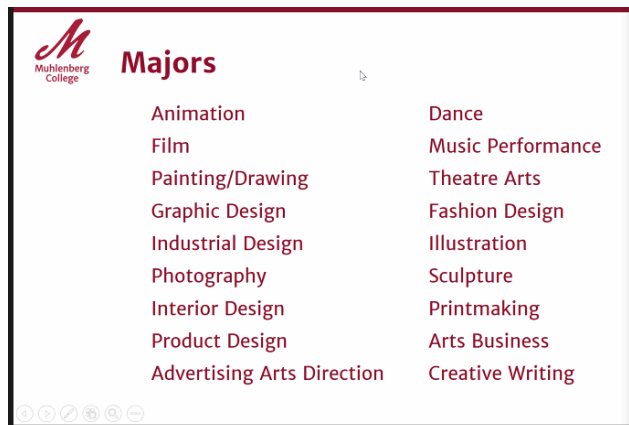


Applying to Arts Programs

Becca Larson, Regional Director of Admissions, Muhlenberg College

April 12, 2021

About the speaker: Becca Larson is currently the Regional Director of Admissions for Muhlenberg College. She has spent a lot of time working with and understanding artistic programs with her current role and previous roles as college counselor at Wildwood and admission work at New York University with students applying to artistic programs across the university. She was also a dance major in college and went through the process herself!



Bachelor of Arts Degree

Focus within a BA degree program leans more toward studies in theory and the liberal arts

$\frac{2}{3}$ of overall curriculum is devoted to courses in all liberal arts

Spend a lot of time in production, but will also graduate with more general skills and academic experiences than you might have in other programs.

Think of your degree in a pie ($\frac{1}{3}$ core liberal arts requirements, $\frac{1}{3}$ major, $\frac{1}{3}$ is up to you)

$\frac{1}{3}$ of overall curriculum is devoted to courses in the studio arts

BA might make more sense in some fields

BA degrees might be more manageable if you want to balance artistic courses with other minors/majors that are interesting to you.

Small liberal arts based colleges may have more BA offerings

Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Music Degrees: Focus is within the art

$\frac{2}{3}$ overall curriculum devoted to courses in studio arts

$\frac{1}{3}$ of overall curriculum devoted to courses in the liberal arts

You might find BFA programs that are all encompassing within the arts

Is one better than the other? The approach is different. Each find success within the fields, but the approach is different. IF you want space to explore other areas of academic interest, then you'll want a BA, flip side if you want to be more focused then BFA works.

You might apply to both! That's okay, you don't have to choose one path when you begin to build your college list. Be open, see where you're admitted and then see what makes sense for you artistically, geographically, and personally.

Applying to artistic programs, adds another complex layer to an already complex process.

In addition to all those steps, you could be:

- Traveling to audition, portfolio days
- Preparing artistic materials
- Have earlier deadlines
- Write an artistic statement

It's work! But because it's something you're passionate about, it can be really fun to prepare you portfolio, write a screenplay, or whatever else.

You want to be organized in this process!

Get to know the programs!

Options of places to study:

- Traditional art schools
 - Cal Arts, Pratt (focusing solely on visual arts), know are dedicated to the arts, majority if not all degrees call within artistic programs
- Art schools that focus on one or just a handful of art forms
 - Specific artistic programs housed within the larger university
 - NYU or Tufts (partnership with museum of fine arts)
 - Apply directly into the school or college and may have separate deadlines
- Art colleges within larger universities
- Liberal arts colleges that offer a major in the arts
- How competitive is the program??
 - Do you thrive in a competitive environment, do you feel challenged?
 - Or do you not like that pressure?
- Think about the **type of environment you'll thrive in.**

Most colleges are four year degrees with bachelor's degrees. Some places might offer certificate or two year training, lots of approaches to artistic education.

Musical example: Berklee college of music, manhattan school of music, and then you have Oberlin college or Gettysburg college that houses a conservatory within the larger liberal arts.

Think about your timeline

In addition to submitting your admissions application, you'll have to prepare artistic materials, look at requirements early, give yourself time

Begin over the summer! Picking out monologues, practicing solo dance performing, going through all of your writing, pieces of art to put together a cohesive portfolio, or if you don't have a ton of figure drawing experience and need it, you might have time to take a class!

Time in the fall will be spent with college essays and the application process so look early!

Art School Applications

Assemble a solid admissions application

- Academic rigor, test scores, essays, letters of recommendation, etc.
- Artist's statement, creative resume
- Audition or portfolio

What colleges are looking for?

Well-rounded students in arts and academics

Dedication to creative practice

Have skills needed to be successful in a program

Willingness to learn and take direction

Auditions

Theater, music, dance, etc.

- Measures not only the creative and expressive facility, but also skill level.
- In-person vs. digital auditions: pre-screens, recordings, resumes, headshots, etc.
- Do you have the level of training, are you strong enough technically to meet the program where it is and continue to grow.
- Prepare at least two pieces in contrasting styles (monologues, songs, dances, etc.)
Trying to show range of your artistic ability
- Showcase breadth and depth
- Being evaluated the moment you walk in and the moment you leave!

May include

- Warm-up time
- Technical work
- Performing prepared pieces
- Group exercises
- Sight reading (for musicians)
- Sharing pre-recorded pieces
- Interview

In Los Angeles, you might have the ability to audition in person, colleges will often host audition opportunities locally

Unified auditions (theater)

By the college specifically

Portfolios

A lot of colleges use slideroom (virtual portfolio sharing software) each college or university you can choose the images to send. If you're applying to multiple colleges, slideroom is an online library where you can use same images for different colleges and it links directly with your Common Application

A way for admission counselors and faculty members to view thought processes when interpreting ideas and visually presenting them on a 2D and 3D plane.

Should demonstrate knowledge of color theory, composition, and be cohesive in nature. Most schools will ask students to submit between 10 - 20 samples and film samples may be 3 - 10 minutes (be clear as to what part you played in that film - were you the cinematographer, did you write the screenplay??)


Prompts for universities can change, so do look at what past challenges have been, but it may change as to what you need to prepare.

Chat with art teachers at the school, ask questions from a professional

You probably have more of your portfolio done than you think! Portfolio creation isn't necessarily expecting you to do new work, often it's pulling off things you've already created. If you have an idea of what you want to study (fashion, art, etc.) research programs and see what the portfolio requirements are to get an idea of what to expect to work on and prepare over summer. You don't HAVE to know what program yet, but just get an idea in your brain as to what to expect.

There are artistic programs that don't require programs too!

National Portfolio Day (a weekend typically happening in Los Angeles) where dozens if not hundreds of art schools will be there with admission counselors and faculty who do evaluation, you can bring in your portfolio and often get feedback before you're admitted. Lines can get long, so choose a few schools you want to talk to and prioritize.



Portfolios

- A way for admission counselors and faculty members to view thought process when interpreting ideas and visually presenting them on a 2-D or 3-D plane
- Should demonstrate knowledge of color theory, composition, and be cohesive in nature
- Most schools will ask students to submit between 10 and 20 samples; film samples may be 3-10 minutes

Portfolios may include:

- Observational drawing, still life, figure drawings, etc.
- 2-D/3-D design work
- Film reel (3-10 min.)
- Screenplays
- Animated film short
- Photographs
- Game characters, schemes
- Set designs, fashion designs
- Creative writing excerpts
- Interview

Interview, they will ask you questions about your work. Generally will also ask about your artist statement (overall artistic vision, goals, mediums you work with, etc.)

If they gave you a prompt or challenge, spend time reflecting on it, what was the process like, what did you enjoy, walk them through the process) Practice having a conversation about your work out loud and then jot down notes about what you said.

Next Steps

1. Research colleges with artistic programs
2. Engage with admissions office
3. Sign up for more information/get on mailing lists (on the college, but also on the college mailing list!!)
4. Sign up for virtual programs
5. Connect with a current student (either an alumni, or someone there, get advice on what they wish they'd done, or insight as to something the college values)
6. Sit in on classes or attend a performance, a gallery walk, etc. Take advantage!
7. Talk to your teachers/directors/instructors (if you need help recording monologues, or need feedback, get great advice, likely may write letters of recommendation on your behalf) help them be aware of your artistic goals and feel supported!

Ask better questions! If you're talking to admissions, get picky and specific. Ask about alumni outcomes, before you reach out, do some basic research, and then ask deeper questions, ask about career opportunities. Connecting with alumni or current students can be incredibly beneficial. Schools that value demonstrated interest, let the admissions office know that you have been asking questions and make sure it's tracked. If you have an email exchange with someone, forward it to the admissions counselor!

Give yourself time! If you need more of your performances on a YouTube presence, or if you need time to dedicate to songwriting, etc. start research and figure out how you can perfect your craft, your skills, or your presence. Get tips directly from admissions!