

## THE ROLE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

One of the first decisions a student with interests in visual and performing arts must make is whether they want to pursue a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) degree or BA (Bachelor of Arts) degree. A BFA is often better suited for students who are committed to a career in the arts, while a BA is better suited for students who want both a more traditional liberal arts program as well as strong preparation for a career in the arts. You will find BFA programs at art schools and conservatories, as well as some larger universities and some liberal arts colleges. While there are exceptions, generally speaking, about 60-70% of the classes in a BFA program are studio or performance-based; in a BA program, that ratio is reversed with approximately 30-40% of classes dedicated to the studio or performance. In most cases, admissions to a BFA program will require an audition or the submission of a portfolio which will be weighted heavily in the process; some BA programs will also ask for an audition or portfolio.

Whether or not you are interested in pursuing visual or performing arts in college, we recommend compiling your best work as part of your application if your artistic interests and talents are significant. The Common Application provides some excellent guidelines on how to put your work together via [Slideroom.com](https://www.slideroom.com) integration.

For visual arts, you will need to have a portfolio of your artwork illustrating your use of different media and genres. For the performing arts, you should be prepared to audition at the college in the event that it is required. If an audition is not required, you will need to demonstrate your talent via digital file. The following are general guidelines for presenting your artwork although **you should check with the colleges on your list and follow their specific requirements:**

### Visual Arts

- ▶ Most colleges will want you to develop a website with photos or slides documenting your work. Colleges want to see a variety of genres in a portfolio and will give specific instructions for you to follow.
- ▶ By the spring of your junior year, you should be working with an art instructor to identify appropriate pieces from your existing work and create new pieces as needed to present your best efforts. **This means you also have to understand the portfolio requirements for the colleges on your list.**
- ▶ A brief statement that describes you as an artist and your interest in the visual arts should be included, as well as a teacher letter authenticating your presentation. Also, along with your portfolio, write a brief description of what emotions or ideas you are expressing or associating with each piece. These statements will enhance your presentation.

- Other formats are possible and may be advisable depending on your artwork and the college you are considering. We recommend you consult with art teachers both in your school and at the colleges.
- National Portfolio Days are held at various colleges around the country. You can bring your portfolio and meet with faculty from the art department who will critique your portfolio and give you tips on how to make improvements. Check the website [portfolioday.net](http://portfolioday.net) for dates and locations.

## Performing Arts

**Music.** As live auditions are often reserved for conservatories or students applying specifically to BFA programs, a digital file of a professionally produced recording can be the most effective way to present your musical talent. For absolute certainty of being evaluated on time, we suggest that you send a link to both the admissions office and music department, unless the admissions office specifically indicates otherwise.

**Dance.** We suggest that you create a digital file of your best performances to demonstrate your talent as a dancer. For absolute certainty of being evaluated on time, we suggest that you send a link to both the admissions office and dance department, unless the admissions office specifically indicates otherwise.

**Theater.** If no audition is required for the program to which you are applying, we suggest that you create a digital file of your best performances to demonstrate your acting talent. You should speak with your drama teacher to discuss the details of filming performances. Also, you should include a resume of your performances, and any special training and experiences you have had.

Students interested in pursuing a BFA degree in Theater may have the option of participating in regional auditions called National Unified Auditions. These simultaneous auditions and interviews take place in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Las Vegas. Students audition for several colleges during the same day making this an ideal option for those who cannot travel to many campuses for auditions. For more information on Unified Auditions and a list of colleges that attend, visit the website at [www.unifiedauditions.com](http://www.unifiedauditions.com).

**Theater Production.** You should be prepared to submit a portfolio either in hard copy or via digital slide show demonstrating your proficiency in design and project planning. If you are applying to a program for production technology, inquire at each college regarding their specific requirements. Be sure to let the head of the theater tech department know of your interest and background and that you are applying.

For any of the performing arts, we recommend that you include a short, typed statement that describes you as a performing artist, your interests and your investment in the arts; such a statement is generally part of an actual art supplement but should be included if you are creating an independent portfolio. Before decisions are made, it is very important to follow up by email, telephone or in person to be sure both admissions and the department of your interest have received your application and enclosed artwork.