Executive Director of the Ulrich Museum of Art
Wichita State University
Wichita, Kansas

THE SEARCH

Wichita State University, the only urban-serving public research university in Kansas, seeks an experienced arts leader to serve as the next executive director of the Ulrich Museum of Art. Founded in 1895, Wichita State is keenly focused on student success, powerful industry partnerships, and innovative faculty conducting cutting-edge research in state-of-the-art facilities. It is a growth-minded university where collaboration and innovative ideas shape the future, with an entrepreneurial spirit embedded in its foundation.

The executive director will continue the Ulrich's trajectory by providing strategic leadership in collaboration with the museum team, faculty, staff, students, and other key internal and external stakeholders, including a committed advisory board and the Wichita State University Foundation and Alumni Engagement. The Ulrich is a vital community resource that supports intellectual inquiry, the quest for enjoyment, and lifelong learning. The next executive director will lead a dynamic university art museum with a high-quality collection, helping it reach its full potential.

Though reporting to the senior executive vice president and provost, the Ulrich executive director will meet regularly with the dean of the College of Fine Arts to collaboratively pursue a vision for arts engagement across the university and the greater Wichita area. The executive director will be a talented relationship-builder dedicated to connection and belonging with our community. This requires a value-driven leader with demonstrated experience in strategic planning and interdisciplinary collaboration, and who is skilled in human and financial resource management. The executive director will have an entrepreneurial approach to forming partnerships and fundraising to support the Ulrich's sustainable future and growth.

Wichita State University has retained Isaacson, Miller — a national executive search firm — to assist in the recruitment of the new executive director. All confidential inquiries, applications, and nominations should be directed as noted at the end of this document.

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

The mission of Wichita State University is to be an essential educational, cultural, and economic driver for Kansas and the public good. With the vision to be one of the nation's premier urban public research universities, known for providing impactful applied learning experiences and driving prosperity for the people and communities we serve, Wichita State launched a university-wide strategic plan and three key priorities:

- Helping families through access and affordability
- Supporting Kansas businesses with a talent pipeline that meets employer needs
- Increasing economic prosperity with higher education that benefits the Kansas economy

The university has specifically committed to:

- **Student centeredness:** Empower students, faculty, and staff to create a supportive culture that inspires growth, meets evolving needs, and fosters success.
- **Partnerships and engagement:** Advance industry and community partnerships to provide quality educational opportunities and collaboration to satisfy rapidly evolving community and workforce needs.
- **Research and scholarship:** Find solutions to emerging problems and accelerate the discovery, creation, and dissemination of new knowledge and innovation.

Wichita State is one of six state universities governed by the Kansas Board of Regents and is Kansas' only urban-based research university. With an institutional operating budget of $906 million, the university's more than 5,000 employees have a regional economic impact of $1.3 billion. On a sprawling 330-acre campus, Wichita State currently has over 900 faculty and an enrollment of more than 18,000 students with a steady record of sustainable enrollment. Wichita State is home to nine colleges: the College of Education, College of Engineering, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, College of Fine Arts, College of Health Professions, the Dorothy and Bill Cohen Honors College, College of Innovation and Design, the W. Frank Barton School of Business, and the Graduate School. The university offers over 200 areas of study in 62 bachelor's degree programs, two associate degrees, 14 doctoral degrees, 55 master's degrees, and over 100 credit-bearing certificates.

Wichita State leadership is focused on strengthening educational opportunities for students, helping ensure student success, and providing an array of research and career opportunities. As a result, the university has experienced audacious growth over the past 10 years with new research centers, labs, buildings, housing, dining, and athletic facilities.

The university is closely affiliated with the Wichita State University Campus of Applied Sciences and Technology, known as WSU Tech. While Wichita State and WSU Tech remain separate degree-granting

institutions, the formalized affiliation enables greater collaboration and increased availability and quality of opportunities for students, while directly meeting the state's core workforce needs. WSU Tech offers more than 100 programs of study, including aviation, healthcare, manufacturing, design, and business.

The Innovation Campus on the northeast corner of the university's main campus is an interconnected community of partnership buildings where organizations establish operations and reap the rewards of Wichita State's vast resources and laboratories, which give students access to real-world applications and the training needed to seamlessly assimilate into the workforce. Innovation Campus partners include Airbus Americas, Deloitte, Boeing, NetApp, Sedgwick County, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The Wichita Biomedical Campus℠ is a new campus set to open in 2027 and located in the downtown health care corridor, where health care services, education, research, and technology are established near existing private hospitals and health care providers. That proximity strengthens collaboration and supports interprofessional health care learning, while forwarding opportunities for partnerships in new and emerging research fields.

Leadership

Wichita State's continued success and forward momentum have been sustained under the leadership of President Rick Muma and the President's Executive Team. Dr. Monica Lounsbery has served as senior executive vice president and provost of Wichita State since January 2025. She is a strong advocate for student success, research development, and faculty support across the university.

More information on Wichita State University can be found at www.wichita.edu

The City of Wichita

Wichita is a dynamic and growing metropolitan community that blends Midwestern authenticity with entrepreneurial energy and cultural vitality. As Kansas' largest city, Wichita serves as the region's center for commerce, healthcare, education, arts, and entertainment. The city is nationally recognized for its affordability, accessibility, and quality of life.

Known as the Air Capital of the World, Wichita pairs a legacy of innovation with a vibrant cultural landscape. Residents enjoy an exceptional collection of museums, performing arts venues and organizations, botanical gardens, wildlife attractions, and a nationally recognized culinary scene.

More information about the City of Wichita:

- Wichita Chamber of Commerce
- Visit Wichita

ULRICH MUSEUM OF ART

The Ulrich Museum of Art was established in 1974 to enhance and support Wichita State University's educational and service mission. Then-president Clark Ahlberg believed a superior university should be ever mindful of the thriving city surrounding it. He articulated his commitment to this belief: "We have an obligation to reach as many people as possible and to do it with the highest standards-in this case, the highest artistic standards if we are to properly serve this urban area."

The museum was named in honor of Edwin A. Ulrich, a New York businessman. He donated his collection of more than 300 works by the early-20th-century painter Frederick Judd Waugh and established an endowment to support the museum. The founding of the Ulrich coincided with the construction of a new facility for the museum, the McKnight Art Center, and the School of Art, Design and Creative Industries. A 1995 renovation created an additional gallery, office space, and a terraced sculpture court at the entrance. In 2005, the American Alliance of Museums awarded the Ulrich museum accreditation as one of only 12 accredited museums in Kansas. The Ulrich was re-accredited in 2026 for another 10 years.

The mission of the Ulrich is to expand human experiences through encounters with the art of our time. Over the past four years, the Ulrich has deepened that mission by rethinking who shapes the museum's work. The *Ulrich Co-Lab* — a multi-year, four-phase experiment in community co-authorship — invited Wichita residents to help set the terms of engagement with the museum. This initiative culminated in the exhibit *With, Not For* in early 2026. The project reflects a broader curatorial commitment to shared authorship: treating the communities the museum serves not as an audience to be reached, but as partners in the creation of knowledge and in the ownership of the institution itself.

The museum has had a run of ambitious exhibitions.

- In spring 2025, the Ulrich presented *Devan Shimoyamo: Rituals,* a solo exhibition of new and recent work by the acclaimed multidisciplinary artist, accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog and public programming that drew scholars and audiences from across the nation.

- This year, the museum opened *Bare it All*, an ambitious presentation of the Ulrich's permanent collection across every gallery simultaneously, paired with community engagement and outreach throughout Wichita.

- In fall 2027, the Ulrich will host a major retrospective of celebrated ceramic artist Jun Kaneko, continuing the museum's tradition of bringing internationally recognized artists to campus and to the broader Wichita Community.

Collection

The Ulrich Museum holds a nationally and internationally significant permanent collection of approximately 7,400 works of modern and contemporary art by world-renowned artists — including Joan Mitchell, Gordon Parks, Nan Goldin, Robert Motherwell, Ai Weiwei, and Benny Andrews. The museum continues to actively acquire pieces to ensure the collection evolves with the art of our time. Joan Miró's mosaic, *Personnages Oiseaux*, greets visitors at the museum's entrance and has become an icon of the university campus – arguably the most significant piece of public art in Kansas, with its brilliance of color, imagery, and play of light. Miró said of the work, "I believe it will be one of the best mosaics ever made." The subsequent sale of Miró's maquette for the mural established a healthy acquisition endowment, allowing the curatorial team to continue enhancing the collection each year.

The museum also stewards the Martin H. Bush Outdoor Sculpture Collection, which includes 90 works sited across Wichita State's 330-acre campus, enriching the university with beauty and distinction. The sculpture collection includes pieces by Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson, Fernando Botero, Andy Goldsworthy, Tom Otterness, Hank Willis Thomas, and Doug Coffin. One of Wichita's most significant cultural attractions is its outdoor sculpture collection, which is always free and open. The museum's commitment to accessibility extends online as well, through the Collection Portal¸ where virtual visitors can explore the permanent collection. Managed by the museum, the collection itself is owned by Wichita State University's Foundation and Alumni Engagement for the benefit of the university and the community.

Dr. Sam and Jacque Kouri Collection Study Center

The Dr. Sam and Jacque Kouri Collections Study Center is the first space visitors encounter when they enter the museum and serves as a portal to the museum's permanent collection. This carefully designed learning environment enables the examination of actual paintings, photographs, drawings, sculptures, and other objects from the collection that are not currently on display, fostering interdisciplinary educational engagement. To maximize this potential, Ulrich staff work with faculty to place selected objects on temporary view in conjunction with specific courses. A seminar instructor might teach one or more class sessions in this space, while those with larger classes might assign students to visit the museum and write about the objects. Classes from art and design, English, modern and classical languages and literatures, nursing, and the honors college have become frequent visitors to the space.

Ulrich Museum of Art Advisory Board

The advisory board makes recommendations to Wichita State University's Foundation and Alumni Engagement regarding acquisitions, accessions, deaccessions, and the care, maintenance, and use of the permanent collection under the stewardship of the Ulrich Museum of Art. The advisory board also helps secure additional financial resources and serves as an advocate for the museum in the community. The advisory board currently has five standing committees: Executive, Collections and Acquisitions, Development, Community Engagement, and Ulrich Friends with Benefits.

Ulrich Museum Alliance

The Ulrich Alliance and Ulrich Mighty Docent Team are a group of dedicated volunteers who raise awareness and promote the arts throughout the community. Alliance and docent members graciously give their time, energy, and enthusiasm to support the museum's art openings, public programs, community outreach, and educational engagement. The alliance raises funds for scholarships benefiting students in the School of Art, Design and Creative Industries, which is part of WSU's College of Fine Arts. Docents focus on educational tours, visitor experiences, and educational outreach. These members are true ambassadors of the arts and the Ulrich. The president of the alliance serves as a representative on the advisory board.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting directly to the provost, the executive director of the Ulrich Museum provides leadership and strategic direction to museum staff and volunteers. The executive director develops, implements, and evaluates strategies to align with and advance the university's strategic priorities. The executive director has six direct reports — including the curator of modern and contemporary art, curator of education, business manager, registrar and collections manager, exhibition designer and production manager, and curatorial assistant. The executive director oversees an annual operating budget of approximately $1.2 million. Wichita State covers facility costs and are not reflected in the operating budget total. In FY26, approximately $185,000 was allocated for acquisitions to the collection. The FY26 budget funding is comprised of the following:

- 54% from state funding
- 17% from endowment distributions
- 11% from fundraising
- 4% from grants
- 14% from budgetary carryover and other sources

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The next executive director will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

Provide exemplary leadership, continuing the museum's position at the forefront of artistic and educational movements

Working with stakeholders – including campus leadership, staff, the advisory board, and the community – the executive director will develop a strategic approach that articulates an intellectually compelling and broadly accessible vision for the Ulrich. Stakeholders are currently participating in a strategic planning process that will guide community feedback and goals. The executive director will have the opportunity to review and shape the strategic plan. The strategic plan provides focus and direction for the development of future exhibitions and programs that represent and engage the museum's campus and regional communities. The Ulrich's goals will align with the strategic plan of the university and position

the museum in a leading role as a campus collaborator. Included in this effort will be opportunities to better connect with faculty and students throughout the university and to work with the campus to deepen exploration of innovative academic collaborations and applied learning across a variety of disciplines.

Steward and grow financial resources

The executive director will cultivate and diversify development opportunities to strengthen the financial base of the Ulrich, in collaboration with Wichita State University's Foundation and Alumni Engagement office. As an advocate for the museum and an active member of the Wichita art community, the executive director will raise the institution's profile with potential donors and further cultivate relationships with existing supporters.

Enhance and support the museum's commitment to connection and belonging

The executive director will promote a culture of belonging throughout the Ulrich and university community while ensuring the exhibitions and programmatic experiences are broadly relevant and welcoming to the communities we serve. The museum will be a leader within the university and the greater community in championing these values and will ensure that internal policies and procedures strategically support this work.

Continue to increase broad community engagement

The executive director will be expected to increase the visibility of the Ulrich by articulating and clearly communicating its importance to a broad audience of potential collaborators, donors, and visitors. The executive director will be a key member of the vibrant Wichita arts community and the surrounding area, exploring additional opportunities to partner with cultural, civic, and educational institutions. As the Ulrich's reputation grows, it will be vitally important for the organization to maintain strong relationships with community groups and arts leaders that reflect the breadth and diversity of the university and the region.

Provide exceptional administrative leadership for the Ulrich's staff

The Ulrich is home to a dedicated and passionate professional team, and the next executive director will foster an environment in which staff can collaborate effectively, communicate openly, and produce high-quality work. In partnership with the team, the executive director will assess and strengthen internal policies, procedures, and ways of working to support greater coordination across the museum. The executive director will establish clear, shared goals; ensure staff members feel heard, respected, and connected to the museum's direction; and cultivate strong morale across the organization. Through transparent, inclusive, and accountable leadership, the executive director will also support continued professional development and empower staff to contribute their expertise to the Ulrich's ongoing success.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The following qualifications are required:

- Master's degree in museum studies, museology, art history, curatorial studies, or other closely related field
- 3-5 years of experience in museum management or curatorial experience
- Demonstrated experience in financial and personnel management

The following qualifications are highly preferred:

- PhD in museum studies, museology, art history, curatorial studies, or other closely related field
- 3-5 years of experience in museum management or curatorial experience in contemporary art
- Successful experience in fundraising and relationship building with individuals, corporations, government, and other granting organizations

The successful candidate will exemplify many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- Highly effective interpersonal skills and an adept communicator who can inspire key external constituencies and create entrepreneurial partnerships
- Ability to successfully lead the development of original exhibitions and programs that advance the museum's signature brand
- A strong ability to clearly articulate the nature of Wichita State's and the Ulrich's missions within an urban setting and the ability to clearly articulate museum goals and alignment with, and in support of, the university mission
- Open and consultative leadership; excellence in collaboration and can partner with and inspire faculty, staff, and students to elevate the Ulrich to heightened levels of success
- Demonstrated experience in advancing and promoting connection both internally within the university and externally with audiences and communities
- Experience executing best standards and practices in the museum field and ongoing professional service; knowledge of collections care and management
- Track record of effectively leading teams to work collaboratively

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.

Jackie Mildner, Arianna Williams, Pamela Carty
Isaacson, Miller

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