someone else can help you listen more objectively without feeling like every comment is a personal attack. Set specific goals for feedback before the critique session so you can guide the discussion and get the most helpful insights.

Bring a notebook, phone, or recording device (if

allowed) to jot down/record the feedback, helping you accurately remember what was said for later review. Struggling with a particular area? Prepare your own questions to direct the conversation to where you need the most help. For example, "What do you think about this color palette?" or "Was the ending clear?" Often, the most productive way to engage with feedback is by sharing your intentions and asking where they've fallen short. Being able to explain your choices can help transform a critique into a deeper discussion.

### HOW TO LISTEN AND ENGAGE

It's the moment of truth with your art on display. As people offer feedback, it's tempting to jump in and explain yourself, but take a deep breath first and try this instead:

- **Listen more, talk less.** It's probably the hardest to do because your first instinct might be to interrupt or defend your choices. Resist the urge! For now, absorb, letting everyone finish their thoughts.
- **Zoom in on the details.** Don't just hear "I don't like it." Ask yourself why? Pay attention to the specifics in the critique. Is it the lighting in a particular scene of your film? Your vocal projection in a certain verse? Color choice in a section of your painting? The more specific you get, the more actionable the feedback becomes.
- **Spot the patterns.** As different people provide feedback, do you notice any recurring themes or points? Three different people mentioning that the ending of your story feels rushed is a pretty strong clue that there's something to explore there.

### ASK SMART QUESTIONS

Actively listening to constructive criticism lets you ask targeted questions, gain insights into your work's strengths and areas for improvement, and transform vague comments into actionable advice. Follow up and ask for clarification.

- Could you explain what you meant by...?
- What specific part of [the element they mentioned] isn't working for you?
- Do you have any suggestions for how I might address [the element they mentioned]?

## DODGE THE DEFENSE DRAGON

The trickiest part of receiving constructive criticism? Avoiding that defensive feeling. Here's how to manage it.

- **When you feel the heat rising, breathe.** A quick, deep breath gives you a second or two to process before reacting.
- **You don't have to agree with everything, but do acknowledge it.** Responses like, "I understand your point about..." or "That's an interesting observation" show you're listening without committing to changing.
- **Remember, it's not personal. If you need to repeat it as a mantra, go for it.** This feedback is critiquing your work, not you. Reframe those negative emotions — like frustration or disappointment — as fuel for improvement, and you've won half the battle.

## PROCESSING AND USING YOUR FEEDBACK

The feedback session ends, and ideas are swirling. The next step is crucial: How do you *use* that feedback to improve your art without feeling overwhelmed or losing your style or vision?

### REFLECT (AND CHILL)

Don't feel pressured to start changing things the second a feedback session ends. Give yourself some space.

Step away. Your brain needs time to digest and process. Trying to implement changes immediately can create frustration or rush decisions you might regret later.

Once you've breathed, review your notes. Try organizing the feedback, perhaps by themes or by what felt most impactful. This activity can help you identify patterns and remember specific details, clarifying your next steps.

### FILTER AND PRIORITIZE

Not all feedback is created equal; you don't have to act on every suggestion. Become the editor of your own growth.

Look for actionable feedback. "This part feels off" helps less than "The lighting in this scene makes it hard to see the actor's expression." Focus on the comments giving you clear steps.

Consider the source. While all perspectives have value, input from a teacher, professor, trusted mentor, or professional in your field may carry more weight than a comment from a peer still learning how to give useful feedback. Remember that diverse opinions have the power to introduce new possibilities.

Trust your gut. After all, this is your art. If a piece of feedback misaligns with your artistic vision, it's okay to set it aside. Sometimes, sticking to your instincts is the bravest choice.

## DEVELOP A PLAN OF ACTION

Once you reflect and filter, turn that feedback into forward momentum.

- **Set specific goals.** Instead of thinking "I need to improve," make your goal concrete. "I'll experiment with XYZ lighting techniques in my next piece" or "I'll incorporate more exposition into my character dialogue in the next chapter."
- **Practice and experiment.** The best way to use feedback? Apply it! Experiment with it in current or future projects. That's where the real learning and growth happen.
- **Ask for a follow-up (if it feels right).** If you have a good relationship with the person (or people) offering constructive feedback, show them your progress after you've incorporated their recommendations.

Remember: Constructive criticism isn't meant to change who you are or what you create. True feedback offers new tools and perspectives to make your art more powerful and impactful.

## KEEPING YOUR SPARK ALIVE

Some people struggle to keep their excitement and passion when they receive constructive feedback, especially if it skews negative. I've been writing for over 30 years, and the number of rejection letters and emails (not to mention the not-so-constructive criticism I've received) gets a little overwhelming and wearing.

Years ago, I didn't always respond with a nod and respond, "I'll take your suggestions under advisement." I took every critique personally, even if the person behind it didn't have my best interests at heart.

The longer I've stuck with my art, the thicker my skin has grown. I've learned to identify those who don't want their feedback to help me grow in my art. Now, their criticism slides right off my Teflon skin.

You can do the same.

### YOU'RE MORE THAN YOUR ART

You're an artist. Your art is part of you, but it's not *all* of you. You have many layers and talents beyond what you create. A critique or even a rejection of a single piece or performance doesn't define your value as an artist or as a person. Your worth is *inherent*.

Art is a journey. There will always be something new to discover, a skill to master, or a perspective to gain.

See mistakes not as failures but as opportunities for discovery. Some of the coolest breakthroughs in art happened because someone messed up and then ran with it.

Celebrate the little wins. Did you nail that tricky perspective? Compose a melody that finally clicks? Acknowledge every improvement and bit of progress, no matter how small. These victories add up and fuel your motivation.

### REMEMBER YOUR WHY

When you get discouraged, stop, breathe, and remember why you started creating in the first place. What sparked that initial joy? What story did you want to tell? What feeling did you want to evoke?

Use every challenge and piece of difficult feedback to reinforce your dedication — and as a reminder that you love creating and sharing your art.



## DISCOVER THE MAGIC OF PERFORMANCE, CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

# PERFORMING ARTS AT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE



At St. Mary's College of Maryland, the performing arts major is where creativity takes center stage. Choose a major concentration in music, musical theater, or theater, dance & performance studies—or amplify your experience with a minor in music, theater studies, or musical arts administration.

Everyone can get involved: all students are welcome to audition for shows and join ensembles, no matter their major. Come create something bold, meaningful and uniquely you.



# YOUR GUIDE TO

## Visual and Performing Arts Degrees

BY STEFANIE TEDARDS

**T**here's never been a better time to explore the world of the visual and performing arts. Today's art majors blend creativity with technology, politics, business, healthcare, and more.

Whether you're drawn to timeless disciplines like the fine arts, acting, music, and dance — or emerging fields in digital media and innovative practices — arts programs help you develop your craft, expand your thinking, and push the limits of art creation.

### WHAT DO ARTS MAJORS STUDY?

Most arts majors combine courses in history and critical theory with hands-on skill development. This practical approach sets them apart from more theoretical majors, like history and philosophy, which are focused on written learning.

- **Visual arts majors** include drawing, sculpture, painting, printmaking, ceramics, photography, illustration, animation, graphic design, digital media, film production, and more.
- **Performing arts majors** include theatre, dance, and music performance, as well as technical, behind-the-scenes fields such as sound, lighting, costume, set design, and stage management.

Key components of an arts education include studio hours, rehearsals, critiques, and portfolio or performance development. Course loads vary by program type. Generally, arts majors can earn one of three degrees.

- **Bachelor of Arts (BA):** A broader liberal arts education balanced between art and general education courses. BA majors often have more flexibility to explore other academic interests and fewer required studio hours compared to BFA majors.

- **Bachelor of Science (BS):** Centers on the arts' technical, scientific, or applied aspects (music technology, sound engineering, or digital media). BS programs blend artistic training with technology and production courses.
- **Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA):** Emphasizes intensive, specialized artistic training to prepare students for professional careers as practicing artists. BFA students spend more time in the studio developing technical skills and producing creative work.

### 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY VISUAL ARTS MAJORS

- **Art and Technology** bridges traditional artistic skills with cutting-edge digital tools. Students experiment with media such as animation, coding, video, and digital fabrication to craft innovative projects, from interactive installations to algorithmic art. (**See:** [Arcadia University](#), [University of Oregon](#))
- **Immersive Media** challenges students to design virtual and augmented reality experiences with 3D modeling, creative coding, spatial computing, and projection techniques. This program equips students with the skills to design engaging physical and digital environments. (**See:** [University of Maryland](#), [University of Miami](#))
- **Sustainable Design** empowers students to tackle environmental challenges by thoughtfully designing buildings, products, landscapes, and urban spaces. This major guides students to create solutions that benefit people and the planet. (**See:** [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#), [UC Berkeley](#))
- **Design, Innovation & Society** explores the powerful role design plays in shaping cultural and social experiences. These programs blend creativity and critical thinking to develop user-centered

innovations for solving real-world problems. (See: [UWMadison](#), [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#))

- **Emerging Media** centers on storytelling and creative expression using digital video, interactive technologies, and evolving media formats. Students gain hands-on experience crafting content for today's media landscape. (See: [University of Central Florida](#), [University of Nebraska](#))
- **Experimental Animation** challenges students to push the boundaries of visual storytelling using hand-drawn, stop-motion, and digital techniques to produce bold, unique narratives. (See: [CalArts](#), [Laguna College of Art + Design](#))
- **Interactive Arts** combines technology and artistic vision to create dynamic, participatory experiences. Students use physical computing, immersive media, and digital platforms. (See: [NYU](#), [Maryland Institute College of Art](#))

## PERFORMING ARTS MAJORS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

- **Acting for Stage, Screen, and New Media** trains performers to adapt their craft across live theater, film, television, and emerging digital platforms. Students refine skills and explore how acting adapts to new media contexts. (See: [Michigan State University](#), [University of Southern California](#))
- **Commercial Dance** prepares students for dynamic careers in dance styles popularized by music videos, theater, and live entertainment. These programs blend rigorous training in technique, performance, and industry skills with real-world professional experience. (See: [Boston Conservatory at Berklee](#), [Pace University](#))
- **Choreography** focuses on the art of creating original dance works. Students learn to design movement narratives and collaborate with performers and designers. (See: [UC Irvine](#), [LMU](#))
- **Sound Design** equips students with the technical and creative skills to shape the auditory world of



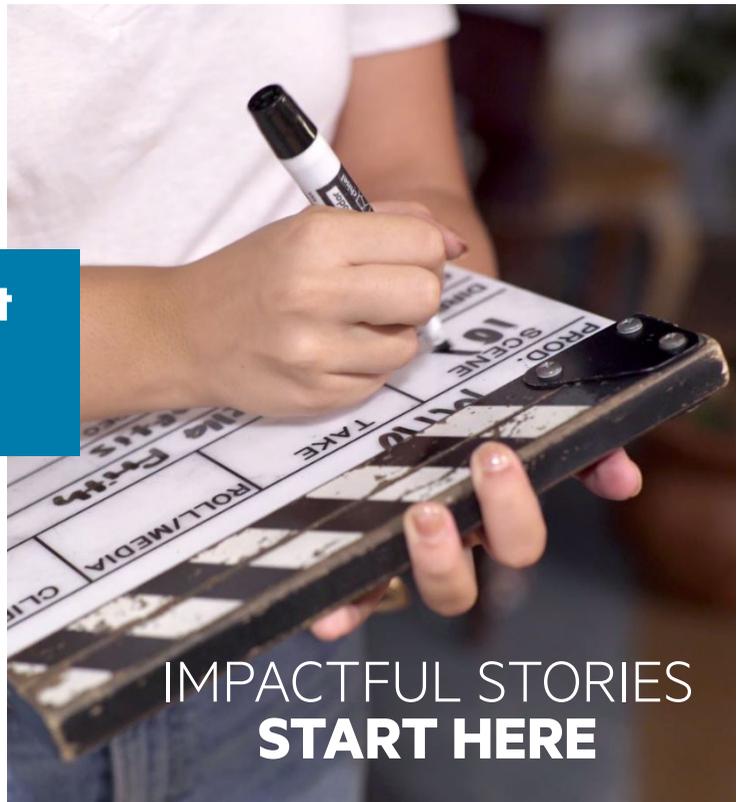
**Loyola  
Marymount  
University**

Los Angeles

## Arts + Entertainment Summer Programs for High School Students

Acting  
Film Production  
Graphic Design  
Screenwriting  
Theatre Arts

For information, visit:  
[summer.lmu.edu/arts](http://summer.lmu.edu/arts)



IMPACTFUL STORIES  
**START HERE**

# THEATRE & DANCE | UWE

## Seven Distinct Areas of Study

Performance | Musical Theatre | Design & Technology | Stage Management  
Arts Administration | Dance | Multidisciplinary Studies



At least six fully-realized productions each year

Student involvement in all areas of production including lead design and management roles

Scholarly opportunities in theory, history, and literature

University support for undergraduate research

No competition with graduate students

Recent KCACTF honors in design, stage management, individual and ensemble performance, dramaturgy, special achievement in the production of a new work, and the 2025 Citizen Artist Award

[www.uwlax.edu/theatre-and-dance](http://www.uwlax.edu/theatre-and-dance)



theater, film, and interactive media. Students learn to craft immersive soundscapes that enhance storytelling. (**See:** [Michigan Tech](#), [Carnegie Mellon](#))

- **Performance Studies** investigates performance in its broadest sense and how it embodies the human experience. Students analyze and create works to understand how performance shapes identity and community across diverse cultures. (**See:** [Northwestern University](#), [NYU](#))
- **Entertainment & Arts Management** prepares students for behind-the-scenes careers by combining business skills with a passion for the arts. This major trains students to manage projects, venues, and talent. (**See:** [Drexel University](#), [Pace University](#))
- **Performing Arts & Social Justice** connects artistic expression with activism, encouraging students to explore how performance can challenge societal norms and inspire change. The program emphasizes community engagement and the role of the arts in social movements. (**See:** [University of San Francisco](#), [American University](#))

## ARE ARTS MAJORS A GOOD INVESTMENT?

Earning a four-year art degree is expensive. College degrees typically increase earning potential, but art majors don't necessarily enjoy the same level of financial benefit as business or STEM graduates.

Creative directors, product designers, and special effects artists can earn six-figure salaries, but arts majors (more commonly) earn closer to \$50K annually. When considering majors, look at the range of careers and salaries; choose a program you can afford without assuming too much debt.

College helps you to build a network of peers, mentors, and industry professionals. Since many of these relationships form locally, look at schools in cities that are hubs for your field. These connections can help jumpstart your creative career.

Your journey in the arts will be unique. Whether you pursue a newer or more traditional arts major, choose the path best aligned with your goals and most likely to position you for success.

From menswear to photography, fine arts to jewelry design

FIND YOUR

future

AT FIT



nurturing  
unconventional  
minds



State University  
of New York



[fitnyc.edu/teenlife](https://fitnyc.edu/teenlife)

# SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE ARTS



**R**eady to pursue your dream career in the visual or performing arts? Scholarships can help make your dream a reality. These awards offer important support and also well-deserved recognition and networking opportunities that can kickstart your journey. This list is but a small sampling of merit and needs-based scholarships available.

We've focused on broader opportunities rather than scholarships associated with specific regions or those directly offered by colleges and universities.

## VISUAL ARTS

- Andy and Julie Plata Honorary Scholarship
- Creative Innovation in Education Scholarship
- Doodle for Google
- Greater Than Gatsby Annual Scholarship
- FSF Case Study Scholarship
- Gucci Changemakers Scholarship Program
- International Furnishings and Design Association Scholarships
- Lucie Foundation
- Photo Contents Guru Fine Art Photography Grants and Awards
- WomenArts Visual Arts Scholarships

## PERFORMING ARTS

- Broadway World Theatre Scholarships
- The Cody Renard Richard Scholarship Program
- The Directors Company Awards and Scholarships
- Educational Theatre Association Scholarships and Grants
- Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship
- Kozakov Foundation Scholarship for Creatives in Theater, Film or Dance

## DANCE

- American Dance Festival
- Brown Girls Do Ballet Scholarship
- Cyril McNiff Memorial Scholarship Program
- Dance Educators of America (DEA) Scholarships
- Gene Kelly Legacy Scholarship
- Joan Meyers Brown Equity Scholarship Fund
- New York City Dance Alliance Scholarship Program
- Ruth Abernathy Presidential Scholarship
- YoungArts Dance Scholarship
- Yvonne Brown Collodi College Scholarship

Once you accept your spot, visit your school's financial pages to see whether it offers school-specific scholarships, too!

Many applications require a portfolio or video submission showcasing your amazing work. To stay organized and keep track of application deadlines (and requirements), we suggest creating a spreadsheet (or other organizational method).

For even more tips on finding and applying for financial aid, including grants and scholarships, to fund your college journey, check out this blog.

## MUSIC

- Against the Grain Scholarships
- ASCAP Foundation Scholarships
- Daughters of the American Revolution Scholarships
- Hartford Jazz Society Scholarship
- MAJORINGinMUSIC - scholarships for music majors
- National Association for Music Education Scholarships
- Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award
- National Federation of Music Clubs Competitions
- National Young Composers Challenge
- VSA International Young Musicians Program (Kennedy Center)

## ANY VISUAL OR PERFORMING ARTS MAJOR

- Against the Grain Productions Artistic Scholarships
- Bond Creative Advancement Project (BCAP)
- The Classic Center Scholarships
- East Rock Films Scholarship
- The Giving Back Fund: Legacy Lab Foundation Scholarship
- Henry and Chiyo Kuwahara Creative Arts Scholarship
- National YoungArts Foundation
- Ocean Awareness Contest
- Scholastic Art and Writing Awards
- Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest



[VISIT OUR BLOG TO SEE THE FULL LIST.](#)

# RESOURCES

Seeking additional opportunities and professional organizations in the arts?  
Check out these resources!

## VISUAL ART & DESIGN

- American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA)The Art Career Project
- Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design
- Association of Photographers (AOP)
- College Art Association: Advancing Art & Design
- College Board's AP Art and Design Program
- International Game Developers Association
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design
- National Portfolio Day Association
- Student Art Guide

## MUSIC

- American Composers Forum
- Berklee Online Free Music Resources
- Careers in Music
- College Music Society (CMS)
- Jazz Education Network (JEN)
- Majoring in Music
- NAMM Foundation
- Opera America
- Polygence Music Research for High School Students
- Student National Association of Teachers of Singing

## THEATRE

- American Theatre & Drama Society
- Black Theatre Network
- Broadway Educators
- Get Into Theatre
- Hola. (Hispanic Organization of Latin Actors)
- National Alliance for Musical Theatre
- Performance Studies International (PSI)
- Stage Managers' Association
- Shakespeare Association of America
- United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc. (USITT)

## DANCE

- The American College Dance Association
- CalArts Library Dance Career Resources
- Dance Informa
- Dance into College
- Dance Magazine
- Dance Studies Association
- Dance US
- The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD)
- International Association for Dance Medicine & Science
- National Association of Schools of Dance

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Documentary
- Art21
- The Art Career Project
- The Arts Career Guide
- College Art Association
- Disability Arts Online
- Exploring the Arts
- GenArt
- Gray Area
- Kennedy Center Arts Education
- National Endowment for the Arts
- New York Foundation for the Arts
- Open Arts Journal
- Sparketh Online Art Courses
- YoungArts

 [VISIT OUR BLOG TO  
SEE THE FULL LIST.](#)





# PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS COLLEGES AND PROGRAMS

Feeling overwhelmed by the number of pre-college programs, summer courses, and universities? We've got it covered! This section includes a curated list of top-tier schools and programs offering a wide array of degrees, concentrations, and short and long summer sessions. Whether you're interested in music, theater, dance, graphic design, film production, photography, arts management, game design — or a combination — this resource can help you choose the perfect fit. We've organized this section by program type and included details on each program's offerings to help you compare your options at a glance.

## COLLEGES

### **BALDWIN WALLACE UNIVERSITY: CONSERVATORY OF PERFORMING ARTS**

**Location:** Berea, OH

**Majors:** D, M, MT, T

**[bw.edu/schools/conservatory](http://bw.edu/schools/conservatory)**

This nationally-ranked conservatory is dedicated to pushing boundaries and investing in the transformative power of the arts to connect, heal, and inspire. More than 500 students (17% of BW's population) are undergraduates currently pursuing degree programs through the Conservatory of Performing Arts. Baldwin Wallace celebrates creativity, innovation, excellence and collaboration with great fervor. [Learn More »](#)

### **BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY: THE ARTS AT BELHAVEN**

**Location:** Jackson, MS

**Majors:** D, F, GD, M, T, V

**[belhaven.edu/arts](http://belhaven.edu/arts)**

Belhaven University is one of only 39 colleges and universities in the U.S. nationally accredited in all four major areas of the arts: visual art, dance, theatre, and music. Contact us for more information and to schedule your campus visit.

[Learn More »](#)

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**A:** Architecture, **D:** Dance,  
**FD:** Fashion Design, **F:** Film,  
**G:** Graphic Design, **M:** Music,  
**MT:** Musical Theatre,  
**P:** Photography, **T:** Theatre,  
**V:** Visual/Fine Arts, **O:** Other

### **BELMONT UNIVERSITY: WATKINS COLLEGE OF ART**

**Location:** Nashville, TN

**Majors:** A, D, FD, F, G, M, MT, P, T, V

**[belmont.edu/watkins](http://belmont.edu/watkins)**

Located in the heart of Nashville, TN, Belmont University offers students the path to pursue their biggest dreams among an encouraging community. A mid-sized, Christian institution with approximately 9,000 students, Belmont provides individual support for each student, while also featuring abundant opportunities with over 180 academic majors and 200 campus organizations.

[Learn More »](#)

**BIMM UNIVERSITY****Location:** United Kingdom, Europe**Majors:** D, F, M, MT, T**bimm.co.uk**

BIMM University offers an extensive range of courses in modern music, performing arts, filmmaking, and creative technology to over 8,000 students across 14 schools in the UK, Ireland, and Germany. We have a longstanding commitment to providing the highest quality education in creative industries, allowing students to maximize their career potential. [Learn More »](#)

**THE BLACKBIRD ACADEMY****Location:** Nashville, TN**Majors:** M, O**theblackbirdacademy.com**

The Blackbird Academy's Professional School of Audio consistently ranks among the nation's top five audio/engineering schools. We have a world-renowned reputation for our outstanding graduates in both our Live Sound and Studio Engineering programs. We emphasize a mentor-based, hands-on education.

[Learn More »](#)**CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE THEATRE SCHOOL****Location:** New York, NY**Majors:** T**circlesquare.org**

We offer a two-year conservatory program and a BFA degree program with Eckerd College. Our actor training connects emotional truth with the power of imagination, cultivating artists with strong technique who will be prepared to thrive in all storytelling platforms.

[Learn More »](#)**CU DENVER COLLEGE OF ARTS & MEDIA****Location:** Denver, CO**Majors:** F, G, M, P, V**artsandmedia.ucdenver.edu**

CU Denver's College of Arts & Media knows that talented creators and innovators deserve careers doing what they love. Learn to inspire, lead, and create in our top-ranked programs in film and television, media forensics, music and entertainment, and visual arts, right in the heart of Denver.

[Learn More »](#)**DEAN COLLEGE****Location:** Franklin, MA**Majors:** D, MT, T**dean.edu**

Dean College, in Franklin, MA, offers a supportive, close-knit community that empowers students to thrive academically, socially, and professionally. With small classes, personalized advising, and real-world learning opportunities, Dean prepares students for success in college and beyond. From nationally recognized programs in business, the performing arts, humanities and sciences to Division III athletics and vibrant campus life, Dean provides the tools, guidance, and confidence students need to discover their strengths and achieve their goals.

[Learn More »](#)**DREXEL UNIVERSITY: WESTPHAL COLLEGE OF MEDIA ARTS & DESIGN****Location:** Philadelphia, PA**Majors:** A, D, FD, F, G, P, V, O**drexel.edu/westphal**

Drexel University's Westphal College of Media Arts & Design is dedicated to educating students in design, media and the performing and visual arts. The college offers 17 majors in award-winning, technologically enhanced facilities, taught by faculty who work at the top of their fields. Students produce sophisticated work through creative, multi-disciplinary practices, and provide meaningful experiences that promote individual and communal growth.

[Learn More »](#)**FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY****Location:** New York, NY**Majors:** FD, G, P, V**fitnyc.edu**

One of New York City's premier public institutions, FIT is an internationally recognized college of design, fashion, art, communications, and business. The college offers degrees in diverse subjects, such as menswear, footwear and accessories design, fashion design, spatial experience design, photography, fine arts, jewelry design, and toy design. It's known for its rigorous, unique, and adaptable academic programming, experiential learning opportunities, academic and industry partnerships, and commitment to research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

[Learn More »](#)

**A:** Architecture, **D:** Dance, **FD:** Fashion Design, **F:** Film, **G:** Graphic Design, **M:** Music, **MT:** Musical Theatre, **P:** Photography, **T:** Theatre, **V:** Visual/Fine Arts, **O:** Other

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create opportunities,  
and lead the way in  
a changing world.

At the Peabody Conservatory,  
you'll study with renowned  
faculty and forge a performing  
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The Peabody Conservatory meets **100% of demonstrated financial need** for domestic undergraduate students, **with no loans.**

### GETTYSBURG COLLEGE: SUNDERMAN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

**Location:** Gettysburg, PA

**Majors:** F, M, P, T, V, O

[gettysburg.edu/music](http://gettysburg.edu/music)

Gettysburg's Sunderman Conservatory provides excellent, comprehensive musical training grounded in a nationally-ranked liberal arts education. In a world-renowned college town with deep historical roots, students can study over 65 academic programs ranging from the natural sciences and business to theater, music, and the visual arts. With guaranteed career-ready experiences from internships to performance opportunities to global study, 98% of alumni are employed or attending graduate school within one year of graduation.

**Learn More »**

### ITHACA COLLEGE: SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE

**Location:** Ithaca, NY

**Majors:** D, M, MT, T

[ithaca.edu/academics/school-music-theatre-and-dance](http://ithaca.edu/academics/school-music-theatre-and-dance)

Join our inclusive community of innovative thinkers, performers, and trailblazers collaborating to push the performing arts forward. Here, in conservatory-style programs grounded in the liberal arts, you'll feel rapport and reinvention in the air — in our classrooms and practice rooms and on and off our stages. Through multidisciplinary training and exposure, you'll forge your career as you create a more equitable and sustainable tomorrow. **Learn More »**

### LIVERPOOL INSTITUTE FOR PERFORMING ARTS (LIPA)

**Location:** Liverpool, England

**Majors:** D, F, M, MT, T, V

[lipa.ac.uk](http://lipa.ac.uk)

LIPA is renowned for our world-leading, university-level training. Co-founded in 1996 by Sir Paul McCartney, who remains our Lead Patron, and based in Liverpool (England's only UNESCO City of Music), you'll train in an inspirational and artistic city. Subject areas include acting, actor musicianship, dance, filmmaking, management, music, musical theatre, performance design, production technology, and sound technology. Collaboration across disciplines is at the heart of what we do, staging 50+ performances and productions each year.

**Learn More »**



## MUHLENBERG COLLEGE: ARTS PROGRAMS

**Location:** Allentown, PA

**Majors:** D, F, M, MT, T, V  
**muhlenberg.edu**

Muhlenberg's 41+ majors and 38 minors provide students with a top-tier liberal arts education that leads to strong outcomes. Through world-class studio training and challenging academics, Muhlenberg produces artist-thinkers well-equipped to contribute to the greater good. The college offers outstanding vocal, instrumental, dance, acting, and production training in addition to rigorous programs in studio art and art history. Students have access to countless opportunities to perform and exhibit their work.

[Learn More »](#)

## NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

**Location:** Multiple Locations

**Majors:** F, MT, P, V  
**nyfa.edu**

New York Film Academy (NYFA) is a world-renowned film, media, and performing arts college that offers BFA and MFA degrees, short-term workshops, one and two-year programs, certificates, online classes, and summer camps for teens and kids. NYFA has campuses across the globe in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Italy, Australia, and online. NYFA students gain hands-on experience alongside industry professionals in filmmaking, acting for film, screenwriting, cinematography, producing, game design, musical theatre, photography, and more. [Learn More »](#)

## NEW YORK SCHOOL OF INTERIOR DESIGN

**Location:** New York, NY

**Majors:** O  
**nysid.edu**

The New York School of Interior Design (NYSID) is the only college in the country exclusively focused on the study of interior design, and it's consistently listed as one of the top-ranked interior design colleges in the world. Located in New York City, the international center of the design industry, NYSID's expert faculty — typically award-winning, practicing designers — mentor students, preparing them creatively and practically to launch successful careers.

[Learn More »](#)

## THE PEABODY CONSERVATORY OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

**Location:** Baltimore, MD

**Majors:** D, M  
**peabody.jhu.edu**

The Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University fosters a rigorous, collaborative, and supportive environment that recognizes each student as a distinct artist. At Peabody, your education is shaped by world-class faculty who provide the tools needed to hone your skills and by a culture that celebrates curiosity, artistic excellence, and creative growth. You'll develop the skills to take risks, explore beyond traditional boundaries, and shape what it means to be a 21st-century artist.

[Learn More »](#)

## SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

**Location:** Fairfield, CT

**Majors:** M, MT, T  
**sacredheart.edu/sacred-heart-life/student-events--activities/performing-arts-program/theatre-arts-program**

Sacred Heart University's Theatre Arts Program is a vibrant, hands-on community offering countless opportunities for students to perform, create, and lead. Each year, we produce six full-scale shows. Students can take the stage or explore behind-the-scenes roles, learning the ins and outs of theatre production. While every show is professionally directed, students are encouraged to take on creative leadership roles such as assistant directing, stage management, and designing costumes, hair and makeup, and more. [Learn More »](#)

## SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY: MEADOWS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

**Location:** Dallas, Texas

**Majors:** D, F, M, MT, P, T, V  
**smu.edu/meadows**

The Meadows School of the Arts is one of the foremost arts education institutions in the United States. The Meadows School offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in an unusual mix of the arts: visual (art, art history and creative computation, film), performance (dance, music and theatre), and communications (advertising, fashion media, media arts, corporate communication and public affairs, and journalism), as well as a preeminent program in arts management and arts entrepreneurship.

[Learn More »](#)

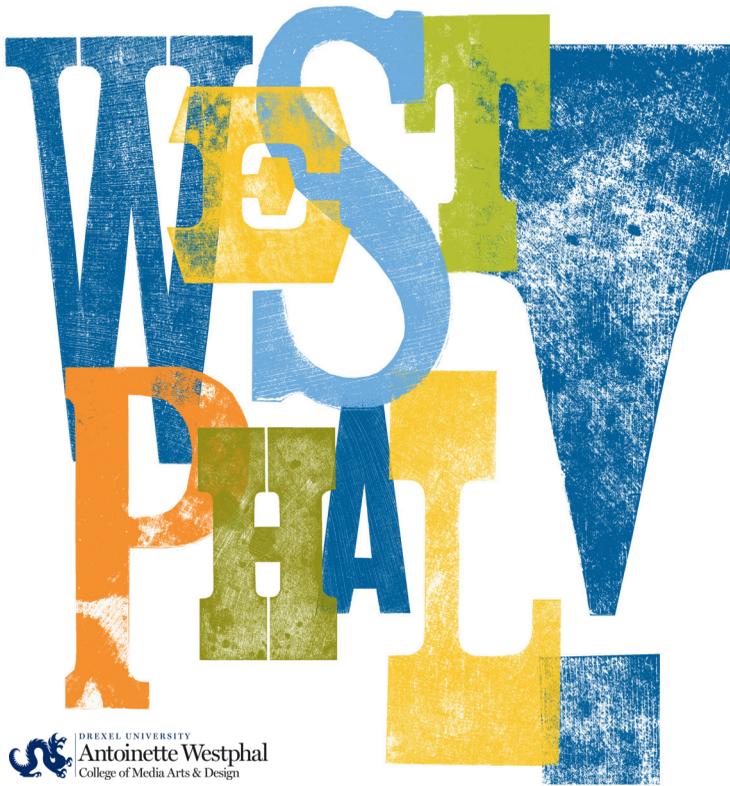
**A:** Architecture, **D:** Dance,

**FD:** Fashion Design, **F:** Film, **G:** Graphic Design,

**M:** Music, **MT:** Musical Theatre,

**P:** Photography, **T:** Theatre,

**V:** Visual/Fine Arts, **O:** Other



## The creative of Drexel University

- Animation & Visual Effects
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- Dance
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- Fashion Design
- Fashion Industry & Merchandising
- Film & Television
- Game Design & Production
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- Interior Design
- Music Industry
- Photography
- Product Design
- Screenwriting & Playwriting
- User Experience & Interaction Design

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### ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND: ARTS PROGRAMS

**Location:** St. Mary's City, MD  
**Majors:** D, M, MT, T, V  
**smcm.edu**

As the National Public Honors College, St. Mary's College of Maryland provides an undergraduate liberal arts education and a small-college experience comparable to exceptional private colleges. The college embodies the hallmarks of private institutions: an outstanding faculty, talented students, rigorous academic standards, a challenging curriculum, small class sizes, a strong sense of community, and a commitment to intellectual inquiry. This state institution of higher education also prioritizes affordability, accessibility, and diversity. [Learn More »](#)

### SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY: COLLEGE OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

**Location:** Syracuse, NY  
**Majors:** D, FD, F, G, M, MT, P, T, V, O  
**vpa.syr.edu**

The College of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) is one of Syracuse University's 13 schools and colleges. Our degree programs span the disciplines of art, communication and rhetorical studies, creative arts therapy, design, drama, film and media arts and music. The vision of the College of Visual and Performing Arts is founded upon the belief that art and scholarship can effect change. [Learn More »](#)

### UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

**Location:** Winston-Salem, NC  
**Majors:** D, F, M, T, V, O  
**uncsa.edu**

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) is America's first public arts conservatory, founded in 1963. With five world-class conservatories in dance, design & production, drama, filmmaking, and music, UNCSA offers high school through graduate programs. Students benefit from a 7:1 faculty ratio, 200+ annual performances, state-of-the-art facilities, and strong industry connections. As part of the UNC System, UNCSA provides exceptional arts education at an affordable cost, preparing students for successful careers in the arts.

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**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN: LA CROSSE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS**

**Location:** La Crosse, WI  
**Majors:** D, MT, T  
**[uwlax.edu/theatre-and-dance](http://uwlax.edu/theatre-and-dance)**  
 Ranked No. 4 as the best public university in the Midwest by U.S. News and World Report, UW-La Crosse is a liberal arts institution with a student population of 10,500 undergrad and graduate students. Theatre and Dance offers an invigorating approach to theatrical training with seven areas of emphasis: performance, design/technical, musical theatre, stage management, arts administration, multidisciplinary studies, and dance. The department produces at least six productions each year with multiple opportunities for student involvement.

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**VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS**

**Location:** Richmond, VA  
**Majors:** D, FD, G, M, MT, P, T, V  
**[arts.vcu.edu](http://arts.vcu.edu)**  
 Create Your Future at VCUarts! At Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts (VCUarts), creativity is more than a skill — it's a way of thinking, making, and changing the world. Located in the heart of Richmond, VA, VCUarts is one of the nation's top public art schools. We offer undergraduate and graduate programs that blend hands-on learning, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and a deep commitment to artistic innovation. **[Learn More »](#)**



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**PROGRAMS, SCHOOLS & SERVICES**

**ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL: SUMMER TEEN CONSERVATORY**

**Location:** New York, NY  
**[atlanticactingschool.org/kids-and-teens/summer-teen-conservatory](http://atlanticactingschool.org/kids-and-teens/summer-teen-conservatory)**  
 Atlantic Acting School offers a pre-college intensive with a focus on the Practical Aesthetics technique and professional-level training. The Teen Conservatory provides an introduction to the Atlantic Acting Technique through a comprehensive curriculum, challenging students to push beyond their creative comfort zones. In this supportive and collaborative environment, students will experience rigorous training in voice, speech, movement, and acting, and gain a taste of the conservatory experience while building foundational skills for their acting journey. **[Learn More »](#)**

**CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAM**

**Location:** San Francisco, CA  
**[cca.edu/academics/pre-college](http://cca.edu/academics/pre-college)**  
 Join us in San Francisco! Current high school students who will complete their sophomore, junior, or senior year by summer 2026 are eligible to apply for CCA Pre-College, a summer program designed to help young creatives develop their skills and experience what it's like to attend college in our supportive, inspiring community. Students will have the opportunity to earn three college credits, learn from expert faculty instructors, and meet other art-minded makers and designers. **[Learn More »](#)**

**A:** Architecture, **D:** Dance, **FD:** Fashion Design, **F:** Film, **G:** Graphic Design, **M:** Music, **MT:** Musical Theatre, **P:** Photography, **T:** Theatre, **V:** Visual/Fine Arts, **O:** Other



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Learn more at [smu.edu/meadows](http://smu.edu/meadows).

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[ciee.org/go-abroad/high-school-study-abroad/summer](http://ciee.org/go-abroad/high-school-study-abroad/summer)

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### IDYLLWILD ARTS ACADEMY

**Location:** Idyllwild, CA

[idyllwildarts.org/academy](http://idyllwildarts.org/academy)

Ranked by Niche as the #1 High School for the Arts in America, Idyllwild Arts Academy is an international boarding arts high school where education is guided by the belief that art is the greatest teacher of humanity. Our dual arts and academic curriculum equips students (grades 9-12 & PG) with the tools to harness their own imagination to change themselves and the world around them. We welcome all life experiences, perspectives, identities, cultures, abilities, and languages.

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### IDYLLWILD ARTS ACADEMY GAP YEAR PROGRAM

**Location:** Idyllwild, CA

[idyllwildarts.org/postgraduate-gap-year](http://idyllwildarts.org/postgraduate-gap-year)

**postgraduate-gap-year** Ranked by Niche as the #1 High School for the Arts in America, Idyllwild Arts Academy attracts high school students and those taking a postgraduate gap year to explore their artistic passions. The campus spans 205 acres of pristine forest in the mountains of Southern California, providing an inspiring backdrop for gap year students to prepare for college auditions, portfolios, or professional life as an artist and facilitating individual goals beyond high school.

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## IDYLLWILD ARTS SUMMER PROGRAM

**Location:** Idyllwild, CA  
[idyllwildarts.org/summer/kids-and-teens](http://idyllwildarts.org/summer/kids-and-teens)

Discover the magic of an Idyllwild Arts summer, where teens can explore their creativity, build confidence, and forge lifelong friendships with other student artists in a beautiful, supportive, and welcoming sleepaway camp environment. Our immersive intensives and workshops include options in all arts disciplines for students aged 13 to 17. Experienced artist faculty provide hands-on guidance for all levels and abilities to hone their artistic technique while emphasizing educational values, personal values, and achievement.

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## IDYLLWILD SEMESTER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

**Location:** Idyllwild, CA  
[idyllwildarts.org/semester-exchange-program](http://idyllwildarts.org/semester-exchange-program)

The Semester Exchange Program allows students to further their academic and artistic skills for a single semester on Idyllwild Arts Academy's beautiful mountaintop campus in Southern California. Designed for international and domestic students in grades 10-12 and postgraduates, this dynamic, personalized offering offers an individually customized curriculum and goals in partnership with each student and their home school. Semester students have access to all campus resources and create lasting memories in an environment brimming with inspiration. [Learn More »](#)

## LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY: PRE-COLLEGE SUMMER PROGRAMS

**Location:** Los Angeles, CA  
[summer.lmu.edu/arts](http://summer.lmu.edu/arts)

Unlock your creativity in a supportive and enriching environment this summer at Loyola Marymount University and receive hands-on training from creative arts and entertainment industry professionals. Join us in Los Angeles for an unforgettable summer of artistic expression and personal growth, where you can expand your skills, build your portfolio, and immerse yourself in LMU's vibrant pre-college community. Arts and entertainment summer programs are available to current high school students ages 14 to 18. [Learn More »](#)



## MONTERRAT COLLEGE OF ART: SUMMER PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAM

**Location:** Beverly, MA  
[montserrat.edu/academics/summer-programs/pre-college-program](http://montserrat.edu/academics/summer-programs/pre-college-program)

Montserrat College of Art offers high school students a three-week, residential pre-college program from July 12 to August 1, 2026. Immerse yourself in a creative environment three blocks from the ocean with students from across the country. Earn college credit while building your admissions portfolio. Pre-college mirrors the personalized scale of our undergraduate experience, prioritizing small classes and mentorship from professional artists/faculty. Study fine arts, digital/interactive media, creative writing or all. Educational field trips and fun are a bonus! [Learn More »](#)

## NATIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (NSLC) | ANIMATION

**Location:** Los Angeles, CA  
[nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/animation](http://nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/animation)

At the NSLC on Animation, you'll explore core concepts of design through workshops on character development, motion, timing, and syncing. Dive into professional 2D animation using industry-standard tools. Learn how to draw, design, and animate using Clip Studio Paint and Toon Boom Harmony, software used by top studios around the world. Master animation workflows and bring your characters to life one frame at a time. Learn from animation professionals, including artists, producers, and character designers. [Learn More »](#)

## NATIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (NSLC) | ARCHITECTURE

**Location:** Washington, DC  
[nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/architecture](http://nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/architecture)

At the NSLC on Architecture, you will learn and practice essential architecture skills. From hand-drawing, CAD, and model-making to structural analysis, building material selection, and the use of cutting-edge technology, you and your peers will make the big decisions that go into designing buildings. Meet and learn from professional architects as you visit top firms and tour active construction sites. Gain insight into the careers available within architecture and the challenges and opportunities facing architects today. [Learn More »](#)





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## NATIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (NSLC) | FILM PRODUCTION & SCREENWRITING

**Location:** Los Angeles, CA  
[nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/film-production-and-screenwriting](http://nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/film-production-and-screenwriting)

At the NSLC on Film Production & Screenwriting, you'll experience the art of cinematic storytelling as you collaborate with your artistic team to produce a short narrative film. Learn the filmmaking process through immersive workshops that cover screenwriting, lighting, shot production, and editing. Meet and learn from professionals from throughout the Los Angeles film community. Visits to film studios and the Academy Museum, along with interactive leadership development workshops, complement the program activities. [Learn More »](#)



## NATIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (NSLC) | MUSIC INDUSTRY AND PRODUCTION

**Location:** Los Angeles, CA  
[nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/music-industry-production](http://nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/music-industry-production)

At the NSLC on Music Industry & Production, you'll collaborate with your peers, tour LA studios, and gain insights from industry leaders, including record company executives, publicists, producers, and artists. Get comfortable with popular DAW programs used by the pros, and discover new recording and editing techniques. You and your team will develop your own album concept and record your first single. Feedback from leading producers and artists will help prepare you for success. [Learn More »](#)

## THE NEW SCHOOL: PARSONS YOUTH & PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

**Location:** New York, NY, or Paris, France  
[cpe.newschool.edu/youth-and-pre-college/parsons-academy-summer-programs](http://cpe.newschool.edu/youth-and-pre-college/parsons-academy-summer-programs)

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## POWERHOUSE THEATER TRAINING PROGRAM AT VASSAR COLLEGE

**Location:** Poughkeepsie, NY  
[vassar.edu/powerhouse](http://vassar.edu/powerhouse)

For six weeks every summer, the Powerhouse Theater Season springs to life on the Vassar College campus to provide a nurturing environment in which passionate theater lovers, from students to professional practitioners, learn from one another. The Powerhouse Theater Training Program provides aspiring theater professionals a chance to immerse themselves in the study of acting, directing, or playwriting. The Training Company also offers free performances throughout the season. [Learn More »](#)

## RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN PRE-COLLEGE SUMMER PROGRAM

**Location:** Providence, RI  
[precollege.risd.edu](http://precollege.risd.edu)

Build your portfolio while developing as an artist and an individual. Whether you attend RISD Pre-College in person or virtually, you'll follow a five-week college-level curriculum led by accomplished teaching artists and learn alongside a community of talented students who will inspire you to push your limits and produce your best work. Rhode Island School of Design offers two summer programs: Pre-College and Pre-College Online.

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## SCAD PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

**Location:** Savannah, GA or Atlanta, GA

[scad.edu/summer](http://scad.edu/summer)

Start your SCAD journey early with a pre-college program. Explore new avenues of artistic development and spark your imagination at The University for Creative Careers. SCAD offers pre-college programs during the summer and throughout the year for high school students to pursue art and design disciplines while working alongside peers from all over the world. Take advantage of the opportunities for artists at all levels to create, learn, and grow! [Learn More »](#)

## SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRE-COLLEGE PROGRAMS

**Location:** Syracuse, NY  
[precollege.syr.edu](http://precollege.syr.edu)

For 65 years, Syracuse University Office of Pre-College Programs has provided high school students with the opportunity to explore college majors and potential careers through its renowned pre-college programs. Students choose from over 100 credit or noncredit courses either on campus or online. Syracuse University faculty and instructors teach all courses. Students learn to balance freedom and responsibility much like a college student and return home feeling confident, enthusiastic, and college-ready. [Learn More »](#)

# WHAT CAN YOU EARN WITH A PVA DEGREE?

BY JODI IRELAND

According to Zippia, the national average salary for a performing and visual arts graduate (with a bachelor's degree) is \$52,654. The bottom 10% in this field earn \$29,000 annually, and the top 10% earn over \$93,000. Industrial designers, for example, can earn six figures.

## AVERAGE PVA SALARIES BY STATE

### HIGHEST:

- New York: \$62,936
- Washington: \$61,454
- California: \$60,639
- Massachusetts: \$58,417
- New Jersey: \$57,538

### LOWEST:

- Louisiana: \$41,057
- Mississippi: \$40,758
- South Carolina: \$40,597
- Oklahoma: \$38,915
- South Dakota: \$38,548

## HIGHEST-PAYING PVA JOBS

- User experience designer: \$91,159 average salary
- Storyboard artist: \$90,053 average salary
- Visual designer: \$86,494 average salary
- Senior graphic designer: \$78,135 average salary
- News photographer: \$76,013 average salary

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## 2025 MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE OF PVA OCCUPATIONS

We sourced updated salaries from several different databases, which we've linked, including ZipRecruiter, Zippia, GlassDoor, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Note that these are national averages and will vary based on level of education, experience, and location. Check out our blog for the full list.

<p><b>ART THERAPIST</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Master's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> <b>\$63,735</b></p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> The visual arts therapy market is experiencing rapid growth, fueled by increased recognition of art as a healing tool and greater mental health awareness. The market size grew to \$1.65 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach \$1.95 billion in 2025, with an impressive compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.3%.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> An art therapist uses different art forms to help patients express emotions, resolve conflicts, and improve their mental and emotional well-being. Some patients who need occupational therapy also benefit from working with an art therapist.</p>
<p><b>FASHION DESIGNERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> <b>\$69,494</b></p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> Sustainability, technology, and evolving consumer preferences for inclusivity and personalization are heavily influencing the fashion industry. Expect about 5% growth annually from 2023 to 2033, with 2,100 new openings projected each year. High-demand roles include digital fashion designer and sustainable fashion designer.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Fashion designers conceptualize and create clothing, accessories, and footwear, translating their artistic vision into wearable garments. These designers own the entire process, from sketching initial ideas and selecting fabrics to overseeing production and marketing collections.</p>
<p><b>FILM AND VIDEO EDITORS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> <b>\$63,735</b></p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> BLS projects a 3% growth for film and video editors from 2023 to 2033, which is about average and translates to approximately 7,100 new job openings annually. Video editors are finding opportunities in marketing agencies, e-commerce companies, educational platforms, gaming and e-sports, news and media outlets, corporate communications, and streaming services.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> In the movie, cable, video, and TV industries, editors shape film and video content. They carefully choose which visual and audio components to incorporate and how to sequence them. Their work requires a combination of sharp observational skills, creative vision, and technical proficiency.</p>
<p><b>GRAPHIC DESIGNERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> <b>\$61,568</b></p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> BLS projects a 2% annual growth between 2023 and 2033, resulting in 2,100 new openings each year, which is lower than the average for other occupations. Industry drivers include companies seeking to enhance their digital presence, the booming e-commerce industry, a continuing need for branding and marketing, and the increasing importance of user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) design for websites and applications.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Through a strategic combination of text and visuals, graphic designers tell stories, promote products, and shape perceptions. Their creations appear in various media, including printed materials such as books and brochures, as well as in television, film, and electronic media. They may design signs, corporate logos, and product packaging. Graphic designers may work directly for specific organizations or companies, design agencies, or as self-employed freelancers.</p>

<p><b>INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> <b>\$123,907</b></p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> Expect 3% year-over-year growth between 2023 and 2033, with an average of 2,700 new job openings annually. Many industries hire industrial designers, including consumer electronics, automotive and transportation, home appliances, medical and healthcare, toys and recreation, furniture and housewares, and commercial and industrial equipment.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Industrial designers shape the physical products in our lives — everything from daily use items like microwave ovens and furniture to complex machinery like cars, airplanes, cell phones, and computers. These designers focus on improving usability, aesthetics, and functionality, transforming ideas into tangible products. Industrial designers may specialize in specific product types or aspects of design.</p>
<p><b>INTERIOR DESIGNERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Associate's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> <b>\$73,024</b></p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> The interior design field is expected to experience 4% growth from 2023 to 2033, with approximately 8,800 new job openings annually. The industry has diversified into residential and commercial sectors, with an emphasis on social connection and community (commercial) and high-end, customized solutions (residential).</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Interior designers specialize in conceiving and furnishing indoor spaces for homes, offices, restaurants, stores, hotels, hospitals, and other buildings. They develop comprehensive design solutions by carefully selecting and strategically implementing elements, such as lighting and materials like wood, metal, plastic, fabrics, and paint, to create a specific, appropriate, and effective mood for each setting.</p>



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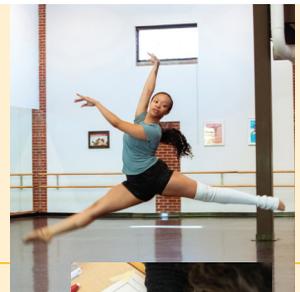
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<p><b>PAINTERS, SCULPTORS &amp; ILLUSTRATORS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> \$52,000 (painter) \$37,440 (sculptor) \$59,345 (illustrator)</p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> The BLS groups “craft and fine artists” together, projecting an “as fast as average” 8% growth from 2016-2026. Other data, however, suggests a 1% growth for painters and a 6% growth for sculptors through 2028. Often combined with graphic designers, the outlook for graphic designers/illustrators and artists/illustrators shows a 3% growth through 2028.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Painters produce 2D visual art, and many undertake commissions for large-scale murals, individual portraits, or contribute to designing and creating sets for stage and film productions. Sculptors craft 3D works of art in various materials such as wood, clay, metal, and stone. Their specialized skills in material manipulation and spatial design enable them to work in many industries, including set design for entertainment, architectural elements, custom fabrication, carpentry, broader construction projects, and even teaching models used in the medical field. Illustrators create pictures and images for a variety of uses. Medical illustrators are specialized artists who generate highly accurate, detailed visual representations of human anatomy, physiological processes, and surgical procedures. Children’s book illustrators collaborate closely with authors to create the engaging, imaginative worlds and images that enhance stories and bring characters and settings to life.</p>
<p><b>SET &amp; SCENIC DESIGNERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> \$49,920</p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> Expect about a 5% growth between 2023 and 2033 for set and scenic designers, which translates to approximately 2,400 jobs each year. The resurgence of live entertainment (concerts, theater, sports, corporate events) has increased demand for immersive, captivating scenic environments. Growth in live-action film and TV also drives the need for these professionals. Companies are also increasing investments in immersive experiences, which rely heavily on innovative set design, for their customers and clients.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Set and scenic designers shape the tangible environments for theatrical productions, TV shows, commercials, and motion pictures. These professionals collaborate closely with the director, choreographer, costume designer, and producer to calculate the spatial requirements and aesthetic needs of a production. They use sketches and scaled models to guide the production crews to build the sets and also source props and furniture to complete the visual world they’re creating.</p>
<p><b>SOUND ENGINEERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> \$84,456</p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> The BLS projects 3% growth for broadcast, sound, and video technicians and 5% growth specifically for sound engineering technicians from 2023 to 2033. The market remains dominated by freelance and independent contractor work, with an estimate of 5 to 8 freelancers for every one salaried audio worker; however, 12,900 jobs open each year, on average. Sound engineers work in music production, at live events, for film, TV, and video game production, in broadcasting, for audio equipment manufacturers, and within the corporate industry.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Sound engineers shape the audio landscape for different media. They may work in a studio environment, designing sound and music combinations to enrich a storyline or atmosphere. In live settings, they ensure optimal sound quality for performers and audiences. When working on a production, a sound engineer partners with the director and producer to build a cohesive soundtrack using musical elements and sound effects. Specializations within the field include creating specific sound effects for TV, film, or theater — or becoming experts in musical studio recording or producing audio for marketing, training, and internal communications in the corporate world.</p>

<p><b>SPECIAL EFFECTS ARTISTS AND ANIMATORS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> \$81,120 (special effects animators) \$62,400 (special effects artists)</p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> Expect 8% job growth for special effects artists and animators between 2023 and 2033, with an average of 9,000+ job openings each year. The visual effects (VFX) market is also expected to surpass \$12 billion in 2025 and reach \$19 billion by 2029 — a boom fueled by several factors, including streaming services, the video game industry, advertising, and VR/AR/metaverse. The greatest area of opportunity for animators? TV, movies, and video games.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Special effects animators and artists bring the impossible to life on screen. Many professionals in this field concentrate on specific areas, like creating intricate makeup, designing prosthetics, or orchestrating pyrotechnic displays. Advancements in software and computer technology have transformed the industry, enabling special effects artists to achieve nearly any visual spectacle a director can imagine.</p>
<p><b>VIDEO GAME DESIGNERS</b></p> <p><b>Entry-level education:</b> Bachelor's degree</p> <p><b>2025 median pay:</b> \$149,118</p>	<p><b>Industry profile:</b> The global video game market continues to grow, with reports indicating that 90% of studios will release at least one new title this year. The market is projected to reach over \$188 billion in 2025 and surpass \$200 billion by 2027. Demand for gaming professionals remains high, with over 109,000 gaming jobs posted in 2025, reflecting sustained hiring needs in game development, design, and engineering.</p>	<p><b>Job Summary:</b> Video game designers conceptualize, plan, and refine all aspects of a video game's experience, from core mechanics and storylines to character progression and user interface. They create detailed design documents, prototype gameplay, and collaborate with artists, programmers, and other team members to bring their vision to life.</p>

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