



# Presidential Search Prospectus

## OVERVIEW

Ringling College of Art and Design is a private, not-for-profit, undergraduate, independent higher education success story.

The College has raised its academic and public profiles to that of one of the most decorated and successful art and design colleges in the nation. To build upon this success, Ringling College is seeking a creative, experienced, and strategic leader. The new president will join a forward-thinking and collaborative leadership team in guiding a highly engaged and artistic community in achieving its vision of becoming the preeminent art and design college in the world.

Additional information about the College can be found at [ringling.edu](https://www.ringling.edu).



# We turn passion into profession.

## The College

Ringling College of Art and Design is a four-year accredited college located in Sarasota, Florida. Founded as an art school in 1931, it was a remote branch of Southern College, named The School of Fine and Applied Art of the John and Mable Ringling Art Museum. The art school separated from Southern College and became an independent nonprofit institution in 1933 and changed its name to Ringling School of Art. In 2007, under the leadership of Dr. Larry R. Thompson, the Ringling School officially became Ringling College of Art and Design.

Today, the picturesque 54-acre Main Campus includes more than 110 buildings, and enrolls approximately 1600 students from over 50 countries, nearly every U.S. state, and multiple territories—three-fourths of whom reside on the pedestrian-friendly residential campus. Its faculty members are all professional artists, designers, and scholars who actively pursue their own work outside the classroom. The College's rigorous curriculum engages innovation and tradition through a strong, well-rounded, first-year program specific to the major of study, with a deep focus on the liberal arts.

### ACCREDITATION

Ringling College is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

The College recently submitted the paperwork for SACSCOC reaccreditation. A campus site visit is scheduled for October 2025, with the decision by SACSCOC anticipated in June 2026. The reaccreditation self-study for NASAD will be submitted in February of 2026 with the campus site visit in early April of 2026 with a decision by NASAD in June or October of 2026.





# By the Numbers

## STUDENT BODY

**84.5%**  
first-to-second year retention rate

**71.8%**  
six-year graduation rate

**1,539**  
degree-seeking students from  
53 countries, 44 states, Puerto  
Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and  
Washington, D.C.

**30%**  
Floridians

**22%**  
international

## FINANCES (FY 2025)

Ringling College has always had a  
balanced budget (never a deficit)

**\$105 million**  
annual operating budget (revenue)  
64% coming from tuition and fees

**\$79 million**  
Endowment total

**95%**  
of our students receive some  
form of financial aid

**27.5%**  
discount rate

## FACULTY AND STAFF

**180**  
faculty (all non-tenured)  
127 full-time  
53 adjunct

**239**  
staff (majority full-time)

**11:1**  
student-to-faculty ratio





## Location

Arts and culture come alive in Sarasota. Sarasota County has the long-standing designation as the Cultural Coast®. Renowned for world-class performing and fine arts, spectacular performances can be enjoyed through the [Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe](#), [Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall](#), [Asolo Repertory Theatre](#), [The Sarasota Ballet](#), [The Circus Arts Conservatory](#), [Sarasota Orchestra](#), [Sarasota Opera House](#), and other venues and events in and around the county.

Sarasota is defined by a rich and varied arts scene that belies the size of the city, estimated to be 772,000 within the Sarasota-Bradenton area. The cultural offerings per capita exceed that of almost any other city outside of New York. For example, the famous John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art features an enormous selection of paintings—including one of the biggest collections of Rubens in the world. There is a vibrant gallery scene showcasing Sarasota's talented local artists as well as visiting collections from artists around the world.

The natural beauty of Florida can be experienced through Sarasota's world-renowned pristine white sand beaches and natural surroundings. The city has some of the most extensive public park lands in the state, including the incomparable Myakka State Park, boasting miles of hiking trails. Sarasota has also become an international golf destination with dozens of courses in the area designed by some of the biggest names in the sport. Ed Smith Stadium hosts the Baltimore Orioles' spring training, and in southern Sarasota County, North Port hosts the spring training of the Atlanta Braves.

[Neighborhoods](#) range from the colorful old-Florida houses of downtown Sarasota's historic Towles Court art district to new housing communities. There are also areas of unique shops, restaurants, and bars that make for an exciting destination. For more information, [Visit Sarasota](#).



# Collaboration Community Creativity Diversity Innovation Integrity Professionalism

## Strategic Planning

The President, with the advice and counsel of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, Academic Planning Committee, and Facilities Planning Committee, leads Ringling College of Art and Design’s strategic planning process. The process for the creation of the updated Strategic Plan formally began in 2023, with the approval of the Board of Trustees granted in February 2024. The updated version of the strategic plan includes the following:

### College Vision

Ringling College of Art and Design will be the preeminent college of art and design in the world.

### College Mission

Ringling College of Art and Design educates students, its community, and the world to understand art and creativity as essential dimensions to life. The College recognizes that scholars, artists, designers, and creative professionals play a significant role in society. Through its policies and practices, the College supports innovation; excellence in education; and fosters the creative, intellectual, professional, and personal development of its students and the greater community at large.

### Core Values

The Strategic Plan is supported by the following core values: Collaboration, Community, Creativity, Diversity, Innovation, Integrity, and Professionalism.

Also included in the updated version of the Strategic Plan are strategic pillars and goals, covering: Academic vitality, student support, people and culture, facilities, technology, resources, and strategic positioning. The Strategic Plan of Ringling College of Art and Design is a plan in action, with the College’s senior officers annually creating a list of initiatives that are aligned with the plan’s goals, with input from the college community. Those initiatives are shared with the Board of Trustees, Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and the college community.

### IN SUPPORT OF THIS MISSION:

- Ringling College prepares students for successful careers that contribute positively to society.
- Ringling College strives to enroll both full-time and part-time students from diverse backgrounds who intend to become creative professionals.
- Ringling College provides community interaction within the complex world of cultural and artistic disciplines for cultural enlightenment, lifelong learning, artistic appreciation, and career development.
- Ringling’s curriculum balances the teaching of technical knowledge and skills with the development of critical, conceptual, and creative abilities and supports courses that provide historical, multicultural, global, and future perspectives.
- Ringling’s faculty consists of professionally active and teaching-oriented artists, designers, professionals, and scholars.
- Academic programs along with Advising, Career Services, and an extensive co-curricular student life program help prepare students for a creative profession, life-long learning, and graduate level studies.
- Ringling College provides the opportunity for all students to gain professional experience prior to graduation by connecting them with leading brands and clients to develop creative solutions to business challenges.



## Governance

Ringling College is governed by a Board of Trustees, consisting of up to 40 members. Trustee members serve three-year terms which are renewable up to a total of twelve years. Many trustees are either full- or part-time residents of Sarasota and are actively involved in the community and other local nonprofits. The president reports to the Board of Trustees and provides updates at their four regular meetings and any special meetings.

The work of the Board is conducted through their robust committee structure, including Academic Affairs, Advancement, Audit, Executive, Facilities/Campus Master Planning, Finance, Governance, Investment, and Student Affairs. The president and board chair serve as ex-officio members of all standing Board committees, working with trustee leadership to accomplish the vision for the institution.



## Academics

Ringling College believes in cultivating the creative spirit of students in a supportive environment with professional resources, inspiring faculty, and world-class facilities and technology. The College is the only institution in Florida dedicated exclusively to teaching art and design. Many of its programs have been ranked among the best in the nation and the world, including #1 in the world for Computer Animation and Motion Graphics for several consecutive years.

Ringling College's primary mission is to prepare students to be discerning visual thinkers and ethical practitioners in their chosen area of art and design and to provide an intensive professional education in the visual arts with an emphasis on professional practice. Ringling College has taken a leadership role in the integration of new technology within art and design curricula over the past three decades. The institution's strategic plan positions the College for continued growth and development, and to responsibly integrate creative technologies, including artificial intelligence, in all areas of study. It is authorized to award the BFA in 10 visual arts disciplines and the BA in two degrees—Business of Art and Design and Visual Studies.

Serving the creative, entertainment, and technology industries, our academic programs are based on a structured studio model of teaching, infused with a robust liberal arts curriculum. The College's commitment to academic excellence and relevancy is reflected in its ability to adapt and adopt cutting-edge programs.

During the admissions process, students are required to submit portfolios of work and apply directly to the major of their choice. Eighty-four and a half percent of students retain after their first year, and 72 percent graduate within six years.

**In the early 90s, Ringling College led the way in computer animation. We recognized, even then, that the computer would become the next paintbrush—which it did.**

**Dr. Larry R. Thompson**  
President, 1999-2026



**85% of students retain after their first year, and 72% graduate within six years.**







## Faculty

Ringling College highly values the blend of academic rigor with technical art and design practice and professional industry experience; our faculty are practicing artists, designers, industry leaders, and educators at the cutting edge of their fields.

Here you will find distinguished experts on a disparate range of topics: from traditional painting techniques to 3D animation, West African textiles to macroeconomics, design sustainability to the history of Sarasota. Their expertise spans skilled knowledge and technical skills, critical thinking, and the humanities.

Ringling College faculty are unranked and the institution does not provide tenure.

### FACULTY AND STAFF

- 180 faculty (127 full-time and 53 Adjunct).  
All faculty are non-tenured
- 11:1 student-to-faculty ratio
- 239 staff, most of whom are full-time

In addition to robust faculty support, students are also assigned an academic advisor. These experienced professionals help students navigate their course loads each semester and advise on how to incorporate additional value into their education by adding minors or certificate programs to their existing degree programs.





**Last year, students engaged in 1,300 programs and 51 student-led clubs. Over 15,000 hours in service projects are logged by Ringling students annually.**

## Campus Life

Ringling College is an accepting and creative community where all are welcome. Our highly residential campus is packed with state-of-the-art facilities where students can experiment, create, learn, and collaborate.

Our robust Student Life programming offers a wide range of social clubs and activities, leadership development, and volunteer opportunities to help balance academic learning and create a well-rounded college experience. Last year, students engaged in 1,300 programs and 51 student-led clubs. Over 15,000 hours in service projects are logged by Ringling students annually. Support services are available to all students through our on-campus Health and Counseling Centers, Student Learning Center, Access Services, and more.

Seventy-two percent of the students reside on the pedestrian-friendly, picturesque campus of more than 110 buildings. Ringling College offers on-campus housing designed for creative living, with housing options that spark community and collaboration. The campus has everything an emerging artist or designer could need: Galleries and exhibition spaces; fully-equipped, professional studios and labs; a "library of the future," the Alfred R. Goldstein Library; large-scale, customizable project rooms; digital checkouts; coffee shops; fitness centers; and more.

The College supports the students' professional development in many ways. The Center for Career Services offers training and career preparation services to students and alumni for life, and brings over 100 recruiters from top companies to campus each year. A new Center for the Creative Economy houses the College's INDEX program (Industry Experience at Ringling College), an initiative that allows students to work on professional projects with external clients, and a creative entrepreneurship pathway for students interested in creating their own businesses.

Art and design exist and thrive through diversity. Diversity of thought and perspective shapes cultures and conversations. It comprises the foundation on which Ringling College is built. We are a community composed of individuals with beliefs and backgrounds from every corner of the world. The College elevates, supports, and empowers students, alumni, faculty, staff, and supporters to celebrate their differences in an environment of trust and respect.





## Alumni

Ringling College boasts a thriving alumni network, with graduates making significant contributions to the creative industries worldwide. Graduates go on to work for globally-recognized companies including Pixar Animation Studios, DreamWorks Feature Animation, Blizzard Entertainment, Instagram, and Nike. Many alumni also pursue successful careers as freelance artists, designers, and entrepreneurs. Alumni awards and accolades have included Oscars, Emmys, Student Academy Awards, prestigious book awards, and recognition at festivals worldwide. The College actively supports its alumni through various resources and events, fostering a lifelong connection and providing ongoing career support.







## Community

Ringling College of Art and Design serves as a vital leader in the Sarasota community. Alongside the College's active and engaged Board members, many of whom live locally or seasonally, the institution champions the arts, culture, and lifelong learning. Through a dynamic array of innovative programs, the College engages more than 100,000 visitors annually.

Ringling College also has a secondary campus, the Museum Campus. This Campus houses the [Sarasota Art Museum of Ringling College of Art and Design \(SAM\)](#), the [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute \(OLLI\)](#), and additional community service programs. Sarasota Art Museum is a contemporary art destination offering thought-provoking exhibitions and educational programming that inspire audiences of all ages. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute fosters intellectual growth for adult learners across a broad range of disciplines.

[Ringling College Galleries and Exhibitions](#) showcase diverse works by both emerging and established artists on the Main Campus, enriching Sarasota's vibrant arts scene. [The TOWN HALL Speaker Series](#) has brought influential global voices to Sarasota for 45 years, including former presidents, prime ministers, renowned artists, sports figures, and political leaders. And, the Ringling College Film Circle promotes a deep appreciation for cinema by presenting meaningful films and hosting engaging discussions with award-winning actors and leading film industry experts.

Together, these initiatives highlight Ringling College's ongoing commitment to enriching the cultural and intellectual fabric of the Sarasota community.

To help support these important programs, Ringling College entered the public phase of its campaign, [Catalyst for Creativity](#), in December 2023. Since it commenced in 2018, over \$168 million has been raised out of the goal of \$175 million. The Campaign includes three institutional priorities: supporting students and faculty, growing facilities, and expanding community programs. It has been supported by trustees, alumni, friends, and the surrounding communities of Sarasota County.





## The Role

The president of Ringling College of Art and Design is the chief executive officer, reporting to the Board of Trustees. In partnership with the Board, the president sets and articulates a compelling vision and a corresponding strategy. The president serves as the College's primary ambassador and chief fundraiser, building relationships internally and externally. The president holds faculty status and serves as an ex-officio member of the Board and all Board committees.

**Direct reports to the president currently include:**

- Executive Assistant to the President
- Executive Director of Sarasota Art Museum
- Executive Vice President
- General Counsel
- Senior Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students
- Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President for Advancement
- Vice President and Chief Digital Information Officer
- Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing
- Vice President for Finance and Administration



# Priorities

In addition to the day-to-day responsibilities of managing the College, the president will be expected to focus on the following opportunities:

## BOARD RELATIONS

- Works closely with the Chair of the Board to formulate a vision and strategy and to gain support and approval of the vision and strategy by the Board;
- Analyzes the future of the College in the context of the rapidly evolving higher education landscape;
- Keeps the Board informed at the appropriate level on issues, operations, and needs of the College;
- Collaborates with committees of the Board, offering appropriate advice and recommendations to the Board based on study and analysis; and
- Interprets and executes the intent of Board policies.

## INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- Presents fresh and creative ideas and articulates the need for continued improvement and new strategies to keep the College at the forefront;
- Serves as the primary spokesperson for the College and plays a lead role in the field of arts education, both nationally and internationally;
- Encourages transparent communications with and among faculty, staff, and students;
- Shows a deep appreciation for shared governance by involving constituents in planning for the future;
- Acts with integrity and promotes an understanding of the values of Ringling College of Art and Design; and
- Provides an environment that motivates staff, board, and volunteers to maximize their participation and commitment to the College.

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Ensures Ringling College’s accreditation and excellence among its peer institutions;
- Drives cultural change to integrate AI and other emerging technologies as necessary tools to attract new students, increase enrollment, meet future challenges in the marketplace, and provide opportunities for continued success to students;
- Supports the development of academic goals, evaluation, and curricular innovation; and
- Supports the principles of academic freedom.

## RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Brings creative ideas to diversify revenue and ensure the sustainability of the College’s business model;
- Leads all fundraising efforts, including major gifts, annual giving, deferred giving, donor cultivation, and broader alumni development;
- Takes appropriate risks while remaining fiscally responsible;
- Develops cooperative relationships with key local partners, including the media and members of the Sarasota business and cultural community;
- Articulates Ringling College’s many distinctive advantages to a wider audience; and
- Supports multifaceted efforts to attract, enroll, retain, and develop a diverse and talented student body.

## FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT

- Facilitates a budget process that aligns resources with priorities;
- Accepts responsibility for difficult decisions and shows sensitivity to those affected;
- Mentors and retains a talented senior team and recruits equally talented new members of the team when needed; and
- Delegates appropriate authority and empowers staff to make decisions.





# Qualifications

Ringling College seeks an inspirational and transformational leader. A bachelor’s degree is required and an advanced degree is preferred. Candidates should have leadership experience in a complex environment, preferably in the arts and/or in education. In addition, candidates should demonstrate excellence in most of the following areas:

## KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

- Ability to successfully navigate academic governance, curriculum development, and accreditation processes;
- Expertise with budgeting, financial planning, and resource allocation, especially in a higher education setting;
- Ability to develop and implement strategic plans to advance the College’s mission and vision;
- Experience handling crises and making informed decisions under pressure;
- Commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse campus community;
- Deep passion for the arts, art education, and/or a related field;
- Proven experience in executive leadership roles; and
- Demonstrated experience in resource management and allocation, selection of and delegation to staff leaders, institutional planning, and fundraising and development.

## VISIONARY AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Track record of leading institutions through paradigm shifts;
- Ability to shape the future of creative education, including an understanding of how art and design education responds to an AI-augmented economy;
- Entrepreneurial spirit, including a balance of risk-taking and pragmatism;
- Knowledge of industries that hire Ringling’s students—including emerging creative-tech sectors and evolving job markets; and
- Ability to manage complexity, especially in rapidly evolving landscapes.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCE

- Engaging storyteller who captivates audiences with compelling narratives regarding the College;
- Stellar communication skills for effectively engaging with diverse stakeholders, including public speaking, persuasive writing, and active listening;
- High emotional intelligence, showing empathy and respect to all stakeholders;
- Understanding of academic programs, particularly emerging interdisciplinary and technology-integrated curricula;
- Collaborative and open leadership style, including the ability to build authentic relationships with stakeholders; and
- Visible, approachable, and actively engaged in local and global communities.

## FUNDRAISING

- Demonstrated fundraising success or personal traits that would predict success in this area;
- Strategic approach to donor relations and advancement; and
- Innovative in diversifying sources of revenue.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

- Experience with AI and other emerging technology (or willingness to discuss and engage in these topics), including a strategic understanding of AI’s impact on creative professions and educational delivery;
- Digital transformation experience, including a track record of successfully integrating emerging technology into educational programs and/or institutional operations;
- Future-focused curriculum vision, including the ability to balance traditional creative skills with emerging trends and technologies; and
- Data-informed decision-making, including comfort with analytics and emerging assessment tools while maintaining focus on creative outcomes.





Nominations, inquiries, and expressions of interest should be directed to:  
**[ringling@russellreynolds.com](mailto:ringling@russellreynolds.com)**

*Ringling College of Art and Design is committed to providing equal employment and educational opportunities for all qualified persons without regard to sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or citizenship status.*

**"Creativity is the heart of the future.  
All that it encompasses—imagination,  
design thinking, emotional intelligence,  
and a holistic perspective—will fuel  
our economy, and our society."**

**Dr. Larry R. Thompson**  
President, 1999-2026