



Executive Director for the Arts
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

THE SEARCH

MIT seeks a collaborative leader and skillful administrator to serve as Executive Director for the Arts. In partnership with the Vice Provost, the Executive Director helps to define and advance the Vice Provost's strategic vision, and holds decision-making authority over operational priorities, budgeting and administrative execution within the Office of the Vice Provost. The Executive Director leads the connection of arts entities across the Institute, facilitates community-wide access to resources for art creation and engagement, and promotes the arts at MIT for faculty, students, staff, and the greater community.

The Executive Director will join MIT at an exciting moment of change and opportunity for the arts. With the completion of the Future of the Arts at MIT report in 2025, a comprehensive review of the arts at MIT was conducted along with the creation of an outline for a vision of the future of the arts and associated recommendations to consider. In February 2026, [Vice Provost for the Arts Keeril Makan](#) assumed his role with the goal of building upon the report to set a vision for MIT's distinctive approach to the arts and to help ensure that artistic practice remains central to MIT's intellectual and community life. Reporting to the Vice Provost, the Executive Director serves as the senior leader responsible for implementation of the vision for the arts and translating aspirations to plans and operational goals. The role oversees the Office of the Arts and cultivates collaboration across the units reporting to the Vice Provost and arts activities throughout MIT. The Executive Director plays a key role in setting strategies and maintaining relationships that support and enhance the innovations and creativity of the MIT community.

MIT has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of its next Executive Director for the Arts. Please direct all applications, nominations, and inquiries to Isaacson, Miller, as indicated at the end of this document

ABOUT MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

MIT's first students enrolled in 1865, marking the culmination of an extended effort to establish a new kind of educational institution relevant to an increasingly industrialized nation. The MIT motto, "Mens et Manus," Latin for "Mind and Hand," expresses the Institute's ideal of a productive continuum between rigorous thought and action. In the land-grant tradition, MIT promoted teaching coupled with research, focusing attention on real-world problems, and forging the notion of the teaching laboratory.

MIT is independent and co-educational, with a private endowment of over \$27 billion, a total annual operating budget of approximately \$5.10 billion, and a workforce of approximately 17,000. Undergraduate enrollment at MIT is approximately 4,550 and graduate enrollment is just over 7,200 students. A distinguished faculty of just over 1,000 instructs both graduate and undergraduate students and engages in research. Twelve current members of the MIT faculty have won the Nobel Prize and more than 25 have won MacArthur Fellowships, colloquially known as the "Genius Grants".

MIT focuses on scientific and technological research and comprises six schools and colleges, with more than 30 academic departments as well as interdepartmental programs, laboratories, and centers. The schools and colleges include: Architecture and Planning; Engineering; Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; Science; the Sloan School of Management; and the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing. In addition to world-renowned programs in science and engineering, the Institute is also home to top-ranked programs in economics, management, linguistics, philosophy, political science, art, architecture, and city planning.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE ARTS

Operating under the Vice Provost for the Arts, the Office of the Arts oversees, coordinates, supports, and facilitates arts activities. The Executive Director is responsible for the administrative oversight, staff, and operations of the Office of the Arts. The office includes the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST), the Council for the Arts at MIT (CAMIT), arts activity across all sectors, and multiple student arts programs—Arts Scholars, Arts Startup Incubator, First Year Advising seminars, the W20 arts studios, the Wiesner Student Art Gallery, and Institute-wide Student Art Awards.

The [MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology \(CAST\)](#) facilitates and creates opportunities for exchange and collaboration for artists with engineers and scientists. The center is committed to fostering a culture where the arts, science, and technology thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge, and discovery. As an umbrella organization, CAST's activities include soliciting and supporting

cross-disciplinary curricular initiatives; managing visiting artist residencies; overseeing undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral research; and organizing programs such as performances, exhibitions, installations, and a biennial symposium.

The [Council for the Arts at MIT \(CAMIT\)](#) catalyzes the development of a broadly based, highly participatory program in the arts, firmly founded on teaching, practice, and research at the Institute, and conducts arts-related fundraising activities on behalf of MIT. Council members are alumni, friends, and volunteers with a strong commitment to the arts and serving the MIT community.

ROLE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE ARTS

The Executive Director for the Arts reports to the Vice Provost for the Arts, serving as the strategic thought partner and senior operational leader responsible for defining and implementing the Vice Provost's strategic vision and ensuring effective administrative and operational coordination across the arts portfolio. Artistic direction, curatorial authority, faculty governance, and donor governance remain with their respective leaders and bodies.

The Executive Director has overall responsibility for the Office of the Arts and its associated programs, providing strategic and operational leadership across the Institute's arts portfolio. The office's Director of Administration and Finance and Program Assistant report directly to the Executive Director. To ensure alignment between strategy, communications, and operational priorities, the Executive Director also shares supervisory responsibility with the Vice Provost for the Arts for the Director of Development and the Director of Communications in the vice provost office.

This position provides financial oversight of a \$3M Office of the Arts budget, including forecasting and compliance, in coordination with the Director of Administration and Finance. The Executive Director provides executive supervision of the Office of the Arts, while the Director of Administration and Finance manages day-to-day operational administration. The Executive Director leads periodic strategic planning, analysis, and assessment of all programs in the Office of the Arts. The Executive Director leads the coordination of the [Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts](#), which recognizes innovative talents and reflects MIT's commitment to risk-taking, problem solving, and connecting creative minds across disciplines. The Executive Director leads special projects such as campus-wide initiatives in the arts or special assignments from the president, provost, or other areas—e.g., arts festivals (FAST 2011, Artfinity 2025) or task forces (Ad Hoc Committee on Arts, Culture and DEI, Future of the Arts Committee, Met Commons Committee). They may also coordinate emerging arts initiatives such as AI and the arts, film and technology, arts and entrepreneurship. The Executive Director also supports the Arts Council, an advisory body chaired by the Vice Provost for the Arts.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

To successfully contribute to the Arts at MIT, the Executive Director will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Execute and actualize the Vice Provost's strategic vision

The Executive Director will collaborate closely with the Vice Provost to translate the Vice Provost's strategic vision into operational plans and deliverables. The Vice Provost's vision will focus on strengthening connections between artistic practice, research, education, and community life, and on supporting public engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration. The approach will be informed by the goals outline in the [Future of the Arts at MIT](#) report completed in 2025. The report contains a detailed assessment of the history and future opportunities of the arts at MIT. It also outlines prioritized recommendations for immediate consideration through long-term planning to help guide potential visioning and goals.

The report sets a vision for MIT as a global center for art-infused innovation. Using the existing strengths at MIT to make is a place that prioritizes research and teaching in science and engineering that is infused with humanistic values and thinking brought by the arts. The report considers strategic investments in leadership, space, faculty, and programming that will be essential to fully realize the arts' potential. The Executive Director will build upon existing strengths such as the report's vision for CAST 2.0, where CAST can serve as a central interdisciplinary hub for innovation and anchor a new era of creativity at MIT—one that is not project-based, but mission-driven. The report also details some of the challenges and needs in infrastructure that are anticipated in advancing the vision. In the near term the Executive Director will assess the needs across the arts and develop priorities through methods such as a staffing plan, a space inventory, and determining how to integrate the arts into the fundraising campaign. The Executive Director will support the Vice Provost in consideration of how a vision can be implemented and will take the lead in shepherding the execution of the goals.

Facilitate collaboration, coordination, and alignment across the MIT Arts portfolio

As the operational leader in the Vice Provost's office, the Executive Director has direct administrative oversight of the Office of the Arts and indirectly supports coordination between other units within the Arts. The Executive Director will work particularly closely with leadership of the [List Visual Arts Center](#) and the [MIT Museum](#) to ensure coordination and effective administration in support of overarching strategic arts goals and initiatives. The Executive Director coordinates preparation of consolidated arts-sector budget materials for the Vice Provost for the Arts, incorporating budget submissions from the List Visual Arts Center, MIT Museum, and Office of the Arts.

The Executive Director will be an ambassador and relationship-builder throughout MIT. Integration across the Institute builds connections to support the Arts and promotes appreciation of the broad scope of activities, innovations, and people across MIT. The role requires enthusiasm, diplomacy, and persistence

to cultivate and sustain successful relationships that are mutually beneficial and genuine. The Executive Director may additionally engage in developing specific relationships or attending meetings when the Vice Provost is not available or when engagements may be deemed more appropriately within the Executive Director's purview.

Support fundraising initiatives and donor cultivation

In close partnership with the Director of Development, the Executive Director will support the implementation of fundraising initiatives and ensure operational readiness for donor-supported programs. The Executive Director will have strong financial acumen and the ability to project the financial and staff resources required from both the Office of the Arts and collaborating units to support new and ongoing initiatives. Additionally, the Executive Director will ensure the effective allocation of funds for the wide variety of arts activities throughout MIT that supports strategic goals and equality of opportunity. The Executive Director will also engage with donors and prospects at various meetings and events to help establish or enhance relationships.

Lead and support a high-performing team

The Executive Director will be an excellent listener and compassionate leader who recognizes and motivates the efforts and accomplishments of others. Internally, the Executive Director will ensure a culture of focus, responsibility, and motivation; and support organizational cohesion and collaboration. The Office of the Arts is a professional and highly knowledgeable team. The Executive Director must have a complete understanding of work across the Arts and be able to anticipate the work and resources required for projects and collaborations. A willingness to evaluate, an ability to think strategically and tactically, and a decisive approach will be necessary to facilitate sustainable and innovative plans.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring many of the following professional and personal experiences, qualifications, and characteristics:

- Demonstrated portfolio of executive leadership and complex program management initiatives.
- Demonstrated ability to define, implement, and achieve strategic goals across all operational areas in an arts organization.
- Demonstrated experience leading high-performing teams with a range of expertise to execute complex, multi-faceted arts events and programs.
- Ability to oversee and manage complex budgets and support fundraising initiatives in collaboration with development leadership.
- Ability to manage projects across multiple departments, disciplines, and personnel at MIT.
- Ability and willingness to lead a team, define and delegate tasks, and cultivate a professional workforce.

- Ability to interact with and represent the arts at MIT to internal leaders and external institutions, foundations, and donors.
- Experience overseeing complex, high-profile arts programming within institutional contexts.
- Established reputation in a high-profile university or non-profit arts organization.
- A broad understanding and appreciation of the arts beyond one's own particular area of expertise.
- Ability to develop multi-media, strategic messaging for the arts (with support from communications staff).
- Excellent organizational, change management, and time-management skills.
- Excellent public speaking, oral, written, and interpersonal skills.
- Creativity, initiative, flexibility, and ability to work well under pressure.
- Bachelor's degree required. Preference for a Master's degree or higher in an arts, management, or arts-adjacent field.
- At least ten years of experience in strategic administrative and operational management within the arts and/or higher education.

COMPENSATION

This position has a hiring salary range of \$173,500 - \$235,100 commensurate with experience.

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/massachusetts-institute-technology/executive-director-arts>.

Andrew Lee, Managing Partner
Ryan Leichenauer, Managing Associate
Madeline Fitzpatrick, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

MIT is an equal employment opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment and will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin

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