

Guide for the Prospective MFA Graduate Student

*Southern Utah University
College of Performing and Visual Arts
MFA Arts Administration Program*

Preface

This web booklet has been designed to address questions concerning graduate school, generally and in reference to the Masters of Fine Arts program in Arts Administration at Southern Utah University. As a prospective MFA graduate student at SUU, you may have questions about arts administration, the graduate school experience, the application and acceptance process, and ways to finance your education. It is our hope you will find the answers you need within this guide to prepare yourself for an exciting graduate school experience at SUU.

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Section 1: So, you're considering graduate school in arts administration...

The following questions and answers address graduate school and the study of arts administration in general.

Why should I go to graduate school?

Students of all ages and situations go for a variety of reasons, such as expanding career prospects, self-improvement, networking opportunities, increasing expertise, or a change in professional careers. Wanting to delay your job hunt is not a good enough reason to attend graduate school. It is a lot of work and requires strong motivation, focus, and dedication. You should have a clear idea of what you would like to accomplish after completing your degree. You will often be asked to share these plans, both as a part of the application process and throughout the program.

Having a graduate degree may bring future benefits in the workplace. These might include higher considerations for positions as an applicant, for promotions as an employee, or for a salary raise. A graduate degree also offers a “stamp of approval,” suggesting you have both a basic and advanced set of skills.

What is the difference between graduate schools and professional schools?

Graduate schools offer study in numerous areas, while professional schools provide training in specific areas, such as law, dentistry, or medicine. Careers for graduate school graduates are just as varied as the fields they can study. On the other hand, law school graduates will most likely become lawyers and medical school graduates will most likely become doctors, even though there are many different types of both. SUU is considered a graduate school.

What is arts administration?

Arts administration is the systematic organization of business principles, people and practices necessary to fund, maintain, promote, produce and/or present an artistic product for a cultivated audience. It involves working with artists, patrons, staff, and other administrators. Responsibilities as an arts administrator may include, but are not limited to: strategic planning, marketing, fundraising, budgeting/finance, advocacy, education, program development, and community relations.

Why should I study arts administration?

If you love the arts, but are concerned just how you are going to make a living, perhaps arts administration is for you. Administration is a crucial part of the success of arts organizations and provides an avenue for you to share your love of the arts, while maintaining the lifestyle you may envision. Benefits to being an arts administrator often include salaried positions, insurance packages, regular office hours, vacation time, and job security.

To get an idea of the types of administrative positions available in the arts, ArtSEARCH is an excellent resource. It is an employment bulletin published bi-weekly by Theatre Communications Group, Inc. and is

available only through subscription. If you still have access to your undergraduate library, check to see if they carry a subscription. For further questions, contact TCG at (212) 697-5230 or www.tcg.org.

What are some examples of jobs in the arts administration field?

Positions held by MFA arts administration graduates are as diverse as the field itself and the many arts disciplines within it. Careers can be found in various not-for-profit and for-profit arts organizations as well as in not-for-profit organizations outside the arts arena. Examples of such positions often fall within the general categories of:

Executive Leadership	Production Management
General Management	Company Management
Fundraising	Human Resource Management
Special Events Management	Financial Management
Marketing	Advocacy
Press and Public Relations	Government Relations
Publications & Information Technology	Union Leadership
Box Office Management	Arts Education

What is the difference between and M.F.A. and an M.A. degree?

An M.F.A. degree is a terminal degree, meaning it is the highest degree achievable within a field of study. Put succinctly, the M.F.A. program combines classroom experience and practical, hands-on learning. An M.A., on the other hand, is often considered an academic step toward earning a doctorate. You are also able to teach at an institution of higher education with an M.F.A.

Am I prepared for graduate school?

Graduate school differs greatly from undergraduate study. It is more focused, more expensive, more individualized, and requires more dedication to studies than do most undergraduate programs. Because you are a part of a smaller group, you must be ready to carry your weight with assignments, discussions, research and projects. Your professors and classmates will expect you to:

- Read a large amount of material on a regular basis
- Take thorough lecture notes
- Lead/participate in class discussion, study session, and professional seminars
- Write research papers
- Prepare presentations

Balancing your priorities while in the program will be critical. Careful planning will be necessary to ensure that you can spend sufficient time and energy on your studies, as well as your life outside the program.

Section 2: Details the MFA program

What is the mission of the MFA program?

The Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) program in arts administration seeks to provide a practical interdisciplinary education that develops well-rounded generalists, employable in any of the arts disciplines as professional arts administrators. The educational objective of the M.F.A. program is to develop graduates who can balance administrative structure with artistic process in an effort to ensure artistic integrity and fiscal responsibility of arts organizations.

Tell me more about the program, curriculum and the paid assistantship.

The MFA program in arts administration is offered in a two-calendar-year format beginning each fall and consisting of 60 semester hours combined with work study performed through professional assistantships. Class size is limited – thereby providing the highest level of personal instruction and mentoring to

each student.

Students receive the opportunity to participate in a series of scholarly and practical activities which result in the combination of knowledge and experience necessary to compete in today's job market upon completion of the program.

The MFA program provides a solid curriculum of national standard, which focuses on practical applications and philosophies of non-profit management necessary to prepare each student with the skills and knowledge to pursue a professional leadership position in the field of arts administration. Professional assistantships, individual tutorials, and direct access to master teachers are combined to create a practical learning methodology. Faculty and professional guests exemplify excellence in teaching, scholarship, and professional contributions to the field of arts administration. This creates an exhilarating environment which enhances learning, stimulates and enriches faculty and students, and provides a pathway for the continuance of lifelong learning.

The MFA program provides services to both the public and private sectors through professional assistantships with the College of Performing and Visual Arts as well as with affiliates such as the Utah Shakespearean Festival, and the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery (see Appendix A). These partnerships, in addition to other local and regional opportunities in the arts, enable students in the MFA program to apply their scholarship first hand in a professional working environment. The assistantship with local professional arts organizations mentioned above allow students to gain experiences in varied areas including Business/Finance, Company Management, Marketing/Public Relations, Education, and Art Gallery Management, to name a few. Examples of projects done by students within their assistantship assignments include assisting with the annual High School Shakespeare Competition hosted by SUU and the Utah Shakespearean Festival, compiling an audience survey, recreating the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America's (STAA) membership directory, working with the Utah Museum Action Team, and developing/teaching summer theatre classes for local youth.

The curriculum covers a wide variety of arts administrative topics. Classes are taught by university faculty and professional guest faculty members. Expect to engage in numerous group projects and research papers.

Each semester, you will take three classes in addition to the assistantship totaling ten credit hours per semester. The sixth and final semester of the program is dedicated to exploring the student's postgraduate vocational interests through a focused internship and capstone project. In preparation for this final internship you will be responsible for researching viable arts organizations, making contacts, arranging interviews, and keeping the Program Director informed of this process. Following the three-month internship, you will return to SUU to defend your experience through a Capstone Project.

Who are the Faculty?

Matthew Neves, Program Director/Assistant Professor
M.B.A. Illinois State University -- Arts Management
M.F.A. University of Exeter in the United Kingdom -- Theatre
Directing (Shakespeare Studies)
B.A. Brigham Young University -- Theatre Acting/Directing

Dr. William J. Byrnes, Dean, College of Performing and Visual Arts
M.F.A. University of California at Los Angeles – Theatre: Lighting
Design and Technical Production
B.A. University of New Mexico – English, minors in Philosophy and
Psychology

<http://www.suu.edu/faculty/byrnes/professional.html>

Raymond P. Inkel, Production Manager, Utah Shakespearean Festival
<http://www.bard.org/News/inkelbio.html>

Dr. Carl Templin, Dean School of Business
http://www.suu.edu/faculty/templin/pdf/templin_vita03.pdf

Dr. Alan Hamblin, Chair Dept. of Management and Marketing
http://www.suu.edu/faculty/hamlin/resume_files/BIOSKETC.htm

Dr. Gerald Calvasina, Professor of Business Administration
<http://www.suu.edu/faculty/calvasina/>

Dr. Wayne Roberts, Associate Professor of Marketing
<http://www.suu.edu/faculty/robertsw/Abbreviated%20ResumeRTF.rtf>

Dr. David Christensen, Chair, Department of Accounting
<http://www.suu.edu/faculty/christensend/>

What are the required courses I will take?

Required Courses

AA 6010	Principles of Art Administration
AA 6030	Professional Writing and Communications
AA 6040	Arts and Society
AA 6060	Fund Development for Arts Administrators
AA 6080	Practices and Principles of Visual Arts
AA 6990	Artistic and Administrative Assignments
AA 7100	Board Relations
AA 7240	Marketing the Arts II
AA 7250	Practices and Principles of Arts Organizations
AA 7950	Final Rotation Internship
AA 7990	Professional Capstone
ACCT 6000	Foundations of Accounting
ACCT 6100	Advanced Managerial Accounting
ECON 6000	Foundations of Economics
MKTG 6000	Foundations of Marketing
MGMT 6100	Advanced Organizational Issues
MGMT 6103	Advanced Issues in Business : Leadership
MGMT 6300	Human Resource Management and Law

What is the difference between a thesis and a capstone project?

A *thesis* is an extensive project centered on a specific theme or point of view, resulting in a lengthy paper or dissertation. A *capstone project* is based on a practicum, or actual experience.

3: The Application Process

What is required to apply to the program?

As an applicant for the MFA program, you must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Earned a bachelors degree, preferably in an arts discipline

- Overall undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher evidenced by official transcript(s)
- Resume including academic, professional, and volunteer experience
The quality of your leadership skills will be assessed through the following experiences, as included in a resume:
 - Undergraduate leadership activities
 - Civic/community volunteerism
 - Internship with professional nonprofit and/or arts organizations, and
 - Paid professional experience in the arts or nonprofit-related work

Other resume tips are located in Appendix B.

- Three (3) letters of recommendation
As soon as possible, select three people who are familiar with your work habits, academic ability, and personality. These individuals may be professors, advisors, supervisors, or community leaders with whom you have interacted. In order for them to write the best letters of recommendation possible, provide them with your plans for graduate school, additional background about yourself, and any other details that support the strengths you've demonstrated. Letters of recommendation can take longer than expected to be completed, so start early.
- Completed application, Statement of Purpose, and non-refundable application fee of \$45 is due when submitting the Graduate Application to SUU. Applications are available on-line through the MFA website at www.suu.edu/pva/mfa or by calling the SUU Admissions Office at (435) 586-7740.

The Statement of Purpose gives you the opportunity to share your intent for graduate school as well as your career goals. You may also include your reasons for applying to this graduate program. It need only be one page in length and will also be used as a writing sample to demonstrate effective writing skills.

Applicants may pay by check or by credit card through the SUU Cashier's Office at (435) 586-7720.

- Interview with the Program Director and acceptance by the Graduate Admissions Committee.

The applicant must schedule an interview, from January 2 through March 30, on-campus or at selected national conference sites. Please call (435) 865-8663 for specific conference dates and locations or to schedule a visit to SUU. If these options are not possible, a telephone interview may be granted.

What if I don't meet all the requirements?

Each requirement is considered a component of the whole. If you lack experience, or feel you are weak in a specific area, this will not block you from consideration. Simply emphasize your strengths in other areas.

What if I am a non-traditional student?

At SUU, you are a non-traditional student if you are married, over 25, have a family, and/or are returning to school after an absence of three years or more. Nontraditional students' diversity and varied experiences add a beneficial perspective to the overall classroom experience. As a prospective non-traditional graduate student, you must be sure you have the time to dedicate to a full-time scholastic schedule even with outside responsibilities.

Timeline

October – January	Request recruitment information and prepare application materials Send in application materials and fee
January – March	Have interview
March 31	DEADLINE for applications. You will be contacted about your application. You will be <u>accepted</u> , <u>rejected</u> or <u>placed on a waiting list</u> .

Section 4: Making the Final Selection

How is my application processed?

When SUU receives your application:

- Your file is created by the Admissions Office
- Your file is reviewed when all elements of the application are received
- Your file is sent to the MFA Program Director
- MFA program faculty review applications and make decisions about a candidate's entrance into the MFA program

How will I know if I have been accepted?

You will be notified by telephone and will receive written confirmation through the mail soon thereafter.

What do I do once I have been accepted?

You will be sent a packet of information containing further instructions. You will have a specific amount of time to notify us of your intent to attend. Also, be sure to notify any other school(s) to which you have been accepted that you will not be attending, so they may fill your space with another applicant.

What if I am not accepted?

If you are not invited to join the MFA program, one or more of the following reasons may apply:

- Failure to include all required application materials
- Limited amount of space in the program
- Lack of sufficient experience or background in the arts

If you are interested in reapplying to the program, you must pay a reapplication fee to the Admissions Office. This fee allows your file to be reactivated for the coming year.

What if I am put on a waiting list?

This means you have met all the eligibility requirements for entry into the program, but have been placed on the waiting list due to lack of space. Should an opening become available for the current year, offers to prospective students will be made according to the order of the waiting list.

Section 5: Financing your Education

How will I pay for my education?

SUU's MFA students are all eligible to receive tuition assistance and/or a full tuition waiver. MFA students are also eligible to receive assistantships up to a maximum of \$8,000 per student per fiscal year. These are earned through part-time work mentioned under Section 2. You, however, will be responsible to pay for student fees, books and living expenses.

What if I need additional money?

Additional employment outside the program is discouraged, and often restricted. You can qualify for student loans, if necessary.

How can I contact the financial aid office on campus?

For further questions regarding financial aid, please contact the Financial Aid office at (435) 586-7735 or <http://www.suu.edu/ss/financial/>.

Appendix A

The following professional organizations are located in Cedar city, and are partners with SUU's MFA program. Internship opportunities are provided through the paid professional assistantship mentioned in Section 2.

Utah Shakespearean Festival

Currently in its fifth decade of operation, the Utah Shakespearean Festival is committed to entertain, enrich, and educate audiences through professional rotating repertory productions of Shakespeare and other master dramatists. Performances are enhanced by a variety of activities that enable patrons to better understand and appreciate the richness of the theatrical experience. As evidence of its high quality and national significance, the Festival received the coveted Tony Award for America's Outstanding Regional Theatre in 2000. www.bard.org

Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery

The Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery is located on the campus of SUU and is dedicated to providing varied visual arts experiences for a broad rural area southern Utah. The Gallery mounts educational exhibits throughout the year and offers related programs, preserves and collects fine art, and serves as a resource center for the visual arts. www.suu.edu/pva/artgallery

College of Performing and Visual Arts

The College of Performing and Visual Arts includes the artistic disciplines of Art Theatre, Dance, and Music, the graduate MFA program in Arts Administration, and the professional organizations of the Utah Shakespearean Festival, the American Folk Ballet, and the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery.

. We believe the arts to be an essential and inspiring part of our campus, community, region and nation. We seek highly motivated undergraduates and graduate students, who are dedicated, enthusiastic, disciplined, creative and resourceful.

Many graduates of this college attend nationally prominent graduate and professional schools. They also find successful careers as arts administrators, educators, and performing and visual artists.

<http://www.suu.edu/pva/>

Appendix B

The following list includes areas to consider when writing your resume. For additional questions about resume preparations, contact SUU Career Services at (435) 586-5420 or visit on-line at www.suu.edu/ss/career/index.html.

Format

There are numerous formats you can use when designing your resume. Choose one that is attractive, easy to read and professional.. You should continuously update your resume. Make sure it is typed, free of errors, and neat.

Personal History

List name, address, phone numbers for home, work and school (if applicable), and e-mail address. This information should be near the top and very visible.

Educational History

List all institutions of higher education you have attended and the degrees earned at each.

Honors and Awards

Especially academic honors, but others may be included as well.

Honors Societies

Include listing of those in which you are/were a member

Leadership Experiences

Include leadership experiences in academic, community, teaching, professional, and/or arts settings.

Related Professional Experience

Include brief summary of employment and related work or committee experiences.

Special Skills and Hobbies

This provides the reader a glimpse of your personality and interests.

List of References

List at least three people who can comment positively about you and your academic/professional abilities. Include their name, title, address, and phone number. You may also say "References Available Upon Request" if you do not have room to list them.

