



Organization

Founded in 1986, Center of Creative Arts (COCA) is a national leader in innovative arts education, dedicated to fostering the transformative power of the arts to change lives. COCA's incoming President and CEO will have the benefit of working with a world-renowned faculty, a newly expanded campus, including a 52,000-square-foot addition that includes a 450-seat theatre, and a diverse community of stakeholders that serve as a model of how city-building and cultural expression go hand in hand. Communicating COCA's role as an exemplary community arts institution will be the primary role of the newly created role of President and CEO.

COCA is the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the country and annually serves 50,000 people of all ages and skill levels—from enthusiastic amateurs to emerging professionals. COCA's faculty of distinguished educators provides meaningful arts experiences in its own studios, gallery, and theaters. Outreach programs extend COCA's mission into schools, community centers, and corporate settings. COCA is one of only 18 schools in the nation accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools.

COCA was founded with the intention of being a courageous space for learning and coming together across boundaries of geography, race, and class. In doing so, COCA has grown to become one of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis—a position bolstered by its commitment to accessibility. As a community arts center, COCA works at intersections of the community, collaborating with wide-ranging partners. COCA continues to develop programs and remove barriers to ensure broad and varied participation. It has developed a portfolio of programs to provide many entry points and to reach a diverse body of students, participants, and stakeholders.

Core programs at COCA include:

- **Classes and Camps:** Programs in dance, theatre, voice, art, design, and culinary
- **Pre-Professional Division:** A youth development vehicle for career and college-oriented students ages 9 to 18, offering highly customized, rigorous, and diverse training and comprehensive support services for students in need
- **COCAedu:** Serves 50 local schools/community sites through 270 semester-long collaborative arts integration residencies, after-school arts classes, and professional development for teachers
- **COCAbiz:** Develops creativity, communication skills, and adaptive capacities in the workplace through public programs and corporate learning initiatives
- **Performance and Exhibitions:** Presents and produces live performances (COCA Presents) and visual arts exhibitions (Millstone Gallery)
- **Community and Public Programs:** Hands-on arts engagement and site-specific programming aimed at community building

COCA is also a partner with Washington University's MFA program, working with their world-renowned dance faculty, many of whom have worked with American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dance Theatre of Harlem, National Ballet of Washington, D.C., Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, and Utah Repertory Dance Theatre.

COCA has gained national recognition for its programs through prestigious grants from the Hearst Foundations, Ford Foundation, Wallace Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and The Kresge Foundation. In 2019, COCA was awarded a What's Right with the Region Award from FOCUS for "Fostering Creativity for Social Change" as well as a Shine the Light Award from Paraquad for making COCA a more accessible, equitable, and welcoming place for people with disabilities. In 2017, COCA was extolled as an exemplary national model of excellence in the National Endowment for the Arts' video *A Look at Arts Education*. In 2016, COCA was the recipient of two awards for advancing diversity and inclusion: the Anti-Defamation League's David M. Grebler Award for Social Justice and a Who's Who Diversity in Color Award. COCA was featured in "The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education," a study conducted by Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, and as a model organization in The Kresge Foundation's publication, "Building a Culture of Capitalization in Your Organization."

In August 2020, COCA announced the successful completion of the Create Our Future Campaign, raising \$49 million over its four-year effort to support the construction of the Ferring East Wing—an accessible, state-of-the-art expansion. The expansion is situated adjacent to the organization’s long-time home in the historic Erich Mendelsohn-designed mid-century building in University City, which was also fully renovated as part of the project. Affectionately dubbed ‘the house of the people,’ the new combined 92,000-square-foot campus is uniquely positioned to welcome diverse, multi-generational audiences for classes, camps, performances, exhibitions, and community gatherings for years to come. Physical facilities include a variety of dance and art studios of varying sizes, the 450-seat Catherine B. Berges Theatre, Staenberg Performance Lab, Dierbergs Kitchen for culinary arts, and Millstone Gallery, public spaces, meeting spaces, and administrative offices for the full staff.

Looking to the future, COCA has embarked on a strategic process centered on five key priorities: improve equity and impact across COCA’s arts and education programming and engagement; expand COCA’s reach through new partnerships, external communication, and stakeholder engagement; establish a viable and sustainable financial model; evolve and strengthen COCA’s organizational structure and practices for greater effectiveness; and develop and articulate COCA’s visions and goals for equity. COCA’s quest for innovation in arts education and institutional excellence and progressive city-building initiatives, exemplified by Forward through Ferguson, suggest an opportunity for deep social impact through creative expression and engagement.

COCA is supported by a 42-member board of directors, led by President Bill Carson. COCA’s staff, led by Executive Director Kelly Pollock, includes 281 full- and part-time employees and is supported by 300 volunteers. COCA’s annual operating budget is approximately \$6.6 million. For the fiscal year ending August 31, 2021, COCA reported a total revenue of \$9.5 million, with \$6.5 million from contributions, events, and grants and \$1.6 million from program services. Total expenses were \$6.9 million.

Community

St. Louis is a dynamic cultural, arts, science and technology hub located in America’s Midwest. A crossroads of national and international migration, St. Louis continues to be a catalyst for the melding of traditions that cut across social and economic divisions to form a uniquely American brand of arts and cultural activity.

Home to both the National Blues Museum and the St. Louis Symphony, one of country’s oldest orchestras, the impact of the city on all major forms of music has been well documented. Jazz, blues and early rock and roll would not exist in its contemporary forms were it not for the support of the local community supporting artists at iconic venues such as Blueberry Hill. Other prominent cultural institutions include the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Pulitzer Arts Foundations, Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis Zoo, Saint Louis Science Center, The MUNY, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, Missouri History Museum, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis (The Rep), The Black Rep, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and more than 40 theater organizations.

The city also boasts a robust tech sector, being a national center of geolocation technology and home to Twitter founder and native St. Louisan Jack Dorsey’s current project, Block. The city has also committed considerable resources to the Cortex Innovation Community, a 200 acre tech sector hub located near Washington University’s medical campus, St. Louis University, and Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

St. Louis remains the largest city in Missouri, with a population of 2.8 million residents in the greater metropolitan area. According to 2021 US Census estimates, the demographics of St. Louis metro area are as follow: White 73 percent, Black or African American 18 percent, Asian three percent, two or more races three percent, Hispanic or Latino three percent.

COCA is located in the Delmar Loop, a six-block center of entertainment, culture, dining, and shopping that has been named one of the 10 best streets in America. Filled with historic locations, the Delmar Loop is both walkable and traversable through MetroLink public transportation. The area is growing and thriving both economically and culturally. Operating within a broadly diverse region made up of dozens of nearby unique neighborhoods, staff and artists at COCA have access to one of the country’s largest parks (Forest Park) and multiple nearby universities, including the immediately adjacent Washington University.

Sources: Edited from stlouis-mo.gov, britannica.com, explorestlouis.com

Position Summary

Reporting directly to the Board of Directors, the President and CEO will be responsible for shaping COCA's vision and establishing and implementing the organization's strategic goals while serving as the primary external leader for the organization. The President and CEO, with the assistance of the senior leadership team, will clearly define COCA's expectations and goals in a number of areas, including fundraising, finance, network building, artistic and educational programming, and high-level administrative functions.

The President and CEO will also serve as a national leader in community arts education, serving not only to advance conversations concerning the equity and access of the arts to all sectors of our society, but framing and contextualizing COCA's work as an exemplar of how this work can be done for the benefit of other arts institutions.

Roles and Responsibilities

Lead Arts Education Advocate

- Articulate COCA's unique attributes (educational philosophy, faculty, physical infrastructure, etc.) as a leader within the arts and culture sector on a local, national, and international stage.
- Frame and contextualize COCA's role in advancing city-building through the arts.
- Expand COCA's cultural and educational impact within and beyond the greater St. Louis area.
- Create opportunities for collaboration with other academic and cultural institutions.

Primary Architect of Organizational Culture

- Implement mission, vision, and values of the organization as outlined in the current strategic plan, as well as work towards long-term evolution of these ideas by a process of facilitated review.
- Realize COCA's continuing commitment to EDIA polices that make all students, staff, and board members feel welcomed and cared for as constituents of the organization.
- Refine COCA's management and reporting structure to better serve internal and external stakeholders.
- Establish a total rewards philosophy and implementation plan for the organization, including retirement planning.
- Deliver professional development that encourages cross-departmental learning, ensuring that COCA's artistic and administrative staff have access to training that will cross-pollinate departments.
- Expand COCA's culture of transparency and accountability for all stakeholders.

Principle Sustainability Envoy

- Secure COCA's financial health through expanding the organization's development networks and ensuring board stewardship.
- Ensure COCA's compliance with all governance and fiduciary responsibilities.
- Develop and expand board engagement.
- Expand COCA's connection to government at the local, state, and federal levels.

Traits and Characteristics

The President and CEO will be a versatile and resourceful leader with the ability to anticipate complex problems and work collaboratively to solve them. Understanding how to prioritize long-range goals while balancing urgent tasks is of the utmost importance, while maintaining adaptive flexibility in their decision making. They will value interactions with a range of stakeholders, eagerly solving problems for the board, staff, audience members, and donors. Comfort in networking across sectors (donors, government, education, grass-roots community) beyond the arts is a must. The President and CEO will demonstrate leadership through consultation and consensus building with highly developed cultural competencies and the ability to handle difficult situations with diplomacy and ease, while remaining sensitive and responsive to the needs of others. The President and CEO will also possess a leadership that promotes transparency with constituents, including the board, staff, and students/parents.

Other key competencies include:

- **Diplomacy and Interpersonal Skills** – The integrity to uphold the highest ethical standards, while exhibiting tact when communicating with all members of the COCA community.
- **Personal Accountability and Leadership** – The clarity to use positional and relational influence to organize people to pursue a collective vision, managed with a sense of purpose and direction.
- **Conceptual Thinking** – The aptitude to analyze problems and opportunities as part of a common ecosystem, with solutions that will emerge from a holistic view of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses and guided by strategic planning and a broad knowledge base.
- **Problem Solving and Priority Management** – The resiliency to solve problems from a variety of vantage points, while understanding the limited capacity of the organization, and that resources must be allocated to solve these issues in a planned, measured, and orderly fashion.

Qualifications

A bachelor’s degree or equivalent experience is required. A master’s degree is preferred. Seven or more years of experience working in the field of performing arts or arts education and five or more years of management experience are required. This position requires financial literacy as well as an understanding of financial reporting. Strong candidates will be comfortable working in a nonprofit environment that includes budget development and management responsibilities. Demonstrated accomplishments in arts advocacy, case making, supporting funding proposals, and general fundraising will be a great asset to the organization. Excellent verbal and written communication skills are essential, including confidence and clarity in presenting to small and large groups from a variety of constituents. Experience in raising upwards of \$10 million in campaigns and revenue generation in the nonprofit sector.

Compensation and Benefits

COCA offers competitive compensation, anticipated in the range of \$210,000 to \$250,000 plus merit-based bonus opportunity. Benefits include full medical, dental, and vision insurance; life insurance fully paid by the employer and holiday time.

Applications and Inquiries

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click [here](#) or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

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Equity Statement

COCA is committed to actively and intentionally operating as an anti-bias, anti-racist institution. As such, we promote policies, practices, and programs that create courageous spaces for our COCA community to dialogue toward understanding. We know art is a powerful instrument for social justice. It is a means for people to share history, culture, and perspectives, celebrate differences, challenge assumptions, and find common ground. We aim to be a home to people from all backgrounds. We do not discriminate based on race, national or ethnic origin, citizen status, veteran status, ancestry, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other basis of discrimination. COCA is dedicated to advancing anti-bias, anti-racism work as we grow. As a learning institution, we understand that this work is an iterative journey. We will continue to evolve our strategies in collaboration with our communities in order to remain relevant and impactful.