



Dean of Arizona Arts Leadership Profile

March 2025



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

The University of Arizona (U of A) seeks an inspiring, forward-thinking, and strategic leader to serve as the next Dean of Arizona Arts. This is a rare and extraordinary opportunity for an intrepid leader to shape the future of one of the nation's most dynamic and influential programs that integrates academic, presenting and engagement units. At a pivotal moment of change and renewal, the next Dean will build upon a rich artistic legacy, expand its impact, and champion the transformative power of the arts in education, research, and society.

Arizona Arts is a cornerstone of the U of A's cultural and academic landscape. The division contains the College of Fine Arts (CFA) and three internationally recognized presenting and research institutions: Arizona Arts Live, the Center for Creative Photography, and the University of Arizona Museum of Art. The College of Fine Arts comprises the School of Art, the School of Dance, the School of Music, and the School of Theatre, Film & Television. Its outstanding, nationally ranked programs serve a student body of over 1,600 undergraduate and graduate students, supported by 167 faculty and 91 dedicated staff members. Alongside its academic programs, the 55 staff in our world-renowned presenting and research institutions steward important collections, commission original performances, and originate exhibitions which not only advance the academic mission of the university but also welcome over 300,000 visitors to campus every year. Together, the academic, presenting and engagement units serve the U of A's land-grant mission as a catalyst for the vibrant arts and culture community in southern Arizona and beyond. The Dean will oversee approximately a \$40 million budget, providing strategic leadership and financial stewardship to ensure the division's continued growth and impact.

As the chief academic and administrative officer of Arizona Arts, the Dean reports directly to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The successful candidate will serve as the public face of the division, forging partnerships with arts organizations, cultural institutions, and donors to elevate Arizona Arts' national and international profile. The next Dean must be committed to fostering intra-institutional and cross-disciplinary collaborations, expanding fundraising and revenue-generating efforts, and advocating for the arts at the institutional, regional, national and international levels. In collaboration with academic and presenting units, they will be instrumental in executing a long-term vision for Arizona Arts and stewarding the growing and expansive assets of the entire division.

The portfolio of responsibilities encompasses: representing all units of the division as a unified voice within the university; fostering a positive work and learning environment within the division; strengthening recruitment, development, and retention of administrators, faculty, and staff; ensuring that students receive an unparalleled education that prepares them for dynamic and evolving creative careers; working with the U of A foundation to cultivate philanthropic support; maximizing opportunity based on the unique location of the institution; championing the ability of the arts across campus to be impactful as applied to the pressing research and grand challenges of our time.

The University of Arizona, a Carnegie R1 institution and a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), is recognized as one of the nation's top public research universities. With an enrollment of more than 56,000 students, U of A has a deep commitment to serving students, families, and communities in Tucson and beyond. Located in the culturally rich city of Tucson, the university fosters a supportive environment where the arts flourish alongside cutting-edge research and interdisciplinary exploration. Arizona Arts plays a central role in this ecosystem and ensures that the university remains a leader in artistic expression and creative thought.

This is an opportunity to make a profound and lasting impact—not only on Arizona Arts but on the university and the broader arts community. The next Dean will be a champion for faculty and students, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where creativity thrives. They will reinvigorate campus energy by elevating live performances, exhibitions, and artistic experiences, ensuring that the arts remain a visible and integral part of university life. With a strong understanding of financial strategy, they will advocate for resources that empower Arizona Arts to expand its reach and influence.

The ideal candidate will bring an integrated vision for the future of the arts, a track record of innovative leadership, and a passion for nurturing artistic and scholarly talent. The Dean will be an effective communicator, and a constant advocate dedicated to advancing the division's reputation on a national and international scale. This is a defining leadership opportunity for someone who believes in the power of the arts to transform lives and shape culture.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see "Procedure for Candidacy" at the end of this document.

About Arizona Arts



Arizona Arts was established in 2019 to fulfill the University of Arizona's Strategic Plan objective of "making the arts central to the U of A experience." This dynamic division unites the academic programs of the College of Fine Arts—encompassing the Schools of Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre, Film & Television—with the university's premier visual and performing arts engagement units, including Arizona Arts Live, the Center for Creative Photography, and the UA Museum of Art.

By integrating arts education, research, creative practice, and cultural programming, Arizona Arts has become a national model for excellence at a top-tier public research university. Its impact extends across the university and beyond, elevating the role of the arts in academic inquiry, student experience, and community engagement.

Mission & Vision

Arizona Arts is driven by two core goals: to provide an exceptional arts education that enriches student learning and to ensure that the arts play a central role in the university's land-grant mission of community partnership and public impact. These efforts are guided by a belief that the Sonoran Desert provides a unique environment for artistic exploration, interdisciplinary research, and creative innovation.

Through a unified approach, Arizona Arts strengthens the university's tripartite mission of teaching, research, and engagement. Its four academic schools offer nationally ranked degree programs, taught by distinguished faculty who mentor and inspire students. Meanwhile, its arts presenting and engagement units serve as critical cultural hubs, enriching artistic expression and dialogue across the campus and community. Arizona Arts' contributions are widely recognized, with national accolades and award-winning State of the Arts Impact Reports, which have documented its transformative influence since 2019.

To learn more about the division, click [here](#).

A Premier Destination for the Art

Arizona Arts offers a comprehensive and innovative curriculum designed to prepare students for careers in creative industries and beyond. The four nationally accredited schools offer a total of 15 undergraduate and 11 graduate degree programs, many of which are among the most highly regarded in their fields. Notable degree offerings include:

- B.F.A. and M.F.A. in Photography, Video, and Imaging (School of Art).
- B.A. and B.F.A. in Film (School of Theatre, Film & Television).
- B.F.A. and M.F.A. in Dance (School of Dance).
- B.M. and D.M.A. in Guitar and D.M.A. in Choral Conducting (School of Music).

Beyond professional training, the College plays a central role in delivering the university's General Education curriculum, which requires all students to engage with the arts through the Artist's Perspective requirement. This ensures that every University of Arizona student, regardless of major, has access to meaningful artistic experiences that foster creativity, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation.

To learn more about the academic program offerings, click [here](#).

Innovation & Interdisciplinary Excellence

In response to the evolving needs of 21st-century artists and creative professionals, Arizona Arts has expanded its academic offerings beyond conservatory-style training. Alongside renowned professional degrees (B.F.A., M.F.A., B.M., and D.M.A.), the College now offers interdisciplinary and liberal arts-based degrees that broaden career opportunities for students. These include: B.A. in Design Arts and Practices (offered both in-person and online)

- Online B.A. in Film & Television
- Redesigned B.A. in Music and Online B.A. in Music
- B.A. in Live and Screened Performance
- Minor in Arts Administration
- Graduate Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Applied Intercultural Arts Research

These programs equip students with versatile skill sets that intersect with technology, business, media, and social impact, ensuring they graduate with a competitive edge in today's creative economy.

Research in the Arts

Arizona Arts is at the forefront of integrating the arts into the University of Arizona's research enterprise, positioning creative practice as a powerful driver of interdisciplinary inquiry and public engagement. In 2019, the division appointed its inaugural Associate Dean for Research in the Arts, marking a significant milestone in elevating arts-based research within the university's broader research ecosystem. Since then, Arizona Arts has built strong institutional partnerships with the Office of Research, Innovation & Impact (RII) and key research institutes, expanding opportunities for faculty and students to engage in collaborative, cross-disciplinary projects.

This commitment to arts-driven research has yielded several landmark achievements. For the first time in its 30-year history, the Udall Center Fellows Program has recognized arts faculty among its honorees in consecutive years, with a second arts faculty fellow competitively funded by RII. Arizona Arts faculty have also been invited to participate in the Research Leadership Institute, further solidifying their role in shaping the university's research



priorities. In addition, the Arizona Institute for Resilience (AIR) has invested more than \$300,000 in internal funding to support arts-focused research fellowships that explore resilience in both natural and human communities.

In 2024, the Office of Research, Innovation & Impact awarded a \$30,000 planning grant to develop a university-wide framework for Arts Research and Integration, in partnership with the Office of Societal Impact. One of the most significant projects to emerge from these research efforts is the Millennium Camera, which was recognized as one of UA's Top 10 News Stories of 2024. This project, which

documents over a century of ecological change at Tumamoc Hill, demonstrates the profound impact of practice-led arts research in shaping public understanding of environmental science and sustainability.

Through these and other initiatives, Arizona Arts has firmly established the arts as an essential pillar of innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research excellence at the University of Arizona, opening new pathways for exploration, discovery, and societal impact.

To learn more about research in the arts at the U of A, click [here](#).

World-Class Faculty

Arizona Arts is home to internationally recognized faculty whose contributions span scholarship, performance, and creative practice. Faculty across Art, Dance, Music, Theater, Film, and Television are leaders and innovators with national and international reputations. Committed scholars and educators, they bring their experience into the classroom and studio. Among the many honors, awards, recognitions and accomplishments—multiple Fulbright Fellowships and Guggenheim Fellowships; residencies and exhibitions including the Huntington Library Fellowship and Venice Biennale; dance and choreography credits with internationally recognized companies such as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Martha Graham Dance Company and Juilliard Dance Ensemble; performance, conducting and composing with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Beijing Wind Orchestra, and Aspen Music Festival; recognition of outstanding work in film and cinema through a Peabody Award and screenings at major film festivals like AFI Docs, Sundance and the Venice Film Festival; theater credits, dramaturgy awards and acting accolades such as a premiere in the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, a Bay Area Theater Critics Award and Emmy Award Nominations.

A Legacy of Distinguished Alumni

Arizona Arts proudly counts among its alumni many leaders and innovators across all areas of the arts and entertainment industries. The division has produced an impressive array of graduates who have excelled in music, dance, theater, film, and visual arts. Music legends like Linda Ronstadt and Harvey Mason Jr. got their

start in our programs, as did renowned conductor Keitaro Harada, now Music and Artistic Director of the Savannah Philharmonic. Our Dance alumni perform on the world's biggest stages – for example, Tori Evans toured with Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, and choreographer Kayla Farrish was hailed as a New York Times "Breakout Star." In the realm of theater and film, alumni include award-winning actors such as Tamika Lawrence (featured in Broadway's *Dear Evan Hansen*), Ben Crawford (featured in Broadway's *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*), Vinessa Vidotto (the current lead in CBS's *FBI International*), and Craig T. Nelson (of *Coach* and *Parenthood* fame), as well as influential filmmakers and producers. Notably, Scott Stuber, head of original films at Netflix, Tyler Gillett, co-director of the horror hit *Scream*, and Sierra Teller Ornelas, co-creator of *Rutherford Falls*, all honed their craft here. Legendary producers like Jerry Bruckheimer, Christina Oh (producer of the Oscar-nominated *Minari*) are also among our distinguished alumni along with the late John Hughes (producer of *Sixteen Candles*, *Breakfast Club*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *National Lampoon's Vacation* movies) who attended U of A. In the visual arts, Tucson muralists Jessica Gonzales and Joe Pagac, and game designer Tom Chilton (known for his leadership on *World of Warcraft*), exemplify the College's far-reaching creative impact. From Oscar-winning film editors to iconic visual artists, our alumni are continually shaping the future of the arts on a global scale.

To learn more about alumni, click [here](#).

Arts Engagement & Community Impact

Arizona Arts strengthens connections between the University of Arizona and the broader community through more than 700 annual exhibitions, performances, and events, reaching over 300,000 attendees. These programs showcase the creative excellence of students and faculty while also bringing world-class artists and thought-provoking experiences to Southern Arizona. The University of Arizona Museum of Art, the Center for Creative Photography, and Arizona Arts Live each play a vital role in shaping the region's artistic landscape. From groundbreaking exhibitions like *Hank Willis Thomas: LOVERULES*, *Linda McCartney Retrospective*, and the *Cuk Şon Auditorama* to dynamic live performances that engage diverse audiences, Arizona Arts fosters cultural enrichment across campus and the region. Its deep partnerships with hundreds of arts and community organizations ensure that the university remains a driving force in the region's creative ecosystem, enhancing access to the arts and positioning Arizona as a national leader in cultural programming.

State-of-the-Art Facilities & Future Vision

Arizona Arts spans approximately 350,000 assignable square feet across the University of Arizona campus, with facilities concentrated in the historic Arts District in the northwest quadrant, as well as along the east and west ends of the University Mall. This extensive footprint includes specialized classrooms, studios, rehearsal spaces, and workshops, all tailored to arts education, creative practice, and production. The division also stewards five premier performance venues, ranging from intimate 225-seat theaters to Centennial Hall, a 2,500-seat venue. In addition, Arizona Arts oversees multiple gallery and exhibition spaces, including those housed within the University of Arizona Museum of Art, the Center for Creative Photography, and the School of Art.

Recognizing the need for modernized and expanded facilities, Arizona Arts completed a comprehensive \$400 million Arts Master Plan in 2020, outlining a long-term vision for renovations and new construction that will enhance both academic programs and public arts engagement. As part of this initiative, a combination of philanthropic support and university investment has already facilitated significant improvements. Recent projects include a redesigned entrance for the Center for Creative Photography and the creation of the Alice Chaiten Baker Interdisciplinary Gallery, offering new opportunities for collaboration across disciplines. The School of Art and the Visual Arts Studio Building have undergone extensive renovations, while the Marroney Theatre has received upgrades to its historic façade, lobby, and auditorium. Additionally, outdoor spaces throughout the Arts District have been revitalized to create inviting, flexible areas for performance, exhibition, and community gathering.

While these improvements mark important progress, much remains to be done to fully realize the division’s long-term facilities vision. A proposed \$60 million new home for the University of Arizona Museum of Art, designated as a Presidential Priority in the Fuel Wonder campaign, has been paused due to university-wide budget constraints. Centennial Hall, the university’s largest and most iconic performing arts venue, is in urgent need of a major renovation, with a feasibility study already completed as a first step toward the project. The School of Music also faces critical deferred maintenance challenges, including essential HVAC system upgrades and acoustical improvements in performance and practice spaces. Addressing these facility needs is essential to sustaining Arizona Arts’ upward trajectory, ensuring that its spaces reflect the ambition, talent, and creative excellence of its students, faculty, and visiting artists.

Philanthropy & Fundraising Success

Philanthropic investment has been a driving force behind Arizona Arts’ growth and impact, enabling the division to expand opportunities for students, faculty, and the broader community. Arizona Arts raises between \$10–15 million annually in private funding, consistently ranking among the top ten fundraising units at the University of Arizona. With a dedicated advancement team, the division focuses on securing support for student success initiatives, faculty research and endowed positions, state-of-the-art facilities, and innovative artistic programming that elevate the university’s reputation as a leader in the arts.

As part of the University of Arizona’s \$3 billion “Fuel Wonder” campaign, Arizona Arts has embraced a leadership role, securing \$113 million toward its ambitious \$175 million fundraising goal ahead of the campaign’s conclusion in FY2027. These funds directly support scholarships, faculty-driven creative research, and critical infrastructure improvements that will sustain the division’s upward trajectory.

Arizona Arts is prominently featured in the campaign as part of the university’s “Front Porch” initiative, alongside Arizona Athletics and Arizona Public Media—high-profile areas that serve as visible gateways between the university and the public. This designation reflects the transformative power of the arts, underscoring Arizona Arts’ ability to inspire donors, engage audiences, and amplify the university’s cultural and creative impact. Through continued philanthropic engagement, Arizona Arts will fuel innovation, support the next generation of artists, and solidify the University of Arizona’s position as a vibrant center for artistic excellence and thought leadership.

Why Arizona Arts?

- **Tucson is a Unique Arts Hub:** The city has a thriving, diverse arts scene that blends Indigenous, Latinx, and Western influences, providing an inspiring setting for the next Dean.
- **Arizona Arts is on the Rise:** The college has made significant strides in elevating its visibility and impact, and now is the time to take it to the next level.
- **A Pivotal Moment for the University:** As the University of Arizona undergoes change, there is a critical opportunity to assert the value of the arts in shaping the university’s future.
- **A Chance to Lead Boldly:** The next Dean will not just maintain a legacy but shape the next era of arts education, making a lasting impact at a flagship institution in the Southwest.

Role of the Dean of Arizona Arts

The Dean of Arizona Arts is the chief academic and administrative officer of the College, responsible for providing visionary leadership and strategic direction to enhance the College’s reputation, visibility, and impact.

The Dean is entrusted with fostering academic excellence, advancing research and creative practice, strengthening community and industry partnerships, and ensuring financial sustainability through fundraising and external engagement.

This is a unique opportunity for a transformational leader to shape the future of a nationally recognized Arts division, reinforcing its mission to provide an exceptional arts education while advocating for the arts as a critical force for societal and cultural advancement.

Additional essential functions and associated tasks for the Dean of Arizona Arts include:

Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Develop and execute a bold, future-oriented vision that elevates Arizona Art's academic and artistic prominence at national and international levels.
- Champion interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering partnerships across Colleges and disciplines to enhance innovative programming.
- Serve as a thought leader and advocate for the arts within higher education, influencing conversations on the evolving role of fine arts in contemporary society.
- Align Arizona Art's initiatives with the University of Arizona's broader strategic goals, ensuring that the division contributes meaningfully to the university's mission.

Academic and Administrative Leadership

- Oversee the development and enhancement of curricula, degree programs, and research initiatives across the four academic schools.
- Recruit, mentor, and retain exceptional faculty and staff, ensuring strong leadership across the division and its constituent units.
- Support faculty in their scholarly and creative work, facilitating opportunities for research, exhibitions, performances, and professional development.
- Ensure the delivery of a transformative student experience, prioritizing experiential learning, career preparation, and artistic exploration.
- Maintain a commitment to shared governance, working collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students to uphold academic integrity and excellence.

Financial and Resource Stewardship

- Provide strategic financial leadership, overseeing a budget of approximately \$40M to ensure fiscal responsibility, impactful resource allocation, and operational efficiency.
- Lead fundraising and advancement efforts, partnering with the university, the Arizona Arts philanthropy team, and the Arizona Arts Foundation to secure substantial philanthropic support.
- Expand revenue-generating opportunities, including grants, sponsorships, and industry partnerships, to sustain and grow Arizona Arts' programs.
- Advocate for Arizona Arts' financial and institutional needs within the U of A's evolving budget processes.

Centered Community Engagement and External Relations

- Serve as the public face of Arizona Arts, building strong relationships with arts organizations, cultural institutions, donors, alumni, and the broader Tucson and Arizona communities.
- Strengthen the division's role as a regional and national arts leader, expanding its outreach and influence within artistic and academic networks.
- Foster partnerships with industry leaders, media, and technology sectors, positioning Arts students and faculty at the forefront of emerging creative fields.
- Elevate the visibility of Arizona Arts' performances, exhibitions, and artistic events, ensuring a dynamic presence in the university and the wider public sphere.

Institutional Collaboration and Advocacy

- Work closely with university leadership to align Arizona Arts' strategic initiatives with broader institutional goals.
- Advocate for arts education and research, engaging in policy discussions and initiatives that support the creative economy.
- Collaborate with Colleges across the university to integrate the arts into interdisciplinary education, reflecting the University of Arizona's commitment to innovation.
- Engage with faculty advisory groups and leadership councils to ensure transparency and collaboration in decision-making.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

Working closely with U of A's [next provost](#), fellow deans, university leadership, and the broader Tucson arts community, the next Dean of Arizona Arts will engage with the following issues, ideas and opportunities:

Defining and Elevating Arizona Arts' Vision and Role in the Region

As a cornerstone of Tucson's arts and cultural ecosystem, [Arizona Arts](#) plays a pivotal role in shaping the creative landscape of both the university and the broader region. The next Dean must clearly define and elevate Arizona Arts' vision, positioning it as a national leader in artistic education, research, and community engagement. The

University of Arizona is undergoing a period of strategic growth, with an emphasis on major research expansion, community partnerships, and industry engagement. Arizona Arts is uniquely positioned to contribute to this vision, particularly as the university explores different ways to further engage and partner with the Tucson community.

Strengthening relationships with arts organizations, cultural institutions, and creative industries will be critical



in reinforcing the division's role as a hub for artistic excellence. The Dean will also have the opportunity to advocate for arts integration into cross-disciplinary initiatives, ensuring that the arts remain central to the university's evolving academic, research, and engagement landscape.

Generating New Resources and Serving as a Spokesperson for Arizona Arts

The next Dean will serve as the chief advocate and public face of Arizona Arts, leading efforts to secure new resources and elevate the visibility. As traditional university funding sources are shifting, fundraising and external partnerships will be essential to sustaining and growing programs. The Dean will be expected to engage actively with donors, alumni, and arts patrons, developing relationships that lead to transformative philanthropic investments. The division has set ambitious fundraising goals, with a target of \$175 million, of which \$102.3 million has been raised to date. Key priorities include expanding student scholarships, supporting faculty research, and addressing urgent infrastructure and facility needs. The Dean will also play a central role in strengthening industry and community partnerships, forging new collaborations with arts institutions, media organizations, and corporate sponsors to support the College's initiatives. Through strategic messaging and external engagement, the Dean will ensure that the division's contributions to artistic innovation, research, and education are recognized at the local, national, and international levels.

Strengthening and Expanding Academic and Artistic Programs

With a foundation of strong academic and artistic excellence, Arizona Arts is well-positioned to expand its programs and enhance interdisciplinary collaboration. The next Dean will provide leadership in assessing and strengthening academic offerings, ensuring that programs remain competitive, innovative, and aligned with the evolving landscape of the creative industries. Developing new curricular pathways that integrate emerging fields in digital arts, immersive media, and technology-driven creativity will be a priority. As the university restructures its

financial aid policies, the Dean will also collaborate with the Vice President for Enrollment Management to ensure competitive recruitment of top-tier students. Expanding scholarship opportunities will be key in continuing to attract a talented student body both within Arizona and across the nation. Supporting student success through professional development, experiential learning, and industry engagement will be a core focus, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the skills and experiences necessary to thrive in an ever-changing creative economy.

Recruiting, Developing, and Retaining Exceptional Faculty, Staff, and Leaders

Arizona Arts' faculty and staff are at the heart of its success, and the next Dean must be a champion for attracting, developing, and retaining top-tier talent. With a faculty body composed of scholars, artists, and industry professionals, Arizona Arts benefits from a diverse range of expertise, but opportunities to enhance recruitment, retention, and resource allocation are ever-present. The Dean will be responsible for advocating for competitive faculty salaries, ensuring that both tenure-track and career-track faculty have the support necessary to excel in teaching, research, and creative practice. Additionally, investment in technical and production staff will be critical to sustaining Arizona Arts' performance and exhibition programs, which require specialized expertise in areas such as costume design, set production, and digital media. Strengthening faculty mentorship programs and fostering a culture of collaboration and professional growth will ensure that Arizona Arts remains a sought-after destination for leading artists, educators, and creative professionals.

Advancing CFA's Financial Health and External Partnerships

As already noted, ensuring Arizona Arts' long-term financial stability will require strategic leadership in resource management, fundraising, and external partnerships. The next Dean will oversee a budget of approximately \$40M and must be adept at navigating an evolving university budget model to advocate for the division's priorities. Given new institutional investments are limited, the Dean will need to identify alternative revenue streams, including increased philanthropic support, corporate sponsorships, and grant funding. As noted above, there are pressing facilities needs, including Centennial Hall, the Museum of Art, the Center for Creative Photography, and School of Music practice spaces. Specialized staffing shortages, particularly in technical production roles, have also placed a strain on the division's ability to support its artistic programming at the highest level. By taking a proactive approach to financial sustainability, the Dean will play a critical role in ensuring Arizona Arts remains a world-class institution, expanding its impact and securing its place as a leader in arts education and creative scholarship.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The next Dean of Arizona Arts must be a visionary leader, arts advocate, experienced fundraiser, and collaborative administrator with a strong understanding of academic, creative, and financial leadership in higher education. This role presents an opportunity for an innovative leader to reshape the future of Arizona Arts, expanding its influence in the arts, and securing sustainable funding while fostering a culture of artistic excellence.

The ideal candidate will possess the following qualifications and characteristics:

Academic and Arts Leadership

- An earned doctorate or equivalent terminal degree along with a record of scholarship or creative work commensurate with an appointment as a tenured full professor.
- Experience as an academic leader—for example, as a dean, associate dean, department chair, center director, or senior administrator—within an arts or creative disciplines unit.

- A strong background in the fine and performing arts with demonstrated support for a broad range of disciplines, including visual arts, music, theater, dance, film, and interdisciplinary creative fields.
- A deep understanding of academic and artistic excellence, with experience balancing research, creative practice, and teaching priorities.

Visionary Leadership & Strategic Planning

- A bold and strategic leader with the ability to articulate a clear vision for Arizona Arts' future, balancing academic, artistic, and financial sustainability.
- Demonstrated success in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly across fine arts, humanities, technology, and health sciences.
- Proven ability to navigate complex institutional and political environments, with a track record of securing resources and advocating for the arts.
- Experience leading through change and transition, especially in the face of financial constraints, program restructuring, or institutional shifts.

Fundraising, Financial Acumen, & External Relations

- Demonstrated success in fundraising and donor engagement, including securing major gifts, endowments, and grants to support scholarships, faculty hiring, and infrastructure projects.
- Strong financial acumen, with experience in budget management, resource allocation, and financial planning within a complex academic institution.
- The ability to develop sustainable funding models, ensuring long-term fiscal health for Arizona Arts amid evolving university budget structures.
- A strong track record of engaging with alumni, donors, arts organizations, and external stakeholders, strengthening Arizona Arts' visibility and influence in the regional and national arts community.

Faculty & Staff Leadership

- A commitment to faculty and staff retention, advocating for competitive salaries, equitable workloads, and professional development opportunities.
- A record of success in hiring, mentoring, and evaluating faculty and staff performance, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.
- An authentic and transparent leadership style, with a commitment to shared governance and faculty engagement.

Community & Industry Engagement

- Deep community engagement experience, actively fostering connections between students, faculty, and local, regional, and national arts organizations.
- A demonstrated ability to advocate for the arts as a public good, positioning Arizona Arts as a leader in arts education, research, and public engagement.
- Understanding of industry trends in the creative economy, ensuring that Arizona Arts' programs remain competitive and relevant for graduates entering the workforce.

- Experience with interdisciplinary partnerships, particularly in arts and health, digital media, film production, and performing arts entrepreneurship.

Institutional & Political Acumen

- A deep understanding of the challenges facing higher education, particularly in public research universities with state funding constraints.
- Proven ability to work within a large university system, advocating for Arizona Arts' needs while aligning with broader institutional priorities.
- The ability to navigate legislative and political challenges, advocating for arts funding and academic freedom in a shifting political landscape.

Interpersonal & Communication Skills

- A relational leader with strong interpersonal skills, who is an engaged listener and effective communicator across diverse constituencies.
- A transparent and forthright leadership approach, ensuring clear and consistent communication with faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders.
- Demonstrated success in fostering an environment of trust and collaboration, where faculty and staff feel valued.
- Ability to inspire and motivate students, faculty, and staff, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose within Arizona Arts.

About University of Arizona

Overview

As Arizona's land-grant university, we are driven to do great things. It's our passion to transform the lives of our student Wildcats and to solve some of the biggest challenges facing our state and the world.

But what makes us unique is *how* we do it. We live our purpose, mission and values every day. And we do this in one of the most incredible places on Earth, surrounded by majestic mountains and Saguaro forests, and under a sky that ignites imaginations with cotton candy sunsets and diamond-filled nights. At the University of Arizona, everywhere you look is filled with wonder.

Purpose

Working together to expand human potential, explore new horizons and enrich life for all.

Mission

We will continuously improve how we educate and innovate so we can lead the way in developing adaptive problem solvers capable of tackling our greatest challenges.

Leadership

Suresh Garimella, President



Suresh Garimella serves as the 23rd president of the University of Arizona and University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, positions he assumed on October 1, 2024. He was unanimously appointed by the Arizona Board of Regents following a robust national search. On selecting Garimella to lead the university, Board Chair Cecilia Mata praised his collaborative leadership, experience, and vision, calling him a “tireless champion for students” who is well suited to lead the university into a bright future.

Previously, he was president of the University of Vermont (UVM) from 2019 to 2024. Under his leadership, the university underscored its reputation as a premier flagship research university dedicated to providing a world-class student experience and committed to fulfilling its land-grant mission, a focus he brings to the U of A as well.

Throughout his career, Garimella has emphasized the importance of access and affordability for students, and he has worked to promote excellence in the student learning experience. A professor of mechanical engineering, he is both a highly cited scholar and researcher and a passionate educator, mentoring over 90 graduate students and 50 post-doctoral scholars, 29 of whom were placed in prestigious faculty positions across the world. During his tenure as UVM’s president, he led an annual undergraduate seminar class devoted to engaging students in civil discourse on multifaceted contemporary issues.

As a researcher, Garimella has made seminal contributions to the field of electronics thermal management and energy efficiency at micro and nano scales, and in sustainable energy systems technology and policy. He is co-author of over 625 refereed publications and 16 issued patents, and he has been recognized as an elected Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Garimella also has made important contributions in national and international policy matters. He serves as a member of the National Science Board, which oversees the National Science Foundation and acts as an independent body of advisers to both the President and Congress on policy matters related to science and engineering. He also chairs the research advisory board of Sandia National Laboratories, is a member of the board of directors at Modine and the executive committee for the Council on Competitiveness and previously served as a Jefferson Science Fellow at the U.S. Department of State and as Senior Fellow for Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas.

Prior to his time leading the University of Vermont, President Garimella served at Purdue University as the Goodson Distinguished Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Executive Vice President for Research and Partnerships. Under his leadership of Purdue’s \$660 million research enterprise, the university achieved five consecutive record years in sponsored funding and seeded approximately 50 startups annually. He developed strategic and comprehensive partnerships with major corporations, NGOs, and national governments in Colombia, India, and the Middle East, conceived and implemented ambitious campuswide initiatives in life sciences and integrative data science, and oversaw Purdue’s Discovery Park, a unique set of facilities and institutes where the convergence of disciplines helped solve global challenges related to health and life sciences, sustainability, food, energy, and defense and security.

His educational background includes a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, an M.S. from The Ohio State University, and a bachelor’s degree from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

Tucson, Arizona

Tucson is a vibrant multicultural city located in the southwest of the United States. The city is known for its culinary diversity, exceptional opportunities for year-round outdoor activities, and exciting cultural offerings.

Tucson has been continuously settled for more than 12,000 years. It is one of the “Mega-Trend” cities of the 21st century known for its Optics Valley, premier health services center for the Southwest, the astronomy center of the world, home to a premier research institution – U of A – and a tourism destination.

Historically, the state economy was based on five key industries - cattle, cotton, copper, citrus and climate. While each of these industries remains central to the economy of Arizona, growth in Tucson is now centered on aerospace, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, health care, and leisure and hospitality.

The greater Tucson area serves 35 million people within a 500-mile radius. Its geographic proximity to Phoenix, Mexico, California and other major markets on the West Coast has made it an economic epicenter. Approximately 35% of Tucson’s population is Hispanic and the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce serves a primary role in ushering trade on both sides of the border, recognizing the Hispanic market is the fastest growing ethnic segment in the country.

Tucson was rated a “mini-mecca for the arts” by the *Wall Street Journal*. Tucson is one of a select few cities of its size that boasts its own ballet company, professional theater, symphony and opera company. The city’s natural history and cultural heritage are also on display in more than 30 regional museums.

Tucson is situated in the Sonoran Desert and is surrounded by five mountain ranges. A trip from the valley floor to the 9,157-foot Mt. Lemmon summit traverses seven of the world’s nine life zones. The city lies between Catalina State Park to the North, Coronado National Forest to the Northwest, Saguaro National Park East and West and the Tohono O’odham Nation to the South.

Tucson is the perfect place for the outdoor enthusiast. With more than 800 miles of bike paths, Tucson has been ranked by *Bicycling* magazine as one of the top cycling cities in the U.S. for several years running and is home to internationally known bicycling events such as El Tour de Tucson. Golf is another popular activity with dozens of regional golf courses.

All the exercise options are a great advantage considering that Tucson is a “foodie” destination. It was recently dubbed our nation’s first City of Gastronomy by the U.N.’s Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) as part of its Creative Cities Network.

Additional information on Tucson is available [here](#).

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

[WittKieffer](#) is assisting the University of Arizona in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by April 1, 2025.

Nominations, inquiries, and application materials can be directed to:

Jen Meyers Pickard, Ph.D., Bree Liddell, Jenna Brumleve

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