



**Dean, School of Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, Texas**

## **THE SEARCH**

Texas A&M University (TAMU) seeks an innovative, entrepreneurial, and collaborative leader to serve as the inaugural Dean of the School of Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts (SPVFA or the School). Reporting to the Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Chief Academic Officer, the Dean will be charged with continuing to establish and build a vision and mission for the School of Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts that positions it for expected growth in programming and reputation. This leader will be joining TAMU and SPVFA at a time of increased attention to growth, research, and innovation and will be able to harness the artistic, scholarly, and technical expertise of a talented and engaged faculty, staff, and student body.

Officially established in September 2022, SPVFA was created to be an incubator where artistic and technological research and practice meet, to create innovative lenses through which to understand and solve the world's pressing problems. The School is meant to be a place where students will gain both the practical, real-world skills and theoretical and historical frameworks needed to become leaders in the highly competitive arts world of the 21st century. The School was established for students who strive to imagine, create, learn, and grow. It's for those who love to explore new ways of seeing the world and who understand the magic that can happen when artistic creativity and technology merge.

The successful candidate will be an established artistic and academic innovator with the ability to foster groundbreaking work across disciplines. The Dean must be eager to engage, support, and develop faculty, staff, and students and ensure that they have the clarity of mission and resources necessary to do their work effectively. With a focus on clear communication, the Dean will lead by centering collaboration and embracing the different needs within each academic discipline, ensuring all are valued and promoted. At the same time, they must be able to make bold decisions to advance the profile, reputation, and reach of the School on campus, across Texas, nationally, and internationally. To ensure continued growth and sustainability, the leader of SPVFA must be a strong financial manager, with the ability to attract and inspire donors, collaborators, and partners from both the academy and industry. This is an incredible opportunity to lead a school that is poised to be a model of how arts students can be equipped for success in an increasingly interdisciplinary and technology driven future.

Texas A&M University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

### *Texas A&M University System*

The total Texas A&M University System is one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, with a budget of \$7.3 billion. Through a statewide network of 11 universities, a comprehensive health science center, eight state agencies, and the RELLIS Campus, the Texas A&M System educates more than 163,000 students and makes more than 24 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year. System-wide, research and development expenditures exceed \$1.1 billion and help drive the state's economy.

### *Texas A&M University*

Texas A&M University, the flagship university of the System and the only university in Texas to hold simultaneous designations as a land-, sea-, and space-grant institution, is in Central Texas and within a two-hour drive of city centers with 26 million of the state's 28 million residents. The University is home to more than 74,000 students, making it the largest in the United States with over 135 undergraduate degree programs, over 175 master's degree programs, and over 90 doctoral degree programs. As a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and an R1 Carnegie classification of very high research activity, Texas A&M boasts over \$1.1 billion in annual research expenditures, which ranks #9 among public universities, according to the National Science Foundation (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey (FY2021). Texas A&M ranks among the very top in many programs, including engineering, agriculture, and veterinary medicine, according to U.S. News & World Report. TAMU was also recently designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by the U.S. Department of Education.

## UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III | President

On December 12, 2023, the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents approved General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III as the 27<sup>th</sup> President of Texas A&M University. Welsh has been Interim President since July 2023. Prior to becoming interim President, Welsh was Dean of the Bush School of Government and Public Service. His service as dean followed a four-decade career in the U.S. Air Force, where he was a fighter pilot, a four-star general, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Welsh commanded the U.S. Air Forces in Europe and NATO's Air Command at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Additionally, he served as associate director of military affairs at the Central Intelligence Agency as well as commandant of the United States Air Force Academy.

Dr. Alan Sams | Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Chief Academic Officer

Dr. Alan Sams was appointed interim provost in August 2022 after returning to Texas A&M to serve as vice president of operational innovation. He assumed the permanent position of provost in June 2023. In this role, Dr. Sams supports deans, colleges, and schools with the mission of empowering and nurturing Aggies to succeed in experiential and transformational education with a focus on student success. He earned his Ph.D. in food science and human nutrition at the University of Florida and joined the Texas A&M University faculty in 1987. He is a professor in the Department of Poultry Science and was a member of the intercollegiate faculty of Food Science and Technology. During his 30 years at Texas A&M, Dr. Sams rose

through the faculty ranks, serving as head of two departments, and executive associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

## **THE SCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE, VISUALIZATION & FINE ARTS**

Visualization, performance studies, and dance science have long been well-established and respected programs at TAMU. In September 2022, these three programs joined forces with world-renowned Aggie expertise in science, the humanities, engineering, and technology to form SPVFA. The new School is set to establish itself as a fully interdisciplinary and interconnected academic unit poised to redefine the future of artistic practice and research.

In 2023, for the sixth consecutive year, the Visualization program was named the best animation program in Texas, and this year, it ranked number two in the nation among public animation schools, according to the Animation Career Review.

You can learn more about the School [here](#).

### *Faculty, Staff, and Students*

SPVFA boasts faculty and staff who are experts in their respective fields and have significant experience working at the intersection of theory and practice across the arts, sciences, and technology. They include dancers, directors, computer graphics engineers, composers, art historians, sound technologists—and much more. Across all academic disciplines, the SPVFA employs a total of 72 faculty and 39 staff members.

In addition to its expert faculty and staff, students are drawn to SPVFA because of its focus on interdisciplinarity and collaboration across disciplines and artistic modes. With its future-minded curriculum, the School allows students who are passionate about the arts to have meaningful and tangible careers post-graduation through access to emergent technology, new artistic practices, and connections with individuals within their chosen industry or field of practice or research. As of Fall 2023, SPVFA serves a total of 588 students across its academic disciplines: 393 in the B.S. Visualization, 77 in the M.S. Visualization, 65 in the B.S. Dance Science, 41 in the B.A. Performance Studies, 6 in the M.A. Performance Studies, and 8 in the M.F.A. in Visualization. Approximately 68% are female, 32% are male, and approximately 21% are first-generation students.

### *Academic Disciplines*

**Dance Science**: Since 2010, the dance program at TAMU has worked to educate the full dancer in the art and science of dance through a personalized approach to training through hands-on, field-based experiences. As a part of SPVFA, students can earn a Bachelor of Science in Dance Science that focuses on dance research, anatomy, nutrition, conditioning, injury prevention and care, and biomechanical principles within dance technique. Additional coursework includes Pilates, dance pedagogy, safe practices in teaching dance, dance production, and dance composition. Students enrolled in the B.S. in Dance Science also have 18 hours of elective in the degree to tailor the degree towards their ultimate career goals through focusing on professional school requirements, additional technique courses, or teacher training. Graduates of the program have careers in professional dance, public schools, and as physical therapists/researchers focused on the specific needs of dancers.

The dance program also offers students the capability to work with guest artists in master classes, watch performances, and learn repertoire. This gives students a unique opportunity to work with a variety of professionals in the field while building their resumes. Dance faculty often receive grants in collaboration with faculty from other programs. Students are also given the opportunity to attend various national and international festivals and conferences. Additionally, students within the dance program can participate in research by becoming research assistants on faculty-led projects, by conducting research projects in a senior capstone, or through the undergraduate LAUNCH program.

Students can also earn two different minors as a part of their course of study. The Choreography minor focuses on creation and motion in order to benefit majors who would like to become professional choreographers, create their own dance companies and schools, or move into public education. The Dance Performance minor features interdisciplinary opportunities including a course that examines dance through virtual and augmented reality. The physical nature of dance is emphasized, including a conditioning course to maximize performance and minimize injury. This minor is designed for students whose goals are focused on a professional performing career. In conjunction with Aggie TEACH, students can also add the Secondary Education minor, which allows them to become state-certified to teach dance in public schools.

Performance Studies: TAMU was one of the first universities in the United States to offer an undergraduate degree program in performance studies. Performance Studies invites students to ask questions about the world through performance and emphasizes project-based learning, trans-disciplinary research, and community involvement. The program is housed in the Texas A&M Liberal Arts and Humanities Building, which offers many resources, including a state-of-the-art black box theater, recording studio, theater shops, rehearsal spaces, and a courtyard performance space—all of which give students extraordinary opportunities to develop their work as creative artists and scholars. Students study music, film, and theater, but also explore other cultural expressions, like rituals, festivals, religious events, public ceremonies, sports and games, dress, tourism, podcasts, dance, and even the ways humans behave in everyday life. At both the graduate and undergraduate level, students develop strong analytical, interpretive, and creative skills to prepare them for diverse careers in the arts and beyond.

The Bachelor of Arts in Performance Studies provides a foundation in critical reflection, analysis, and creative practice from which students can launch a variety of careers. Pedagogically, the B.A. has developed four performance studies pillars: performance as research, intercultural performance practices, performance and technology, and performing communities. In their core Performance Studies courses, B.A. students are immersed in performance theory and history, learn the craft of creating live theatrical and musical performances, and cultivate essential research and writing skills to be successful citizens, scholars, and artists in the 21st century.

The Master of Arts in Performance Studies program is built around a multifaceted understanding of performance. This program bridges scholarship and practice, ranging from applying qualitative research methods to transmitting knowledge through performance. Besides learning and discussing ideas from a close reading of texts, students are encouraged to explore other modes of knowledge transmission and use SPVFA's state-of-the-art facilities to put together performances, concerts, exhibitions, and installations.

Visualization: The advent of high-technology information, imaging, and media systems has fostered a modern renaissance in visualization. Today's visualizers need skills spanning computer science, video

technology, psychology, and more. The visualization program at Texas A&M University focuses on the creation, design, and development of visual experiences by teaching students the equal importance of art, technology, science, and design. Students in the program are trained to be collaborative technical artists who are leaders in the fields where art and science merge.

The Bachelor of Science in Visualization program fosters students' artistic, scientific, and technical abilities. Students develop the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the field. Each student chooses a concentration in which they develop a focused expertise. Areas of undergraduate emphasis include animation and virtual production, interactive design, game creation, media art, and visual computing. During their junior year, all visualization students may choose between studying abroad, studying at another university, or serving in an approved internship in an industry related to the student's area of interest.

Master's students can choose between two advanced degrees, a Master of Fine Arts in Visualization and a Master of Science in Visualization. The M.F.A. in Visualization is unlike any degree in the state of Texas. The degree combines creativity with technical disciplines to hone student's skills as technical artists as they create a body of work. Through their studies, students are taught to visually communicate their ideas in both digital and analog mediums. The interdisciplinary curriculum encourages the development of new technologies and creative applications. At the end of their studies, graduates are equipped with a unique balance of artistic insight and technical prowess that sets them apart from their peers.

In the Master of Science in Visualization program, students will develop focused expertise and a broad foundation of knowledge in the artistic, scientific, cognitive, and technical foundations of the discipline. Areas of emphasis include computer animation, interactive design, user experience design, computer graphics, gaming, virtual reality, augmented reality, and data visualization. Every summer, select visualization graduate students in both degrees participate in a Summer Industry Workshop. During this intensive course, students work all day for 10 weeks to produce professional-grade short films. Students are mentored by professionals from top-of-the-line animation studios.

[Joint-Degree Program:](#) The 5-Year Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts Program in Performance Studies involves an interdisciplinary, liberal arts approach to the study of performance. As a department soundly positioned between arts and scholarship, humanities and social sciences, theory and practice, students are provided with opportunities to engage with the field of performance studies from multiple angles. In their core performance studies courses, students are immersed in performance theory, create and analyze live performances, and cultivate essential research and writing skills to be successful citizens, scholars, and artists in the 21st century.

[Undergraduate Certificate in Performing Social Activism:](#) The Certificate in Performing Social Activism prepares students seeking careers in the arts, politics, community organizing, international development, and the non-profit sector by asking them to consider the relationship between performance and social activism. Through the certificate program, students design their own service-learning project that engages with social activism in order to gain real-world experience in using performance to explore and work towards social change, inclusivity, diversity, and social justice.

*Minors:* In addition, in Dance Performance and Choreography described above and a minor program in Performance Studies, SPVFA also has minors in several other areas that represent areas of growth in the

school, including minors in Devised Theater, Film and Media Studies, Game Design and Development, Graphic Design, Music Technology, and Studio Art.

In addition to these offerings, the School is also looking to expand its programming over the next few years to serve a broader range of the arts, including a potential B.F.A. in Theater (projected to start in Fall 2024), an M.F.A. in Dance, a B.F.A. in Music, a Ph.D. in Visual Computing and Interactive Media, and a Ph.D. in Visual, Material, and Performance Cultures.

### *Institutes and Spaces*

[The Institute for Applied Creativity](#): The Institute for Applied Creativity is a forum for collaboration among domains and disciplines intent on creating a radiant future. The Institute champions combinations of experimental, rational, intuitive, and analytical methods to realize tangible accomplishments. The inherent creativity of individuals, the deep knowledge within disciplinary practice and research, and the rapid pace of transformation in society collectively contribute to an institute that exercises iterative, regenerative, and nimble practices that center innovation. Today's societal challenges are of such a magnitude of complexity that multiple areas of expertise are needed to design effective solutions. The Institute addresses critical problems shared by communities throughout the world, beginning locally and translating solutions for global contexts.

[Learning Interactive Visualization Experience \(LIVE\) Lab](#): All across the globe, efforts are underway to incorporate game technology and methodologies into the classroom experience and within educational research. To help answer this charge, the Learning Interactive Visualization Experience Lab was created as part of the Visualization program. It is the LIVE Lab's mission to collaborate with other departments, colleges, and universities to create an environment that fosters the research and development of educational experiences for use in the classroom from K – 12, Higher education, Corporate, Government, and NGO's. Through expertise, research, and rigorous scientific process, the LIVE Lab is able to create groundbreaking world-class interactive educational experiences that engage students, help teachers, and are developed in collaboration with industry and experts in their respective fields.

### **THE ROLE OF DEAN**

Reporting to the Provost, the Dean of the School of Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts serves as the chief academic and executive officer of the School, managing its human, financial, and capital resources. The Dean is supported by an administrative team consisting of an Associate Dean for Industry and Community Engagement, an Associate Dean for Research and Creative Works, an Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, an Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and an Assistant Dean of Business Services, alongside Section Chairs and other administrators.

With an eye toward the future of the visual, performing, technological, and fine arts, the Dean is responsible for supervising and directing the teaching, research, and service missions of the School and the wider University. With that mission in mind, and in collaboration with their leadership team, faculty, staff, and students, the Dean will make decisions and recommendations regarding budget, curricula, degree offerings, faculty and student recruiting and retention, faculty development/tenure and promotion, staff professional development, fundraising, long-term strategic planning, matters of academic quality, promotion of SPVFA's interests, and research planning.

The Dean will be responsible for a total operating budget of approximately \$24.5 million. Of that total, approximately 24.5% comes from state allocations, approximately 24.5% from student tuition and fees, and the rest from a special 2-year legislative appropriation. Additionally, the School has endowment funds totaling \$5.9 million disbursed across endowed faculty positions, as well as \$1.5 million in income from research funding.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

In particular, the next Dean will be charged with addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

### ***Develop and implement a bold strategic plan and long-term vision for the School***

As Texas A&M continues to strengthen its place of preeminence among public universities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and as a land-grant institution, the Dean must be prepared to meet changes in higher education with initiatives that are rooted in a tradition of service and that advance the multifaceted mission of the School. To address the expected growth of the School, the Dean must work to create systems and processes that both create efficiencies for a larger enterprise and delineate ownership and accountability for the day-to-day work of the School and its faculty, staff, and students. In all things, the Dean must be an entrepreneurial leader who encourages whole institutional thinking and demonstrates a steadfast commitment to the mission and vision of the University. Leveraging the vast experience of SPVFA's talented faculty, staff, students, and former students, the Dean will use their knowledge of industry standards, advancing and evolving technologies, best practices in higher education, and cutting-edge teaching, as well as passion for creative arts practice and theory, to develop a strategic direction for the future of the School that links, reinforces, and balances theory and practice and encourages innovation. As such, the Dean must understand and champion creative practice as valuable research. SPVFA is complex and holds many programs with different needs and priorities, and the Dean must be able to understand and develop all of them equally. While the collective perspective of all the programs is vitally important to the mission of the School, the Dean must also be able to lead and make decisions that center the overall good of the School and its faculty, staff, and students.

### ***Establish the SPVFA as a destination of choice for top-notch faculty, staff, and students***

Given the still early days of the School, it will be critically important that the Dean work to quickly increase its reputation and credibility. The School has been successful at securing a highly qualified and innovative faculty, and as the School continues to grow, the Dean will hire, develop, and retain faculty and staff that embrace and are committed to student success and advancing the School's mission. Further, the Dean will work to connect faculty and staff with professional development opportunities that keep their skills in line with their interests and fields of study. As the School's structures continue to be built, there is great enthusiasm among the faculty and students to work collaboratively across disciplines and to explore innovation unfettered by traditional academic silos. The Dean will work with faculty and staff to make SPVFA one of the top institutions for graduating students, who become impactful professionals within their fields. With a sharp focus on student engagement, success, and outcomes, the Dean will curate curricula and programs that provide students with the skills and experiences to thrive in the ever-changing professional, social, and artistic worlds they will enter.

### ***Support an internal culture of respect, collaboration, and connectivity***

In service to the School's mission, the Dean must be ready to embrace and lead within a culture that craves and values interdisciplinary collaboration. They must quickly work to build trust among their administrative and leadership team and model best practices. Simultaneously, the Dean will invest time and resources to ensure a strong sense of community among faculty, staff, and students. One way of achieving this will be to leverage both in-person and digital points of connectivity, to create a thriving and bold artistic community. They must work to create a strong foundation of safety that allows and encourages all constituents at the School to both practice their chosen art and find ways to creatively explore within and outside of their chosen fields of study. Additionally, as students graduate, the Dean will ensure robust former student engagement, to ensure students are connected to the School in multiple ways, well beyond their time on campus.

***Forge new and innovative partnerships on campus, locally, nationally, and internationally***

As the lead ambassador for the School, the Dean must be an extremely effective communicator, able to forge connections and relationships within the University and in broader academic and industry-based communities and organizations. Leveraging these relationships to enhance SPVFA's curriculum, the Dean will further opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in new and cutting-edge relevant research and practices. As a visible force beyond the boundaries of the University, the Dean will help build partnerships that serve as a critical conduit between the academy and the various industries, in terms of sharing research and refining practices and in establishing experiential learning opportunities, so that students graduate ready to meaningfully work within their disciplines of choice.

The Dean must also be an internal advocate for all of the programs at the School, able to talk about them all equally and compellingly, and make the case to TAMU leadership for increased funding, resources, and campus space. There is a distinct opportunity to explore opportunities to connect with other colleges, schools, and programs at TAMU, to create compelling and innovative programming to explore complex topics and issues with multidimensional nuance. As resources like the [Texas A&M – Fort Worth](#) Campus are built, the Dean will find ways to further connect them with the School, in order to uplift SPVFA's creative research practices, as an important part of TAMU's overall research enterprise.

***Generate and develop sustainable resources for the School***

To help the School grow and evolve, it will be imperative that the Dean work to secure resources to sustain its mission, vision, and direction. To be successful, the Dean must be a skilled budgetary and financial manager, with the ability to plan for current and future financial and resource needs as the School grows. An enthusiastic fundraiser, the Dean will work alongside advancement, other institutional partners, and their own networks to engage potential short- and long-term donors and to secure additional funding to grow and support the work of SPVFA. Highlighting the School's current successes and painting the story of its future accomplishments, the Dean will create strong relationships that result in opportunities to advance the School fiscally, in service to the School's pedagogical and research missions. The ability to prioritize, leverage, and tactfully utilize funds and resources will be an ongoing requirement for the Dean. It will be paramount that they continue to nurture established relationships with donors and corporate partners, while strategically developing plans to foster new relationships with the aforementioned constituents.

**QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

While few candidates will possess all the qualifications and characteristics the search committee is seeking, the ideal candidate for the Dean of the School of Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts will have many of the following:

- An advanced degree in a field of study or discipline relevant to the School;
- Substantive work within a discipline or disciplines related to one or more of the degree programs offered by the School;
- Significant experience working at the intersection of the arts and technology;
- Strong administrative experience within a complex organizational context;
- Prior success in leading/expanding a major program, department, or college;
- A record of recruiting and mentoring researchers, educators, and practitioners who embody high-caliber professionalism and excellence in their field;
- Experience or familiarity with higher education accreditation processes;
- Astute financial acumen and demonstrated ability to acquire and manage external resources through fundraising, grants, or contracts;
- Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, working as a member of the University's senior academic leadership team;
- Ability and desire to work within a highly collaborative culture;
- Willingness to advocate for and incorporate University systems and processes that support faculty and students;
- Demonstrated entrepreneurial skills that leverage the expertise of faculty to enhance educational offerings at the local, state, national, and international levels;
- Effective interpersonal skills and ability to develop people within teams;
- Excellent oral and written communication skills;
- Ability to clearly articulate the nature of the School's vision to internal and external constituencies;
- A clear understanding of the modern educational landscape and current national trends, at the intersections of the arts, technology, and research.
- An innovative and visionary leadership style; and
- Experience working with development/fundraising personnel and alumni relations.

#### APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and/or resumes with cover letters may be submitted electronically to:

Jackie Mildner, Partner  
Angelo Alexander, Senior Associate  
Pamela Carty, Senior Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller  
1800 K Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Applications, inquiries, and nominations may be submitted at the [link here](#).