

Organization

Wharton Center for Performing Arts

Wharton Center for Performing Arts (Wharton Center) at Michigan State University (MSU) engages the community through dynamic programming, education, and outreach to inspire the mind and move the soul. Wharton Center will celebrate its 40th year in the 2022-2023 season, serving as the premier venue in mid-Michigan presenting Broadway, classical, jazz, variety, theatre, dance, world music, family events, sensory-friendly performances, lectures, and concerts.

Annually, the Wharton Center presents six to nine weeks of Broadway shows and 20 to 30 performing arts events. In 2019, *Venues Today* ranked the Wharton Center as the 10th highest grossing performing arts center among international venues with a capacity of 2,001-5,000 seats. The largest venue at Wharton Center is Cobb Great Hall, which boasts 2,254 seats. Additionally, Wharton Center houses the 585-seat Pasant Theatre. The Wharton Center is the home venue for MSU's College of Music large ensemble programs, the Department of Theatre mainstage productions, and the Lansing Symphony Orchestra. Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. The university resides on land ceded in the 1819 Treat of Saginaw.

Institute for Arts and Creativity opened in 2008 to connect youth to engaging, creative opportunities that expand their hearts, minds, and world view. Programs include Take It From the Top, the Sutton Foster Awards, the Young Playwright Festival, Sensory-Friendly Performances, Disney Musicals in Schools, and the High School Shakespeare Immersion Project. Wharton Center's volunteer organization, The Inner Circle has 300 members, many of whom assist and support the Center's professional staff in arts education, box office, gift shop, and front of house. Wharton Center has a staff of 40 employees and an annual operating budget of \$11 to \$15 million range depending on Broadway programming and currently has an endowment of \$19 million.

Michigan State University

Founded in 1855, Michigan State University (MSU) is one of the world's leading public research-intensive institutions, one of the original land-grant universities, and a member of the Association of American Universities. MSU enrolls approximately 50,000 students in 17 colleges, employs more than 11,000 faculty and staff, and has approximately 563,000 living alumni worldwide. The beautiful 5,200-acre campus is located in East Lansing, Michigan, adjacent to the state capital and an hour from suburban Detroit. The nation's premier land-grant institution, MSU is home to world-class faculty, nationally and internationally recognized academic departments with over 200 programs of study, and a diverse student body from 130 countries, all 50 states, and every county in Michigan.

Community

East Lansing is the home of Michigan State University and is adjacent to the state capital, Lansing. Located 90 minutes northwest of Detroit and approximately four hours from Chicago, East Lansing has a population of 48,579, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, and the Lansing-East Lansing metropolitan area has a population of over 450,000 with 25 different neighborhoods. Downtown Lansing includes a mix of restaurants, shops, galleries, visitor accommodations, offices, living spaces, public art, and outdoor plazas. East Lansing has been recognized nationally as the second happiest and eighth most walkable small U.S. city. A tree-lined boulevard, Grand River Avenue, separates the MSU campus and East Lansing. The city boasts many natural and cultural spaces, such as the W.J. Beal Botanical Garden, the oldest botanical garden in the U.S., the Eli and Edyth Broad Art Museum, the Abrams Planetarium and the MSU Observatory, Beaumont Tower, and the Spartan Stadium. East Lansing and the surrounding communities offer an affordably priced, diverse real estate selection, nationally recognized education systems, and a high quality of life. Several area school systems are ranked in the top 20 in the state, and outside of Michigan State University, Lansing is also home to Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Davenport University, and Lansing Community College.

Sources: census.gov; cityofeastlansing.com

Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) will lead the Wharton Center to further its position as a leading university performing arts center with a sterling national reputation, highly regarded as a nexus of artistic activity in East Lansing and the Mid-Michigan region. The ED will establish and nurture innovative partnerships across the university, with national and global artists and producers, community partners, and in support of the university's overarching educational mission including a close and collaborative working relationship with regular university arts users in Theatre and Music. Guiding the artistic direction for Wharton Center, the ED will offer performing arts programming of the highest caliber, engaging students and faculty in arts learning and creative activity, and facilitating innovative arts education for the community at large. This individual will demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and actively infuse these in all facets of the Wharton Center's work, including staffing, performance development, audience-engagement, education, internal and community partnerships, and all creative activities. The ED will oversee all areas of operations, finance, marketing, and development, while adeptly navigating the university structure and advocating for the role of performing arts as integral to student's academic experience. The ED reports to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs through the Associate Provost for University Collections and Arts Initiatives.

Roles and Responsibilities

Artistic and Programmatic Leadership

- Create and guide the artistic and educational vision for the Wharton Center.
- Conceptualize and implement a vibrant and diverse annual schedule for the Wharton Center that combines first run and popular Broadway productions, music and dance performances, theatrical productions, lectures, and other innovative arts and cultural programs including collaborative commissions of the highest caliber.
- Develop and nurture strong relationships with national and international artists, producers, presenters, promoters, and university and community stakeholders to ensure that the Wharton Center annual season is recognized for its eclectic and attractive programmatic mix.
- Manage the development of creative and inclusive performing arts programming for K-12 students and community members in alignment with community interests and needs, reflecting the organizational mission and access goals that forward MSU's Arts Strategy.

University and Community Engagement

- Become an active and engaged presence throughout the university and the community at large, serving as the Wharton Center's visible leader in East Lansing, mid-Michigan, and the broader region.
- Nurture partnerships and collaborative relationships with university academic units, faculty, and student organizations to position the Wharton Center as an integral component of the MSU student experience, including curricular and co-curricular activities, engagement in inter-disciplinary research and innovation, and other opportunities centered on the university's mission.
- Partner with the Wharton Center's Advisory Council to leverage their expertise and community knowledge to guide strategic decisions and advocacy to advance the Wharton Center's mission.
- Foster partnerships and collaborative relationships with businesses and community organizations to achieve the Wharton Center's programmatic, educational, and inclusive access goals.
- Collaborate with MSU Government Relations to establish relationships with local and state political leaders and to monitor and inform legislation at the local, regional, and national level that will impact the Wharton Center.

Earned Revenue and Fund Development

- Establish annual and long-term goals for earned and contributed revenue that ensure the self-sustainability of the Wharton Center.
- Actively partner with University Advancement and the development team to expand the portfolio of contributed revenue, cultivate and steward current and future individual donors, and identify and secure gifts, grants, and sponsorships from foundations and businesses.
- Identify and secure, directly or with community partners, public funding and strengthen relationships with local, state, and federal community and arts agencies.
- Lead the staff in the execution of a robust ticket sales and rental plan that generates earned revenue to support the Wharton Center's current and future program and community access goals.

- Oversee marketing and communication strategies that maximize ticket sales, concessions, program fees, rentals, and other earned revenue opportunities.

Planning and Strategy

- Collaborate with university and community stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to guide the Wharton Center's next phase, aligning its growth to the MSU Arts Strategy and MSU 2030 Strategic Plan.
- Promote and support the implementation of strategies that deepen the Wharton Center's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout its programs, activities, staff, and all aspects of the organization, working with the DEI Committee and with academic and administrative units across the university reflecting the MSU Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan.
- Partner with the MSU Office of Infrastructure Planning and Facilities to develop and implement a comprehensive facilities plan that maintains the Wharton Center in exemplary condition and continues to provide amenities and resources to maximize the audience experience.

Organizational Oversight

- Recruit, retain, and mentor a diverse and highly qualified staff, fostering an inclusive organizational culture centered on team cohesiveness and collaboration and providing opportunities for professional and personal growth.
- Establish and maintain efficient systems and policies for the scheduling and use of the facilities, including all aspects of performances, rentals, and daily operations.
- Ensure that the organization's fiscal management and operational practices are in accordance with university policies, procedures, agreements, and guidelines.
- Maintain a positive financial position, working within the approved budget and in close coordination with university financial officers.

Traits and Characteristics

The Executive Director will be a collaborative and innovative ambassador in the arts and culture sector, recognized for their dynamic, forward-thinking, and strategic leadership. Possessing both the entrepreneurial mindset and the intellectual curiosity to expand the definition and scope of arts programming, the person in this role will welcome the opportunity to integrate the arts across every academic and research discipline at MSU and beyond. An open minded, approachable individual who welcomes feedback and responds with grace and diplomacy, the ED will inspire trust and build investment in the Wharton Center both internally and externally. The individual stepping into this position will be a highly organized, thoughtful, and strategic risk taker, inviting programming and relationships that set the stage for future collaborations and new artistic opportunities. Possessing the cultural competency to engage diverse audiences and individuals, integrating equity, diversity, inclusion, and access into management and artistic decision-making, the successful candidate will support existing successful programming and welcome new ideas that advance the Wharton Center's reputation for artistic excellence.

Other key competencies include:

- **Leadership and Personal Accountability** – The capacity to influence and inspire others to believe in a vision while holding oneself answerable for personal actions.
- **Planning and Organizing and Problem Solving** – The acumen to define and diagnose key aspects of a challenge and then establish a course of action to achieve the outcome.
- **Decision Making and Negotiation** – The ability to analyze all aspects of a situation and listen to many points of view to make consistently sound decisions and facilitate agreements between two or more parties.
- **Interpersonal Skills and Conceptual Thinking** – The aptitude to effectively build rapport and relate to many kinds of people while also analyzing hypothetical concepts and formulating connections and new insights.

Qualifications

The ED will have a demonstrated track record of effective and visionary leadership in the arts and culture sector, including the ability to communicate with energy and passion across a variety of platforms and in person. A comprehensive understanding of theatrical production, arts education programming, audience development, venue management, and a working knowledge of academic environments is critical. Qualified candidates will possess exceptional relationship management, fundraising and collaboration skills, effectively engaging diverse

stakeholders at the university level as well as regionally and nationally, while also creating visible paths to access for educational and artistic programming at the Wharton Center. An expansive network with leading producers and artists at the national and international levels is highly desired. The ability to work flexible hours and attend events frequently on evenings and weekends is expected. The Wharton Center welcomes candidates with a variety of academic and educational credentials who possess the professional experience to inspire support, collaboration, and investment in the Wharton Center and Michigan State University's diverse academic, social, and artistic culture.

Compensation and Benefits

Wharton Center at MSU offers a salary commensurate with experience and a comprehensive set of benefits including subsidized medical/dental and long and short-term disability coverage, Flexible Spending Account (FSA), 403(b) retirement plan with university match, nine paid holidays, and paid parental leave and vacation. An overview of MSU benefits for executive management positions may be found on the [university website](#).

Applications and Inquiries

To submit a letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments in arts and culture leadership and management as well as a statement addressing how past/and or potential contributions to diversity and inclusion will advance MSU's commitment to inclusive excellence (electronic submissions preferred), please click [here](#) or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries, including estimated salary range, regarding this job opportunity, please contact:

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All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, age, disability or protected veteran status. MSU is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer. MSU is committed to achieving excellence through cultural diversity. The University actively encourages applications and/or nominations of women, persons of color, veterans, and persons with disabilities.