



Vice President for Enrollment Management

SAIC

Chicago, Illinois

THE SEARCH

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago ("SAIC" or "the School"), one of the world's premier institutions for art and design education, seeks a visionary and strategic leader to serve as its next vice president for enrollment management (VPEM). Reporting directly to the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, and working closely with the President and serving on her cabinet, the VPEM will lead SAIC's enrollment division, encompassing student recruitment, admissions, and financial aid. The new VPEM will be tasked with shaping a comprehensive institutional strategy while forging a forward-looking, analytical, student-centric, collaborative, ethical, and access-oriented approach to enrollment management.

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago is widely recognized as a global leader in art and design education, celebrated for its bold innovation and creative excellence. With a legacy of advancing both the teaching and practice of contemporary art, SAIC's impact resonates across disciplines and around the world. Ranked second among fine arts graduate programs by *U.S. News & World Report*, the School is defined by its groundbreaking educational model, one that eliminates traditional majors and empowers students to forge their own interdisciplinary paths.

SAIC's diverse community of 3,395 degree-seeking students includes artists, designers, scholars, and visionaries who challenge norms and redefine the boundaries of creative expression. The School's unique affiliation with the Art Institute of Chicago, the nation's second-largest fine arts museum, offers students unparalleled access to world-class collections and cultural programming. Complemented by cutting-edge facilities and deep-rooted partnerships with Chicago's educational, civic, and cultural institutions, SAIC provides a dynamic and richly resourced environment for artistic exploration and growth.

The VPEM will lead strategic initiatives to cultivate a creative student body across undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs. This role requires close collaboration with the Division of Marketing and Communications to lead outreach initiatives targeting prospective students; partnership with the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Advancement to enhance scholarship programs and improve retention; and oversight of Admissions and Student Financial Services to ensure enrollment strategies and financial aid policies align with the institution's net tuition revenue goals.

Ideal candidates for the Vice President for Enrollment Management will bring a proven track record of success in enrollment strategy and leadership as well as experience cultivating a culture of data-informed decision-making and leveraging analytics and predictive modeling to guide strategic planning and operational effectiveness. This individual will also have experience developing strategies to better leverage and expand access to financial aid, collaborating with senior campus leaders and faculty to promote student success, and communicating effectively with a range of audiences. Candidates should also be adept at building sustainable systems and processes using technology and be deeply committed to cultivating a student body aligned with SAIC's distinction as a leader in artistic excellence.

SAIC has retained the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this recruitment. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE

Founded in 1866 as the Chicago Academy of Design, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago is one of the oldest accredited independent art schools in the United States and the largest museum-based art school in the country. From its inception, the integration of a school *and* a museum has been central to its vision. [The Art Institute of Chicago](#) encompasses both the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the museum known as the Art Institute of Chicago. The Art Institute and SAIC were established by artists for artists, and since their founding have been pioneers in art and design education. Today, SAIC is nationally recognized for its excellence, and continues to uphold its legacy of artistic rigor and design innovation.

SAIC fosters a vibrant and intellectually engaged community where curiosity, passion, critical thinking, and active debate are central to its institutional culture. Deeply rooted in both the School and the broader Chicago community, SAIC embraces the concept of the "citizen artist," individuals who integrate their creative practice with the social, cultural, and political issues of our time to effect meaningful change.

Students

SAIC enrolls 3,395 students, including 2,806 undergraduates and 589 graduate students. The institution offers undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate programs to students from 82 countries; one-quarter of the student population is international and one quarter of SAIC's domestic degree-seeking students self-identify as people of color. Twenty percent of SAIC students are the first in their families to attend college. Approximately 24 percent of the student body is Pell Grant eligible. Ninety percent of degree-seeking students receive some form of financial aid, reflecting the School's commitment to access and inclusion.

For Fall 2024, the student body was 76 percent female and 24 percent male. Nearly 35 percent of SAIC students identify as White; 12.7 percent as Latinx, 9.4 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 5.9 percent as Black or African American, and 0.1 percent as American Indian students. Students come from across the United States, with regional representation from the Midwest (excluding Chicago) at 17.3 percent, the West at 15.1 percent, the South at 13.2 percent, the Northeast at 12.6 percent, and Chicago at 7.5 percent.

SAIC maintains a first-to-second-year retention rate of 82 percent, and 67 percent of first-time freshmen graduate within six years of beginning their studies.

Academic Programs

SAIC's most popular undergraduate degree is the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio, which allows students to explore across 13 art and design disciplines or concentrate in specific areas such as art education or writing. The School's diverse [program offerings](#) include architecture, interior architecture, designed objects, historic preservation, art and technology studies, arts administration and policy, art education, art therapy and counseling, art history, theory and criticism, fashion design, film, video, new media and animation, ceramics, contemporary practices, fiber and material studies, liberal arts, painting and drawing, performance, photography, print media, sculpture, sound, visual communication design, visual and critical studies, and writing.

SAIC's commitment to personalized, intensive instruction is made possible by its exceptional faculty and staff, including 158 full-time faculty, 620 part-time faculty, and 400 staff. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 11 to 1 and average class sizes of just 12 students, the School ensures that each student receives individualized attention and mentorship. SAIC's nearly 850 faculty members are practicing artists, designers, and scholars who are internationally recognized in their fields. They include painters, filmmakers, historians, sculptors, animators, web artists, graphic designers, theorists, sound artists, fashion designers, architects, philosophers, performance artists, photographers, and writers. These faculty members are leading voices in contemporary art and design discourse. Their dedication is matched by SAIC's staff, many of whom are practicing artists or experts in their disciplines, and who share a deep commitment to the School's distinctive mission.

Educational Program

The hallmark of an SAIC education is the interdisciplinary open curriculum. Instead of electing a major, each undergraduate student completes the [Academic Spine](#), a three-course sequence that serves as the scaffolding for an individualized program of study pulling from the full curriculum, unbounded by disciplinary borders or precedent. Graduate students likewise frequently craft a cross-disciplinary experience. Assessment takes place through critiques conducted one-on-one with faculty, in small groups with fellow students, full-class discussions, and other settings. Students are graded credit/no credit. The assessment model fosters self-direction, encourages experimentation and risk-taking, and requires openness to the ideas of others, persistence, and resilience.

At SAIC, students are free to shape their coursework based on their interests, with guidance from advisors. This interdisciplinary freedom encourages the blending of media, fostering innovative ideas and new modes of creative expression. SAIC's open curriculum promotes self-directed study across a wide range of disciplines, cultivating critical thinking, rigorous exploration, and imaginative creativity.

Leadership and Governance

[Jiseon Lee Isbara](#) assumed the role of President in July 2024, becoming the School's 16th executive leader, the second woman, and the first first-generation immigrant to lead the institution. With nearly 25 years of experience in higher education in art and design as a faculty member and administrative leader, she brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role. Before joining SAIC, Jiseon served as the provost of Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. During her tenure at Otis College, she led the development and implementation of the school's strategic plan and operation, which resulted in enrollment growth, financial health, successful fundraising, and enhanced partnerships. Her leadership also promoted strong diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Previously, she held various roles, including tenure-track faculty and academic and administrative leadership positions at Oregon College of Art and Craft and East Carolina University. Throughout her 16-year administrative tenure, she continued to teach as a faculty member, demonstrating her commitment to education and student support.

As a practicing artist herself, she understands the transformational power of an art and design education. She earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Fibers from Colorado State University and a Master of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Fibers from Ewha Womans University in Seoul, South Korea, where she was born and raised.

[Martin Berger](#) serves as the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs. Berger first joined SAIC in 2018 as the Dean of Faculty and Vice President of Academic Affairs before his appointment as Provost in 2019. As Provost, Berger provides leadership and vision for the academic program, establishes budgetary priorities, and guides the implementation of SAIC's strategic plan. He oversees a broad range of academic and administrative departments, including academic affairs, student affairs, enrollment management, information technology, community engagement, and the libraries and special collections.

Prior to joining SAIC, Berger served as Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Associate Campus Diversity Officer for Faculty at the University of California, Santa Cruz. There, he led a university-wide strategic academic planning process and co-chaired a faculty training initiative focused on sexual harassment prevention. Berger's scholarly expertise centers on 19th- and 20th-century US art and culture, with a focus on representation, gender, and race. He has held fellowships at the National Humanities Center, Smithsonian Institution, Stanford Humanities Center, and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. He holds degrees in English and Art History from Wesleyan University and earned his MA, MPhil, and PhD in American Studies from Yale University.

Governance

Governance at SAIC is structured to support collaboration and institutional alignment. The President reports to the Board of Trustees, which oversees both the School and the Art Institute of Chicago museum. Management of the School is delegated by the Trustees to the Board of Governors, whose President also serves as a Trustee and sits on the executive committee of the Board of Trustees.

Faculty governance also plays a central role in SAIC's shared governance model, with the Faculty Senate serving as the primary representative body of the faculty. Composed of eleven members, the Senate leads academic and institutional policy development through its seven active committees, which develop and implement academic and institutional policies.

Student engagement also contributes to SAIC's governance structure. Students actively contribute to institutional decision-making through the Student Government, which includes four elected representatives and the Graduate Senate. Both groups play a meaningful role in shaping campus policies and enriching community life.

SAIC is accredited at the institutional level by the Higher Learning Commission. Some of SAIC's programs also maintain specialized accreditation with the National Architecture Accrediting Board, the American Art Therapy Association, and/or the Illinois State Board of Education.

Strategic Plan

SAIC's most recent [strategic plan](#), [NEXT](#), was launched in 2019 and concluded at the end of 2024. NEXT involved 14 high-impact initiatives that addressed affordability, belonging, diversity, equity, and inclusion, postgraduate life, and how the School can and should deliver its program, facilitate interdisciplinarity, and support faculty teaching and student learning. The VPEM will serve as a key contributor to the development and execution of SAIC's forthcoming strategic plan, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and advancing initiatives that promote access, inclusion, academic excellence, and student success.

City of Chicago

SAIC is located in the heart of Chicago, a city of extraordinary diversity, architecture, and public art. The third most populous city in the U.S., Chicago has one of the country's largest concentrations of working artists, designers, writers, and thinkers. SAIC sponsors a range of public programs that contribute to Chicago's rich cultural life and enhance the resources available for students. Creative and academic programs are offered to the public through Continuing Studies, including but not limited to adult continuing education and programs for youth, high schoolers, and schoolteachers. SAIC also hosts cultural events showcasing the School's artists, designers, writers, performers, and scholars; acclaimed and emerging visiting artists; and independent and international cinema at the School's Gene Siskel Film Center. More than one million people participate in SAIC programs annually.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Enrollment management at SAIC is comprised of the Office of Admissions and the Office of Student Financial Services, and the division partners closely with the Office of Marketing and Communications. The division has a proposed balanced budget of \$160 million for fiscal year 2026, with tuition revenue estimated at \$125 million.

The Office of Admissions

The Office of Admissions oversees all student admissions at SAIC and has a central role in shaping each incoming undergraduate class. The office also partners with department chairs and other faculty in recruiting and enrolling graduate students. Through its recruitment and admissions efforts, the office fosters a dynamic student body, drawing individuals from a wide range of geographic regions, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences. In addition, the Office is responsible for conducting portfolio reviews for prospective first-year students.

Office of Student Financial Services

The Office of Student Financial Services at SAIC is dedicated to supporting students through the financial aid and student account management process. The office administers merit-based scholarships to incoming students through a holistic review of application materials, including portfolios, academic records, test scores, artist statements, and letters of recommendation. These scholarships, which do not require repayment, are renewable annually for students who maintain satisfactory academic standing. Through personalized guidance and financial support, the office plays a key role in helping students access and manage the resources they need to succeed.

More about the Offices of Admissions and Student Financial Services can be found [here](#).

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

The VPEN serves as a senior leader at SAIC, providing strategic counsel and leading initiatives that contribute to the academic, cultural, and financial health of the institution. The VPEN is responsible for managing the Offices of Undergraduate Admissions, Graduate Admissions, and Financial Aid, with approximately 30 professional and support staff and an operating budget of \$3 million.

The next VPEN will play a key role in advancing SAIC's mission and helping the institution take bold steps toward delivering transformative educational experiences through art and design. More specifically, the VPEN will work to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Establish a strategic vision for the enrollment division amidst a changing higher education landscape.

The next Vice President for Enrollment Management must develop and implement a strategic, data-driven enrollment plan that is proactive and aligned with SAIC's institutional goals. This leader will balance budgetary priorities, such as managing tuition discount rates, while maintaining enrollment targets without exceeding capacity. They must understand the complexities of higher education enrollment, especially within the unique culture of an art and design school, and craft strategies that support sustainable graduate enrollment growth. International students represent approximately one-third of SAIC's student body, contributing significantly to the School's global perspective and cultural richness. Amid a shifting geopolitical landscape marked by visa restrictions and travel challenges, the VPEN will

develop agile and forward-looking strategies for international student recruitment and engagement, ensuring these students are fully supported and empowered throughout their educational journey.

Utilize data and enrollment modeling best practices to support institutional priorities and decision-making.

The VPEM will be responsible for developing a more sophisticated, data-driven approach to enrollment management. By leveraging enrollment modeling techniques, the VPEM will strengthen the use of data to shape enrollment strategies and optimize the allocation of both merit and need-based aid. The VPEM will harness technology and predictive analytics to enhance SAIC's ability to forecast enrollment trends accurately and effectively recruit and yield both undergraduate and graduate students.

Build strong relationships and serve as a collaborative partner across SAIC.

The VPEM must cultivate strong relationships and be an eager cross-departmental collaborator, helping to break down silos and promoting a more integrated, student-centered approach. There is a particular opportunity for the next VPEM to deepen connections to the Division of Marketing and Communications to design and implement a comprehensive enrollment marketing and communications strategy, as well as more targeted outreach efforts. The VPEM will also partner with the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Advancement to support recruitment and retention and collaborate with the Office of Finance and Administration to align enrollment goals with financial aid strategies.

Champion access and affordability, promoting policies that support students from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Access and affordability will be central priorities for the next VPEM. In a time when the enrollment cliff, shifting demographics, geopolitical headwinds, and rising questions about return on investment have placed increasing pressure on higher education broadly—and art and design schools in particular—SAIC must ensure that a world-class education remains attainable for a broad cross-section of students regionally, nationally, and internationally. The VPEM will play a pivotal role in expanding access by enhancing communication with students and families about affordability, financial aid, and program outcomes, while also addressing concerns about post-graduate success. In close partnership with the Office of Student Affairs and academic units, the VPEM will strengthen retention and support initiatives, with particular attention to the needs of first-generation and low-income students. By fostering transparency, building trust, and aligning enrollment strategies with student success efforts, the VPEM will help ensure that SAIC delivers both opportunity and value in today's challenging higher education landscape.

Serve as a trusted, strategic advisor to the senior leadership of SAIC.

While reporting to the Provost, the VPEM will also serve as a strategic thought partner to the President, the President's cabinet, and other senior institutional leaders. The VPEM will be a subject matter expert in strategic enrollment but also have an important voice in other institution-wide conversations. As SAIC

looks ahead to the future, the institution will engage in a strategic planning process, and the VPEN will have an opportunity to participate in and steward pieces of that effort. In addition, as the head of enrollment management at one of the top global art and design schools, the VPEN will be an important external representative of the institution and serve as a thought leader and public advocate for the value of art and design education and the transformative role of art in society.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

SAIC seeks a Vice President for Enrollment Management with demonstrated success leveraging data to inform decisions. This individual should be an enrollment thought leader with strategic vision, energy, and creativity. The VPEN should have a demonstrated knowledge of state, national, and international demographics and in-depth knowledge of both emerging national trends and issues facing higher education enrollment.

The following qualifications represent the broad set of skills and personal qualities deemed important for success for the next Vice President for Enrollment Management. While no candidate will embody every quality, ideal candidates will bring many of the following professional qualifications and attributes:

Experience & Education

- BA required; MA or terminal degree preferred.
- 10+ years of leadership experience in higher education with demonstrated success as a senior leader in enrollment management. Experience with colleges of art and design is a plus.

Skills & Knowledge

- Demonstrated success in the field of enrollment management, particularly in the areas of recruitment, enrollment projections, and financial aid leveraging.
- Advanced analytical, evaluative, and critical thinking skills, and proven success in making data-driven decisions that advance the mission of enrollment management.
- Detailed knowledge of state and federal financial aid regulations.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, ensuring effective communication to a wide range of stakeholders on complex issues, both verbally and in writing.
- Demonstrated tact, diplomacy, and honesty.
- Evidence of calm and effective decision-making under pressure.
- A track record of working productively and collaboratively with a range of stakeholders.
- Strong leadership and management skills.
- Demonstrated facility with budgeting.
- Evidence of sound judgement and a commitment to ethical decision-making.

COMPENSATION

The expected salary range for this position is \$250,000 to \$270,000 annually. SAIC offers a comprehensive package of benefits including generous paid time off; paid holidays; medical, dental, and vision insurance; generous parental, caregiver, and medical leave benefits; competitive retirement plan (up to nine percent employer contribution); tuition remission and tuition exchange program; employee discounts; and complimentary general admission to participating cultural institutions.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/school-art-institute-chicago/vice-president-enrollment-management>

Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Jeff Kessner, Partner
Alycia Johnson, Managing Associate
Jenny Rubin, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

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