



**VICE PRESIDENT, ADVANCEMENT**  
**SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO**  
**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**



**School of the Art Institute  
of Chicago**

Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in the search for a Vice President, Advancement.

The Vice President, Advancement will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of SAIC through strategic vision and leadership. The vice president will develop and manage a comprehensive fundraising strategy that aligns with the School's goals, working closely with the president and leadership team to drive advancement efforts. As the lead relationship manager for the School's most valued prospects, the vice president will secure transformative gifts while fostering vital connections with key donors as well as the creative community of Chicago. The vice president will staff and leverage the talent of the Board of Governors' Advancement Committee while cultivating strong relationships within faculty and administration to enhance donor engagement. With a focus on creating achievable yet ambitious annual plans for alumni relations, major gifts, and grant development, the vice president will refine assessment methodologies and mentor a dedicated Advancement team. By implementing comprehensive capital campaign strategies and establishing clear policies, the vice president will ensure fundraising initiatives not only meet but exceed expectations, propelling the mission of SAIC forward.

Founded in 1866 by artists for artists, SAIC has a rich history of innovation in art and design education. For more than a century and a half, SAIC has been at the forefront of art education, fostering critical thinking, rigorous investigation, and playful creativity. The School's objective is to assemble a diverse body of intelligent and creative students and faculty in an environment designed to facilitate and encourage the discovery and production of significant ideas and images and to provide for the development of individual excellence in undergraduate and graduate programs in the visual and related arts. SAIC provides excellence in the delivery of a global education in visual, design, media, and related arts, with attendant studies in the history and theory of those disciplines set within a broad-based, humanistic curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences. It provides instruction for this education in a range of formats: written, spoken, media, and exhibition based. SAIC was among the first schools to embrace self-directed study across disciplines. SAIC alumni have gone on to shape the world as artists, designers, and scholars.

Chicago, a global cultural center full of opportunity, is home to SAIC. It is a diverse city of neighborhoods and strong communities, a welcoming place where creativity thrives. SAIC alumni settle in Chicago to make work, open galleries and studios, and power the city's creative industries. Forming a city within a city, a campus, close and yet not contiguous, SAIC is urban. Chicago's richness, complexity, and contradictions are the perfect environment for this diverse community.

Every school has something that makes it stand out. At SAIC, there is no one “something.” That is because everything—from how artists and designers learn, to the community’s deep involvement with the issues of the time—is part of a big picture that is intentional. Play and experimentation are at the forefront of the SAIC experience—and of contemporary practice. Students and faculty stretch conventions of what traditional and unconventional materials can do to explore the unknown, achieve breakthroughs, and create meaningful work that expresses a distinctive vision. Because SAIC is convinced that the freedom to experiment nurtures ideas and their expression, the School has a credit/no credit grading system; students have to feel free to fail. A survey conducted by the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University ranked SAIC “the most influential art school in the United States.”

Experimentation starts early with SAIC’s classes for families with young children. Working with non-traditional materials like found objects and food tells children that there is no limit to what they can do. This freedom to explore continues through the undergraduate and graduate programs at SAIC, where students are free to shape their coursework based on their interests, with guidance from advisors. This interdisciplinary freedom allows students to layer media and arrive at new ideas and ways of making.

Being open to new ways of thinking and doing is more crucial today than ever. SAIC’s interdisciplinary approach, which emphasizes collaboration across fields and media, equips emerging artists and designers to develop informed practices and prepares them for an ever-evolving creative landscape after SAIC. At the center of it all is the idea that what we make and what we are thinking about amplify each other in a feedback loop. And so, by experimenting with materials and processes across disciplines, digging into the topics of interest, and engaging the world, thinking is deepened to determine the best form of expression.

As citizen artists, students and faculty at SAIC extend their practices beyond their studios, actively engaging with the world, linking studio practice to social and community issues, and catalyzing change. This synergy is one example of “making and meaning are inseparable.”

As fearless innovators and bold thinkers, SAIC faculty members push the boundaries of creative exploration. In their work as makers, scholars, and innovators, and through their teaching and mentorship, they have shaped the future of art and design alongside their students. Every SAIC faculty member is an active practitioner in their field. The classes they teach emerge from their unique research and practices, and their passion about what they are sharing.

SAIC’s philanthropic priorities put students at the center and make way for the future of art and design. Current philanthropic priorities ensure emerging creatives are fully resourced from their first day of classes to graduation and beyond. Identified through conversations with faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, the institutional and philanthropic priorities of scholarships, wellness, and internships develop a pathway of access to a world-class art and design education.

## **REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

The Vice President, Advancement will report to President Jiseon Lee Isbara. The vice president will serve on the president's leadership team and oversee a team of 20 staff, including four direct reports: executive director of development and alumni engagement; executive director of strategic information; director, donor relations, advancement communications, and events; and director of corporate, foundation, and government relations.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Though I have only been at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for a few months, its vibrancy is clear. It is a place where we find strength in our differences, learn from our diverse perspectives, and foster an inclusive School for our global student body. I hope that sounds like the kind of community you will want to join as our next Vice President, Advancement.*

*You will join SAIC at an exciting time—one full of possibilities. After several successful fundraising initiatives and strong post-pandemic enrollment, the School's near- to mid-term development goals emphasize supporting student outcomes. This means the successful candidate will not only have major gifts experience and the ability to thrive in Chicago's philanthropic landscape, but they will also be able to help further our engagement with creative industries, creating new career path opportunities and social mobility for students.*

*Over its more than 150-year history, SAIC has become the most influential art school in the United States, teaching generations of emerging artists, designers, and scholars to make their mark on the world. If helping tomorrow's talents continue that legacy excites you, then I hope we meet soon.*

—Jiseon Lee Isbara, President

## THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, ACCESS, AND ANTI-RACISM

SAIC cultivates a campus designed to encourage the discovery and development of significant ideas and images. The School is committed to assembling a diverse community of faculty, students, and staff and to nurturing and creating an environment in which those different perspectives and backgrounds can be heard, valued, and utilized. To better support its diverse community of artists, designers, and scholars, SAIC has made diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives a significant element of its planning efforts for more than a decade. These initiatives have established the current DEI staff positions in academic affairs and student affairs, diversified the reach of student admissions and faculty recruitment, incentivized diverse content in the curriculum, introduced DEI training for new community members, and increased programming and support structures to better nurture and create an environment that respects, values, and includes the backgrounds and perspectives of all of its community members.

The School's [Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion](#) leads SAIC's dynamic schoolwide strategy for advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and anti-racism (DEIA+AR). The office works in collaboration with other SAIC leaders, faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members, and key stakeholders. One of the essential responsibilities of the office is to provide vision, direction, coordination, and support to the DEIA+AR ecosystem at SAIC.

The School encourages students to explore diverse narratives, perspectives, and ideas through programs, education, and involvement in the community. The Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion does this work by engaging with the student community outside of the classroom space. Specifically, it works in collaboration with various departments and with students to cultivate an inclusive community where all its members are heard, valued, and respected.

Approximately one-third of all the student groups are affinity- or identity-based. Student affinity groups are formed around a shared interest, ideology, identity, experience, or common goal. These student-led groups are open to all members of the community and provide opportunities to form meaningful connections.

## PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vice President, Advancement will

- develop, manage, and articulate a strategic plan and fundraising priorities for the advancement department;
- work closely with the president and serve as a critical member of the leadership team, providing leadership and vision to ensure the achievement of the organization's advancement efforts;
- serve as the lead relationship manager for the School's most highly rated prospects, securing transformative gifts while working directly with key donors and volunteers;
- staff the School's Board of Governors' Advancement Committee;
- engage and develop strong relationships among the faculty and administration, optimizing the impact of their relationships with potential donors and enfranchising them as spokespersons for the institution in appropriate venues;
- develop annual plans and budgets for alumni and parent relations, annual fund, gift planning, major gifts, and grant development;
- continue the refinement of systems, tools, metrics, data, and methodology that allow for accurate program assessment;
- hire, train, and mentor direct reports and the advancement team toward accountable, goal-oriented outcomes;
- ensure that staff have access to information and briefings on key fundraising priorities, including exhibitions;
- lead the development and implementation of comprehensive capital campaign strategies that achieve organizational fundraising goals, and oversee all phases of campaigns from planning and feasibility studies to execution and evaluation; and
- establish and monitor policies for the advancement department.

## LEADERSHIP

### **Jiseon Lee Isbara**

#### **President, School of the Art Institute of Chicago**

Jiseon Lee Isbara is the president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She assumed the presidency in July 2024, becoming the School's 16<sup>th</sup> executive leader, the second woman, and the first first-generation immigrant to lead the institution. Jiseon oversees the School's world-renowned academic programs, strategic direction, and operations across all facets of the institution. With nearly 25 years of experience in higher education in art and design as a faculty member and administrative leader, she brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role.

Before joining SAIC, Jiseon served as the provost of Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. During her tenure at Otis College, she led the development and implementation of the school's strategic plan and operation, which resulted in enrollment growth, financial health, successful fundraising, and enhanced partnerships. Her leadership also promoted strong diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Previously, she held various roles, including tenure-track faculty and academic and administrative leadership positions at Oregon College of Art and Craft and East Carolina University. Throughout her 16-year administrative tenure, she continued to teach as a faculty member, demonstrating her commitment to education and student support.

Jiseon is deeply committed to fostering academically rigorous and culturally, socioeconomically, and racially inclusive learning environments for creative practitioners and researchers. She has a significant record of bold and courageous leadership, administrative and financial acumen, and interpersonal skill.

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

### **PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago seeks a Vice President, Advancement with

- a deep belief in the mission of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago—to provide excellence in the delivery of a global education in visual, design, media, and related arts, with attendant studies in the history and theory of those disciplines set within a broad-based, humanistic curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences and to provide instruction for this education in a range of formats: written, spoken, media, and exhibition-based;
- experience in the development of successful strategies at the individual, departmental, and institutional level;
- capital campaign experience from inception to completion;
- experience engaging and building a culture of philanthropy with alumni;
- an ability to serve as a strong communicator, public speaker, and collaborative leader with political acumen who will build interpersonal relationships;
- experience managing boards and volunteer committees, including building boards and leveraging the time, talent, and resources of Board members;
- an ability to collaborate and partner with industry leaders within the creative community;
- experience creating and implementing an actionable advancement vision that includes engaging, cultivating, and soliciting both currently active and newly identified prospects;
- an ability to review and evaluate systems and data to ensure success;
- strong communication, relationship-building, project management, organization, and problem-solving skills;
- an ability to motivate and influence others including peers, direct reports, and staff across the organization, utilizing an open and transparent leadership and management style;
- a commitment to applying an ethical code and good judgment, and handling confidential materials and situations with sensitivity and discretion;
- experience supporting an organization with a diverse community of stakeholders, both internal and external; and
- a disarming and authentic manner in engagement with others.

A bachelor's degree or knowledge equivalent to that which would be acquired by completing a four-year college degree program is preferred for this position as is at least 10 years of progressively responsible experience in higher education advancement including at least five years in a leadership role. Experience working within or deep knowledge of the Chicago philanthropic landscape is preferred. SAIC will consider candidates with a broad range of backgrounds. If you are excited about this role and feel that you can contribute to the School, but your experience does not exactly align with every qualification listed above, we encourage you to apply.

## SALARY, BENEFITS, AND CULTURE

The salary range for this position is \$260,000 to \$280,000 annually. SAIC offers a comprehensive package of benefits including generous paid time off; paid holidays; medical, dental, and vision insurance; generous parental, caregiver, and medical leave benefits; competitive retirement plan (up to nine percent employer contribution); tuition remission and tuition exchange program; employee discounts; and complimentary general admission to participating cultural institutions

SAIC flourishes as a result of its passionate, talented staff and faculty—people who think creatively, drawing from their own unique experiences to forge fresh insights, innovative ideas, and ambitious goals for the future. The School strives to attract, engage, and grow with its talented staff and faculty.

## LOCATION

This position is in Chicago, Illinois.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago as well as the responsibilities and qualifications presented in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

The Art Institute of Chicago, including both the School and the Museum, is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for its students, visitors, faculty, and staff, and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on an individual's abilities and qualifications. Neither institution tolerates unlawful discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, military or former military status, or any other status protected by federal, state, or local law, in its programs and activities, public accommodations, or employment practices.

To apply for this position, visit: [Vice President, Advancement, School of the Art Institute of Chicago](#).

To nominate a candidate, please contact Don Hasseltine, [donhasseltine@aspingleadershipgroup.com](mailto:donhasseltine@aspingleadershipgroup.com) or Steven Wallace, [stevenwallace@aspingleadershipgroup.com](mailto:stevenwallace@aspingleadershipgroup.com).

*All inquiries will be held in confidence.*