

# CaLARTS

Search for the Dean of the School of Critical Studies  
California Institute of the Arts  
Valencia, California

The California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) seeks a dynamic and forward-thinking pedagogical leader to serve as the next Dean of the School of Critical Studies. The School of Critical Studies is not only responsible for the foundational education of all BFA students, but it also houses two interdisciplinary graduate programs in creative writing and aesthetic and political theory. As the Institute's impressive reputation continues to expand, the incoming Dean of Critical Studies will play a vital role in further developing the unique identity of CalArts, rooted in critical and creative inquiry. Critical Studies is where all CalArts students come together, and the Dean of Critical Studies will collaboratively develop and execute the vision for the School and ensure it is in alignment with the institute's strategic framework and academic strategic action plan by providing an inclusive and transformative experience for students to become critical artists and scholars.

CalArts is renowned internationally in the education of professional and experimental artists. An all-inclusive community for a diversity of authentic voices, CalArts today offers more than 58 comprehensive degree programs in the visual, performing, media, and literary arts. Established in 1961 by Walt and Roy Disney, CalArts emerged with a bold new paradigm for arts education, the kind not seen since the Black Mountain College experiment of the 1930s that promised freedom to create with boundless imagination and unfettered by conventional expectations. Offering a curriculum that is both imaginative and rigorous, the Institute continues to distinguish itself as a leader in arts education, nurturing and respecting students as artists, offering remarkable interchange with faculty across disciplines, and encouraging students to cross-pollinate and inspire each other.

The School of Critical Studies brings together internationally recognized writers, poets, scholars, and thinkers working in both new and traditional forms across a wide variety of disciplines, extending from narrative fiction, performance, and multimedia to cultural criticism and political theory, and the Dean will have the opportunity to work alongside these revered faculty and contribute to world-class programming. The School of Critical Studies plays a key role in the overall undergraduate education of students at CalArts. The goal is to provide students with a course of study that advances both the practice of the arts and a broad program of liberal arts education that is designed to enable students to consider aesthetic questions within larger socio-cultural, ethical, and political contexts. The School of Critical Studies emphasizes the close relationships between the liberal arts and artistic practices, as well as CalArts' visionary commitment to study between and across the disciplines.

To be successful in this role, the Dean will address the following opportunities and challenges, outlined in greater detail on page six:

- Collaboratively develop and execute a strategic vision for the School of Critical Studies.
- Build and expand programs at all levels, specifically strengthening the BFA curriculum, which serves as the foundational aspect of the degree.
- Develop, recruit, and retain excellent and diverse faculty and staff with a continued commitment to a culture of trust and transparency.
- Embrace and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion as a central part of the School and Institute's identity.
- Raise funds and expand resources to ensure the School is able to reach its full potential.
- Serve as a visible and collaborative advocate for the School of Critical Studies throughout the Institute and beyond.

A complete list of the desired qualifications and characteristics may be found at the conclusion of this document, which was produced with the support of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the end of this document.

## **CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS**

Established in 1961 by Walt and Roy Disney, CalArts emerged with a bold new paradigm for arts education, the kind not seen since the Black Mountain College experiment of the 1930s that promised freedom to create with boundless imagination, unfettered by conventional expectations. CalArts has a multidisciplinary approach to its studies of the arts through six schools: [Art, Critical Studies, Dance, Film/Video, Music, and Theater](#). CalArts encourages students to explore and recognize the complexity of the many aspects of the arts. It is supported by a distinguished faculty of practicing artists and provides its Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral students with the hands-on training and exposure necessary for an artist's growth.

[CalArts Extended Studies](#) is the continuing education unit of the institution whose mission is to expand CalArts' pedagogical reach and visibility by developing high-quality educational programming to serve a diverse, global community of lifelong learners. CalArts Extended Studies has grown organically, piloting new offerings based on opportunity and leadership interest. As of 2019, Extended Studies offers credit and non-credit bearing options for creative exploration in the arts, on-campus, online and through summer intensives, to adult and pre-college learners. Through partnerships with online platforms Coursera and Kadenze, CalArts currently offers several courses and certificates in graphic design, game design, poetry, music technology, and more.

CalArts is also committed to serving the wider community through programs such as their award-winning CalArts [Community Arts Partnership \(CAP\) program](#). Distinct from Extended Studies, this co-curricular program offers free after-school and school-based arts programs for youth ages 4-18 in every discipline taught at the Institute. Programs are offered at public schools, community centers, and social service agencies, covering a 1,000-square-mile radius across Los Angeles County. With classes led by a teaching corps of accomplished CalArts faculty, alumni, and student instructors, CAP participants learn to create original works of art and to experiment with prevailing conventions of artistic expression. CAP's success has served as a model for other arts education organizations locally and nationally. CAP has received numerous honors, including the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, which recognizes exemplary programs that foster the creative and intellectual development of America's children.

Located on a campus 25 miles north of Hollywood in the Santa Clarita Valley, CalArts has helped fuel several movements in the arts, its graduates fanning out internationally in every major arts arena. It now holds a prominent place in the exploding arts scene in Los Angeles, where a critical mass of emerging artists and professional colleagues both come from the ranks of CalArts alumni. In addition to the main campus, CalArts operates the Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater (REDCAT), an interdisciplinary contemporary arts center for innovative performance and exhibition in downtown Los Angeles.

[The Reef Residency](#) supports recent graduates from the MFA & MA programs for one year in a creative and collaborative working environment. It encourages participants to get involved in opportunities held at the Reef building, Maker City, and Downtown Los Angeles over the year and to propose their own exhibitions, symposia, events, and readings. The residency was originally open to alumni from the Schools of Critical Studies, Film/Video, and the School of Art. However, this year, the REEF Residency has expanded to include alumni from all six schools to provide for 18 postgraduate fellows.

The Institute's 2023-2024 fiscal year operating budget is over \$77 million. Approximately 68% of the budget is generated by tuition and fees, with the rest coming from donations, investment earnings, and other miscellaneous revenue sources. The Institute's endowment has grown to \$220 million as of 2023. There is a focus on diversifying and strengthening the revenue streams for the Institute, including significant growth to the endowment.

To learn more about CalArts, please visit <https://calarts.edu/>. For more information about CalArts leadership, see Appendix I.

### **Strategic Visioning Process and the 2020 Strategic Framework**

In 2018, President Rajan embarked on a historically comprehensive strategic visioning project that sought feedback and ideas focused on shaping the Institute over the next 50 years. In March 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking hold, the Board of Trustees approved the outgrowth of this project: a reaffirmed mission and values, and the 2020 Strategic Framework.

In March 2021, after the disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic began to subside, CalArts published the 2020 Strategic Framework, which provides a guide for priorities and activities across the Institute. The framework puts forth three vision pillars and seven goals, with objectives to support each of them. The framework, [Shaping CalArts' Future](#), is a forward-looking, insight-driven roadmap that builds on CalArts' extraordinary legacy and defines a vision for its future. The framework's three pillars comprise the overarching vision that CalArts seeks to pursue in the years ahead:

- Center the Educational Experience
- Remove Barriers to Access
- Shape our Sustainable Future

This roadmap is now being used in the collaborative creation—through shared governance—of actionable area plans (e.g., the [2022-2025 IDEA Action Plan](#), Academic Plan, Strategic Enrollment Plan, Facility Master Plan, etc.). The IDEA Action Plan is complete, and the provost, deans, and faculty have recently completed the Academic Plan, which is set to be published in early January. The others will follow in turn. Each of these area plans seeks to plot a data-informed, assessable trajectory of work over a multi-year period.

The strategic visioning project brought renewed recognition that the Institute's stated values—agency, diversity, distinction, empathy, equity, inclusivity, persistence, rigor, and social justice—are the CalArts community's shared, aspirational values. While access was not a stated value per se, its inclusion in the lens through which CalArts sees its future is articulated by Pillar 2—Remove Barriers to Access—of the newly developed strategic framework.

In August 2020, CalArts' Board of Trustees earmarked funds and directed the president to orchestrate a central effort to identify and assess current diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and add the lens of access to them. In October of that year, President Rajan announced the Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Access Cooperative, abbreviated as IDEA, as this coordinating effort. This cooperative of work, under the leadership of the Institute Diversity Officer (a cabinet-level position), sought to redouble the Institute's efforts to confront, address, and eradicate the structural, systemic, and societal injustices that are threaded through communities in the United States and therefore also at CalArts. The major objectives were to add a focus on access to existing DEI efforts, to give visibility to the work that was already happening, and to introduce an Institute-wide effort to the ongoing, distributed efforts.

In the Fall 2022 semester, the Institute enrolled 11 students from New York City who make up the inaugural cohort of the [Posse Arts Scholars](#), in partnership with the Posse Foundation. The program has most recently accepted their third cohort of Posse Scholars students into the institute. The Arts Posse program was supported by the Miranda Family Fund of actor and playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda and his father and was first announced publicly in April 2021 with the help of former First Lady Michelle Obama. The initiative aims to connect young artists from public high schools nationwide to top arts-oriented colleges and universities to enable a pipeline of diverse leaders in the creative arts.

## THE SCHOOL OF CRITICAL STUDIES

Aside from bringing together internationally recognized artists and scholars across a wide variety of disciplines, the School of Critical Studies is responsible for the undergraduate core studies of CalArts, which forms the liberal arts backbone of a bachelor's degree. Faculty from Critical Studies teach a range of courses in the humanities, social sciences, cultural studies, sciences, and mathematics that engage and inform each student's own artmaking. The School of Critical Studies establishes a vital discursive center for the entire CalArts community. Critical Studies is the site for the generation of new ideas through interaction and discussion with a diverse cross-section of practitioners from creative métiers—a place to acquire key intellectual skills and to interrogate what one might define as a “thinking practice.”

The School also offers two master's degree programs, the MFA in Creative Writing and an MA in Aesthetics and Politics. Both develop and refine advanced creative writing and sophisticated critical scholarship in a unique multidisciplinary arts environment dedicated to experimentation and innovation.

### Programs

**General BFA Education** is overseen by the School of Critical Studies and is designed to develop the powers of analysis and communication which students need to produce innovative and challenging art and to articulate their vision in the larger social context. To facilitate this learning, the faculty in the School of Critical Studies are recognized scholars in their own disciplines with close connections to art making and a passion to teach the liberal arts and sciences within an arts environment. BFA students must complete 46 units of Critical Studies coursework, which they select from a range of courses from cultural studies, humanities, the social sciences, science, and mathematics. In addition, students take courses in the history of their own métiers and the arts in general.

**The Aesthetics and Politics MA Program** is a one-year full-time, plus one-year low-residency, program that engages students in an intensive critique of the relations between culture, politics and society in today's demanding global context. The program offers a series of rich and dynamic core courses that span globalization, technology and media, politics and the arts, socio-economics and urbanism. Over two years, students work with the support of a dedicated mentor towards an independent thesis that marks the culmination of their degree. The MA Program equips students with a unique combination of creative and analytical skills that enable them to enter their professional milieu with confidence and to participate in practical, cultural, and theoretical fields of work. This flexible, two-year program allows students to focus with more time and depth on their interests, take advantage of the creative environment of CalArts, have access to a large and diverse cross-section of theorists and artists, and to opt to study while working during their second year.

**The Creative Writing MFA** was designed to overcome the division between “creative” and “critical.” Here, writing is understood as an art form best practiced alongside the other arts, and students benefit from having access to the CalArts community of artists as their peers and fellow travelers. A defining feature of

the Creative Writing Program is hybridity and experimentation, so students are free to take courses in, and to write in, any genre they wish. Poets may take prose workshops to learn narrative conventions and how to deploy or challenge them; fiction and nonfiction writers may benefit from poetry workshops that hone their use of and engagement with language; and still other students may develop multidimensional writing practices. All students graduate with the ability to comprehend and critique work across genres, and an expanded sense of possibilities for their own work. Students are encouraged to situate their creative practice in a critical context—to engage with the history, theory and politics of contemporary writing, and to think hard about what and why they write. The Program offers graduate students the chance to further develop both their craft and their knowledge base, and workshops combine attentive critique of student work with the discussion of readings on and in the various genres—or on special topics particularly relevant to writing today.

The School of Critical Studies is currently working on a comprehensive redesign of the BFA curriculum course categories and breadth requirements. The goal is to move away from the discipline coverage model currently used and instead create categories and requirements that more fully reflect CalArts commitment to interdisciplinary learning, global cultures, and the intersection between critical and creative writing. This curriculum redesign will also enable a fresh approach to Critical Studies BFA minors and graduate concentrations.

## **ROLE OF THE DEAN**

Reporting to Provost Tracie Costantino and serving on the Deans Council, the Dean provides strategic leadership and vision for the School of Critical Studies and its programs. In doing so, the Dean serves as the School's representative and liaison with the Institute's senior administration, as well as in external engagement.

The Dean oversees 15 full-time faculty with a shifting number of adjunct faculty colleagues each year. They serve as the lead on decisions related to curriculum, recruitment and admissions, student experience and conduct, budgets, space, and associated academic policies. Additionally, the Dean is responsible for a budget of over \$3 million and oversees a core administrative support team through two staff reports and four academic/program leaders: an associate dean, two program directors, and the writing director.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

### ***Collaboratively lead and execute on the creation of a strategic vision for the School of Critical Studies***

The Dean will engage a variety of stakeholders to develop a clear and compelling vision that articulates the mission and value of Critical Studies, internally and externally, as well as future plans and goals for the School. This vision must be expansive, recognizing the strengths across disciplines, and be forward-looking when it comes to curriculum development, partnerships, and recruitment. Overall, the Dean will lead the

development of strategic and measurable objectives to build upon the School's strengths and envision a new chapter of growth and impact.

***Build and expand programs at all levels, specifically strengthening the BFA curriculum, which serves as the foundational aspect of the degree***

The Dean will be a creative thinker and collaborative leader with an eye toward growth. They will have the unique opportunity to lead conversations across the Institute and must strategically invest in the development of an interdisciplinary curriculum. They will work alongside faculty, staff, and students to envision new programs that meet the needs of the current market and help develop pathways into the Institute, scholarships, and financial resources to ensure the success of students while in their programs. This means also working closely with the other Deans and the Provost in shaping the BFA curriculum. The Dean will partner with the other units to formalize the curriculum, as well as collaborate with Program Directors and graduate program faculty to further develop and elevate the MA and MFA programs. Additionally, the Dean will help further develop minors and other curricular pathways. The School of Critical Studies seeks to prepare the next generation of artists who master their specific métier, always attuned to how their art is intertwined and informed by the world around them. Through strengthening and expanding academic programs, the Dean plays an important role in upholding this mission.

***Develop, recruit, and retain excellent and diverse faculty and staff with a continued commitment to a culture of trust and transparency***

The Dean will lead strategic recruitment while ensuring that all faculty and staff are supported by engaging in inclusive decision-making processes. They will be an active collaborator with the faculty and staff, driven by the united purpose of Critical Studies as the discursive center of the Institute. The Dean will lead this endeavor with a focus on maintaining and growing the School's distinctive, interdisciplinary profile, creating an environment where all faculty and staff feel well supported and empowered in their work. To be successful, the Dean will have exceptional interpersonal and management skills, a passion for mentorship, and a commitment to ensuring a healthy work environment for faculty and staff at all levels. They will have experience with diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices, change management, and conflict resolution, and will appropriately recognize faculty and staff for outstanding performance.

***Embrace and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion as a central part of the School and Institute's identity***

Since its founding, CalArts has proudly viewed the arts as a way to not only create connections, but also as a vehicle for deep conversations about what is happening in the world around us. The next Dean will be expected to uphold this belief, and approach strategic planning, curriculum development, and faculty and staff recruitment through a critical lens. The Dean will assist in cultivating a diverse cohort of educators and students and promote discourse that inspires students to become agents of positive change within their respected métiers. More broadly, the Dean will embrace and advance diversity, equity, and



inclusion initiatives, fostering safe spaces for respectful dialogue and a welcoming environment regardless of background.

***Raise funds and expand resources to ensure the School is able to reach its full potential***

Like other institutions, CalArts and Critical Studies has seen declining enrollments since the COVID-19 pandemic. As a tuition-dependent institution, fundraising has become increasingly important, and the Dean, in partnership with advancement and other senior administrators, will lead the fundraising efforts within the School. The Dean will be expected to support the wellbeing and longevity of the School of Critical Studies by cultivating individual support as well as fostering partnerships to continue to securing resources. They will clearly articulate the mission of CalArts and ensure donors are enthusiastic about supporting education and art spaces. Overall, the Dean will be a savvy leader who elevates the School's position across various audiences.

***Serve as a visible and collaborative advocate for the School of Critical Studies throughout the Institute and beyond***

The Dean will serve as a bold advocate for the School, articulating its interdisciplinary mission and value internally and externally. The Dean must speak cogently and persuasively about what it means to be an educated artist, rooted in the liberal arts, and demonstrate the importance of Critical Studies at every opportunity. Through this work in the School of Critical Studies, the Dean will help to further establish CalArts across the country and, indeed, in the world as a visible and accessible option for a holistic arts education.

**QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

While no one person will likely possess all, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- A terminal degree in a relevant field or a combination of education and professional accomplishment.
- Ability to consolidate forward-thinking and creative ideas into a clear and understandable vision for the School of Critical Studies, engage the Institute community in the implementation of the vision, and build the operational components to execute it.
- Demonstrated cultural competencies and commitment to advancing CalArts' aspirational community values of agency, diversity, distinction, empathy, equity, inclusivity, persistence, rigor, and social justice.
- Strong experience in the teaching, leading, and development of programs offered across multiple disciplines.
- Strength in working collaboratively and communicating effectively, both in conversation and in writing; and engaging inclusive decision making processes.



- Dynamic interpersonal skills, including nuanced management skills, capacity to steward institutional relationships, and ability to solve problems creatively.
- Knowledge about managing complex budgets and allocating resources with high transparency and fairness.
- Demonstrated success in generating support for their organization, including alumni engagement, donor cultivation, and fundraising.
- Exceptional judgment, discretion, and integrity when working with students, faculty, and staff in an educational environment.

## COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The expected salary range for this role is \$180,000 - 200,000, with a competitive benefits package.

## LOCATION

Located 25 miles from Hollywood, CalArts occupies 60 acres on hills overlooking the incorporated city of Santa Clarita, which encompasses the towns of Valencia, Newhall, Saugus, and Canyon Country. The Santa Clarita Valley is surrounded by the Tehachapi Mountains to the north, the San Gabriels to the east, and the Santa Susannas to the west, all visible from campus. Historically, the valley has been devoted to agriculture and cattle ranching, but the last three decades have seen the northward expansion of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. This ongoing development has resulted in new residential communities and an ever-increasing population of more than 175,000.

To learn more about Santa Clarita and the town of Valencia, please visit <https://visitsantaclarita.com/>.

## 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 for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/california-institute-arts/dean-critical-studies>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) seeks to employ faculty and staff who can engage our diverse communities of learners at the highest levels of artistic endeavor and critical thinking. Across the range of practitioners from artists to scholars and librarians, we welcome candidates who possess a demonstrated worldview and cultural competency to support teaching and mentoring undergraduate

and graduate students of varied backgrounds, capabilities, perspectives, social identities, and gender expressions. CalArts is an equal opportunity employer.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **LEADERSHIP**

#### **President Ravi S. Rajan**

Ravi S. Rajan is the fourth President of CalArts, succeeding President Emeritus Steven D. Lavine.

Rajan has extensive experience in the production of art, music, theatre/dance, and film/video, as well as in senior executive roles in higher education. He became an Assistant Dean of Art+Design at Purchase College in 2005, eventually rising to the position of Dean of the School of Arts in 2012. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in London; a former member of the Tony Awards Nominating Committee, and a past president of the Asian American Arts Alliance.

Rajan is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma and Yale University. He is an accomplished musician, performing with and conducting for many large and small musical groups as well as for the theatre. His practice also encompasses producing collaborative mixed-media projects with artists, filmmakers, directors, and choreographers for museums, galleries, foundations, biennials, festivals, and venues public and private.

#### **Provost Tracie Costantino**

Tracie Costantino earned her undergraduate degree in art history and Italian studies at Boston College and her master's degree in art history from Brown University. In 2005 she completed her PhD in aesthetic education (curriculum and instruction) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Before CalArts, Costantino served as the interim Provost, Dean of Faculty, and Associate Provost of Teaching and Learning at RISD, and prior to RISD was on the faculty at the University of Georgia for nine years.

Her teaching abilities have been recognized through the Richard B. Russell Award for Undergraduate Teaching, the General Sandy Beaver Teaching Professorship and participation in the Lilly Teaching Fellows program at the University of Georgia. Costantino's research focuses on the nature of cognition in the arts, creativity, and the transformative potential of aesthetic experience as an educative event. Her interest in interdisciplinary curriculum, STEAM, and creative learning has been supported by two grants from the National Science Foundation. In addition to numerous published articles and book chapters, Costantino has co-edited two books on aesthetic education: *Essays on Aesthetic Education for the 21st Century* (Sense Publishers, 2010) and *Aesthetics, Empathy, and Education* (Peter Lang Publishers, 2013).

For more information, visit: <https://calarts.edu/about/institute/leadership>