

College of Visual and
Performing Arts

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026 HIGHLIGHTS



Radford
UNIVERSITY

College of Visual and
Performing Arts



Dean's Introduction

When I joined Radford University as the Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, I knew I would have the privilege of working alongside extraordinarily creative, dedicated, passionate, and imaginative colleagues. Their love and dedication to the work and students at Radford University is unparalleled.

Even in this first year, I have been continually inspired by the depth of insight, dedication, and care our faculty and staff bring to our students and to their disciplines every single day. CVPA is a vibrant and multifaceted community—artists, performers, educators, scholars, designers, and administrators—each bringing distinct expertise and perspectives that enrich our shared mission. That diversity of thought and practice is one of our greatest strengths. It allows us to create transformative educational experiences for our students at Radford University and to nurture the kind of collaborative, student-centered environment that makes Radford University such a special place to learn and to work. Students have so many opportunities to find their place here.

It has been an honor to represent and advocate for our programs and for the people who make them exceptional. I am deeply grateful for the partnerships we have built this year—with our students, their families, donors, alumni, and campus and community collaborators—and for the spirit of innovation, generosity, and resilience that defines the College of Visual and Performing Arts. I am excited for what lies ahead and look forward to continuing this work together as we strengthen our academic offerings, expand opportunities for our students, and elevate the arts across campus and throughout the region. In crafting this report, my intention was to integrate the work accomplished across the college with my own leadership efforts in order to illustrate how I have sought to fulfill my responsibilities as Dean through active engagement with—and in support of—the vision, creativity, and commitment of our faculty, staff, and students.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Williams'.

Rachel Marie-Crane Williams, Ph.D., Dean and Professor, CVPA

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4.1.3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of Deans

The Deans of the undergraduate colleges are the chief administrative officers of each college. The Dean's responsibilities are primarily:

- to lead the faculty and staff of the college in developing and delivering educational opportunities of the highest quality possible for students, consistent with the mission of the College,
- to lead the College in procuring and managing fiscal, human, and physical resources necessary to accomplish these goals,
- to represent the college, its goals and needs to other external as well as internal constituencies, and
- to promote the overall excellence and welfare of the University

Based on recommendations from the Provost, the college deans are appointed by the President, subject to annual evaluations of their effectiveness in this capacity.





Overview of the College of Visual and Performing Arts

The College of Visual and Performing Arts seeks to provide comprehensive professional and liberal arts education for students in the disciplines of dance, fashion, interior design, music, theatre and cinema and the visual arts; to serve the educational needs of all Radford students by providing comprehensive opportunities and experiences in the arts and design; to enrich the artistic and cultural environment of the university, western Virginia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and beyond; and to make significant artistic contributions in the disciplines of dance, fashion, interior design, music, theatre, and the visual arts.

Departmental curricula address the needs of students seeking careers in the arts as teachers, designers, therapists, practitioners, and performers. These same courses of study may be modified to combine study in the arts with a number of other major disciplines. In addition, each department offers courses and performance opportunities that encourage participation by students wishing to go beyond their established degree requirements.

The faculty members of the college maintain active professional lives as performers, artists, designers and scholars. Visits by nationally and internationally renowned guest artists and scholars provide an added dimension to the educational experiences offered through the CVPA. Students have many opportunities to work with and learn from these professionals.

Internship programs are an integral part of many College of Visual and Performing Arts degree requirements. In addition to the usual student teaching component required of all education majors, programs in art, dance and music education involve students in extensive field experiences prior to their senior year of study. Music therapy students are involved in field training as well as a six-month internship. Music business students also are involved in field training and have an eight-week internship. Students in Fashion Design & Interior Design experience a required internship in professional settings. Graphic Design students may spend one semester in professional studios and firms in order to apply skills and techniques developed in the classroom.

Personal Goals

The College of Visual and Performing Arts is a deeply engaged, highly creative, and caring community—one that contributes powerfully to Radford University and to the culture, economy, and history of our broader region in Southwest Virginia. The College of Visual and Performing Arts is dedicated to advancing a culture of excellence and experiential learning in the arts by strengthening our academic programs, cultivating an environment where innovation and artistry thrive, and championing the success of our students, faculty, and staff. My goals as the dean include the following:

- Collaborate with the faculty and staff of the college in developing and delivering undergraduate and graduate educational programs of the highest quality, consistent with the college’s mission
- Promote overall excellence, a culture of care, and the safeguard the future and welfare of Radford University
- Lead the college in obtaining and managing fiscal, human, and physical resources necessary to meet the college’s vision, and curricular and programmatic goals
- Represent CVPA to external and internal constituencies



Pipe and Drum Corp of Radford University

CVPA MISSION

Cultivate an artistic community of practice.

Expose others to the creative process.

Engage in interdisciplinary and international collaborations.

Lead the institution to cultural prominence.

CVPA VISION

The College of Visual and Performing Arts strives to reveal and harness the creative energy that drives cultural innovation, empowers leadership, and provides the inspiration to devote one's life to learning and pursuing artistic excellence.



Professor Sal Privitera examines negatives with students in a photography class

Acknowledgement of Faculty and Staff Contributions

**“Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.”
~ Kenyan Proverb**

As we come to the close of another year together, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude to the faculty and staff in CVPA. Your dedication, creativity, and generosity of spirit have shaped this year for me and the college in extraordinary ways.

Every rehearsal, performance, exhibition, lesson, critique, meeting, and act of support—seen and unseen—has woven us together to create our vibrant, inspiring community that our students depend on. You give so much of yourselves to ensure that our learners grow, thrive, and feel a sense of belonging. You innovate, you problem-solve, you lift each other up, and you pour your talents into work that makes a difference. I am continually moved by your devotion to your craft and to this college. Your artistry and your commitment to excellence make CVPA a place where creativity is not only taught, but lived. It is a privilege to work alongside you.

Thank you for showing up with heart. Thank you for giving your best in moments both easy and difficult. And thank you for making this year one filled with purpose, imagination, and joy. I also want to thank Tim Channell for his support and wisdom. In addition I would be remiss if I did not recognize the chairs and administrators in CVPA. They are the glue that has held the college together and kept us moving forward. The support from the President and Provost have also been essential to our success. They regularly participate in the life of our college and their support and presence is so deeply appreciated by all.

CVPA College Goals

Building on the strong foundation built by the previous interim Dean, Tim Channell, I spent the year as dean getting to know the college and working on our college goals outlined in 2024-2025 which were as follows:

Goal 1: Continue to enhance recruitment and retention initiatives

Goal 2: Foster a safe and innovative environment for artistic excellence

Goal 3: Engage the public and foster community connections

This year was an exciting year as Radford University finalized the new Strategic Plan. This created an opportunity for us to begin thinking about our own strategic plan. In 2026-2027 we will begin this process and perhaps reimagine our mission, vision, and our college goals.

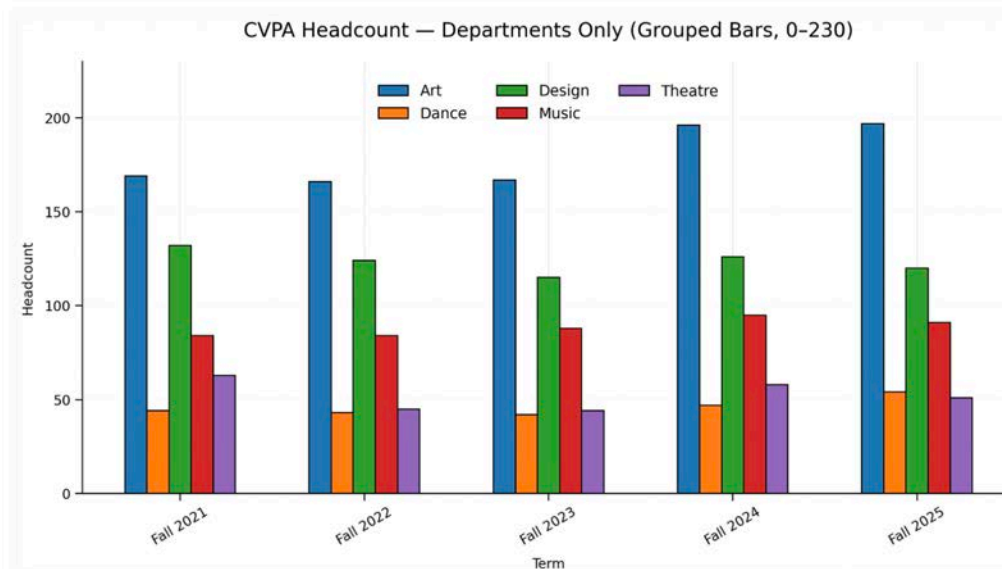
Goal 1: Continue to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Initiatives

Undergraduate Enrollment

Our undergraduate enrollment continues to hold fairly steady with some fluctuations across the college. Between Fall 2021 and Fall 2025, the College of Visual and Performing Arts experienced a 4.27% overall increase in enrollment, driven largely by strong growth in several departments. Dance saw the most significant gain, rising 22.73%, followed closely by Art, which increased 16.57% over the same period. Music also grew, with an 8.33% increase, reflecting steady strengthening in that program. In contrast, Design declined in terms of undergraduate enrollment by 9.09%, and Theatre experienced the largest decrease at 19.05%, though both programs showed periods of stabilization within the five-year span. Taken together, these trends show that while some departments are facing enrollment challenges, the college as a whole is moving upward. The faculty and chairs for each department have developed very targeted and discipline specific enrollment strategies and have also worked closely with admissions to stabilize the number of undergraduates within their departments. We have also seen positive enrollment returns due to our involvement in the Summer Residential Governor's School Program. Concerted efforts were made this year to improve our recruitment strategies in partnership with admissions.

Undergraduate Fall Enrollment 2021-2025

Name of Department	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Art	169	166	167	196	197
Dance	44	43	42	47	54
Design	132	124	115	126	120
Music	84	84	88	95	91
Theatre	63	45	44	58	51
Total	492	462	456	522	513



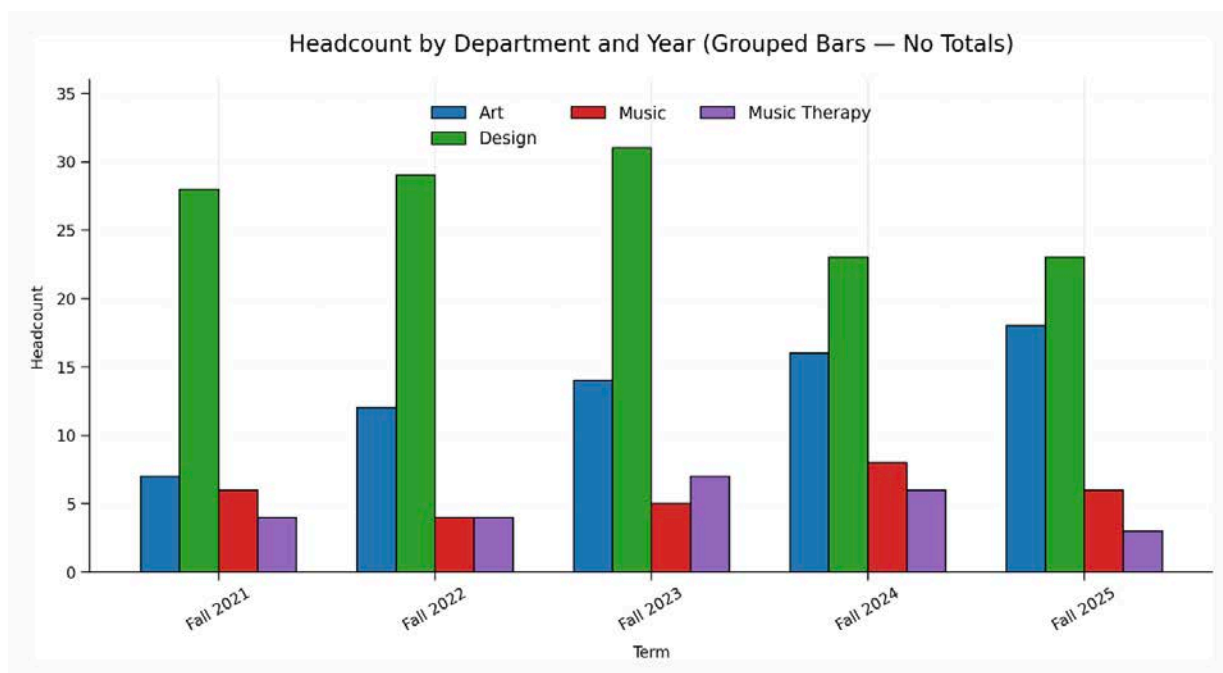
Moving forward, we are excited about the potential to stabilize enrollment in Visual Art and continue growing programs such as Theatre and Music, all of which are positioned to benefit from renewed recruitment efforts and increased visibility. Our new building has already become a meaningful draw for prospective students, showcasing state-of-the-art facilities and reinforcing the high quality of the student experience in CVPA. While the building was designed for a stable enrollment base and some programs—such as Design, Visual Art, Theatre, and Dance—operate within space and safety parameters that naturally guide responsible growth, these boundaries also help ensure that students receive the attention, resources, and performance opportunities they deserve. Dance, for example, is intentionally structured to maintain a cohort size that supports safe studio practices and rich performance experiences, while Theatre can grow modestly within its production and facility capacities. As our Visual Art and Design programs continue to thrive, we are mindful of the high student–faculty ratios and are actively exploring ways to support faculty workload and sustain program quality. Although severe winter storms disrupted several on-campus audition days this year—which are often pivotal in helping undecided students choose Radford—we remain optimistic. Our faculty invested significant time in personalized communication and outreach before and after the cancellations, and we are hopeful that these strong relationships and follow-up efforts will minimize any impact on Fall 2026 enrollment. Overall, we feel confident about the future of undergraduate education in CVPA and energized by the opportunities ahead.

Graduate Enrollment

Our graduate programs continue to demonstrate resilience and promise, with overall enrollment remaining steady and several areas showing meaningful growth. Art, in particular, has experienced remarkable expansion—rising 157% between Fall 2021 and Fall 2025—which affirms the strength and appeal of our studio-based graduate offerings. As we look ahead, we are excited to re-imagine the MFA in Studio Art to enhance the balance between FTEs and graduate enrollment, allowing us to provide students with more individualized attention, expanded studio space, and greater teaching opportunities alongside the growth of the undergraduate program. The MFA in Design Thinking continues to attract students nationwide from a wide range of industries, reflecting the program’s uniqueness and relevance, even as it requires significant faculty expertise to sustain. We hope to explore new partnerships with the Davis College of Business and Economics and the College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences to broaden opportunities for our Design Thinking students and strengthen interdisciplinary pathways. We also see strong potential for continued growth in Music and Music Therapy, where targeted recruitment efforts—supported by our partnership with Admissions—are helping to elevate visibility and engagement. Taken together, these trends reflect a graduate portfolio that is stable, evolving, and increasingly aligned with the needs and interests of today’s learners, with overall enrollment rising 11.1% over the past five years.

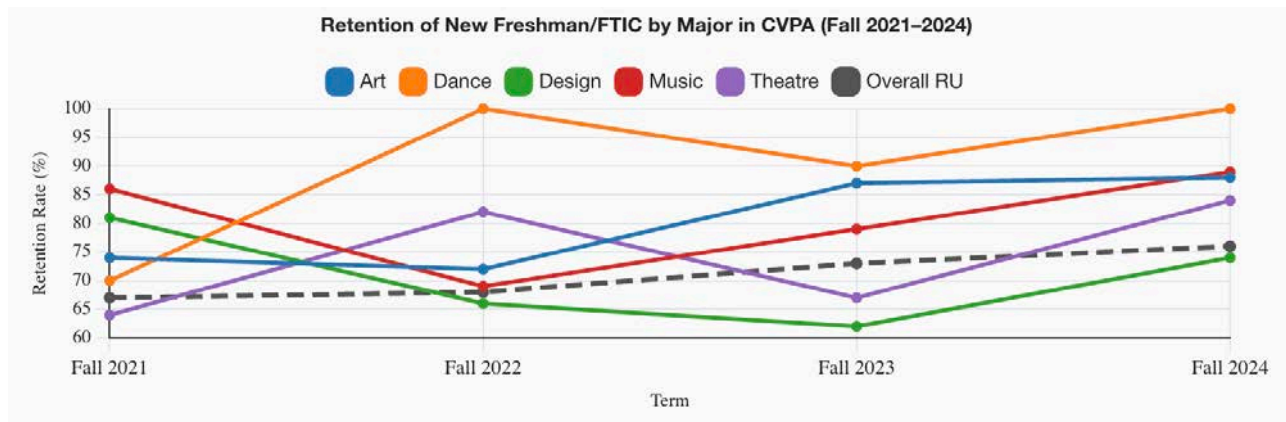
Graduate Fall Enrollment 2021-2025

Name of Department	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Art	7	12	14	16	18
Design	28	29	31	23	23
Music	6	4	5	8	6
Music Therapy	4	4	7	6	3
Total	45	49	57	53	50



Retention of New Freshman and First Time in College Students

CVPA excels in retention. Our precensus numbers have hovered between 88% and 95% while the university overall is between 81% to 74% between 2021-2024. CVPA's retention of new freshmen/FTIC students has remained consistently strong across all majors and continues to outpace the university's overall retention rates each year. Programs such as Art, Dance, Music, Theatre, and Design regularly exceed institutional averages, with several majors—most notably Dance—achieving exceptionally high retention in multiple years. While year-to-year fluctuations occur, the collective performance of CVPA majors demonstrates a clear pattern of resilience and student persistence. Nationally in 2023 80.9% of students seeking bachelor's degrees in the Visual and Performing Arts Nation Wide continued their enrollment at the institution where they first enrolled the next fall. *It is unclear if they persisted in their Visual and Performing Arts major or just re-enrolled at the same university (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Persistence & Retention. 26 June 2025, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention/>.)



Retention is an important issue within CVPA and across the campus at Radford University. Jerel Benton, the Vice Provost for Student Success identified a number of characteristics related to retention that we are seeking to address through advising and mentoring. Radford University wants to set a benchmark of the completion of 30 credits during the first year of enrollment. We hope to offer strong advising, summer opportunities for credit earning coursework, and alternative course work or schedules for students in CVPA who enroll in and complete less than 24 semester credit hours their first year of college in order to raise our retention rates. We also hope to add a layer of advising to students who have GPAs between 2.5 and 3.3 in order to help them reach a higher GPA and slide out of their status as students in good standing. 62% of students who left our college after the first year (2024-2025) were not in good standing academically. We hope to continue to strengthen our relationships with the Highlander Student Success Center, provide opportunities for faculty to learn about working with students who experience difficulties socially and or academically, and strengthen our communication with the Registrar’s office, the Highlander Success Center, and Student Affairs.

Studying the visual and performing arts requires a rare blend of discipline, creativity, and resilience. Because artistic training is built on long hours in the studio, practice rooms, rehearsal spaces, and on stage, students must learn to manage ambiguity, collaborate effectively, and explore multiple solutions to complex problems. Success in the arts demands not only technical skill and dedication, but also curiosity, adaptability, and a willingness to take risks. Those who thrive are the students who show up consistently, embrace feedback, support their peers, and persist through challenge with passion and purpose.



Goal 2: Foster a Safe and Innovative Environment for Artistic Excellence



Creating exceptional art, music, theatre, design, and dance requires significant resources—skilled people, deep experience, and specialized spaces and tools. The Artis Center is a remarkable addition to our campus, offering state-of-the-art facilities that take substantial labor to set up, maintain, and operate safely. This year, we worked closely with Facilities to complete a number of important projects that enhance safety for our faculty, staff, and students. These include continued progress on air-handling and dust-collection systems in the ceramics studio, the theatre scene shop, and the Maker’s Space, as well as installing a sprung floor in Room 352 to support stage combat, dance, and physical theatre. Our Maker’s Space Director, Kaelum Hasler, has been instrumental in these efforts—establishing all required safety protocols, air and dust systems, and equipment-handling procedures aligned with OSHA standards. He has installed and tested every piece of new equipment, including the Tormach 1500, ShopBot, router table, spindle sander, edge sander, drill press, 3-D printers, laser cutter, and CNC machine; developed comprehensive standard operating procedures in collaboration with Environmental Health & Safety; and trained hundreds of students and colleagues across campus to use the space safely and confidently

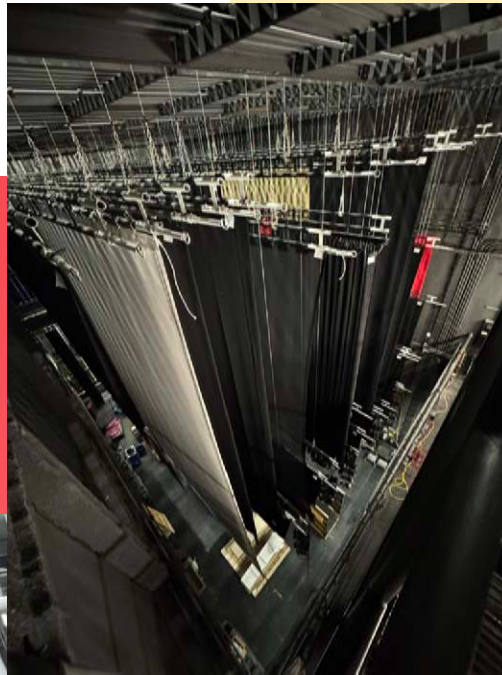
Theatre is a uniquely complex discipline to support because its work depends on highly specialized facilities—a costume shop, a fully equipped scene shop, and fabrication spaces capable of producing stagecraft that involves both wood and metal work. Our scene shop has been incomplete for two years, and its full functionality is essential to the safety and success of our productions. This year, through close and sustained collaboration with Facilities and the expertise of David Wheeler, Kate Burnhan Hull, and Shaly Farmer, we have made significant progress toward completing the space. Facilities staff have helped install appropriate and much-needed storage for stock materials and continue to partner directly with our theatre faculty and Chair, Rich Dunham to advance the metal-working components of the shop.

Our partnership with Facilities extended well beyond the shops. Together, we designed and installed a secure catwalk with solid footing and a safety rail to protect students, faculty, and staff working on the grid—approximately 70 feet above the stage. This shared effort ensures that individuals working at height feel safe and confident, and it dramatically reduces the risk of injury to those below in the event that equipment is accidentally dropped.

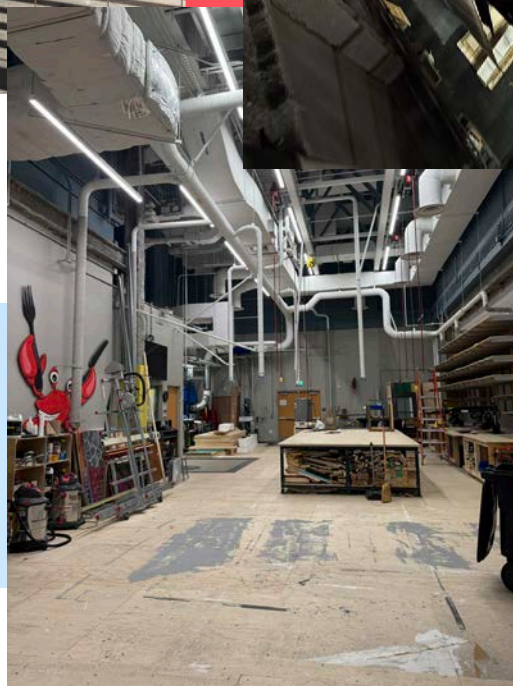
We are deeply grateful to be part of a campus community where care, safety, and collaboration are core values. Our strong partnership with Facilities supports not only the operational needs of our programs, but also our educational mission and the wellbeing of everyone who learns and works in these spaces.



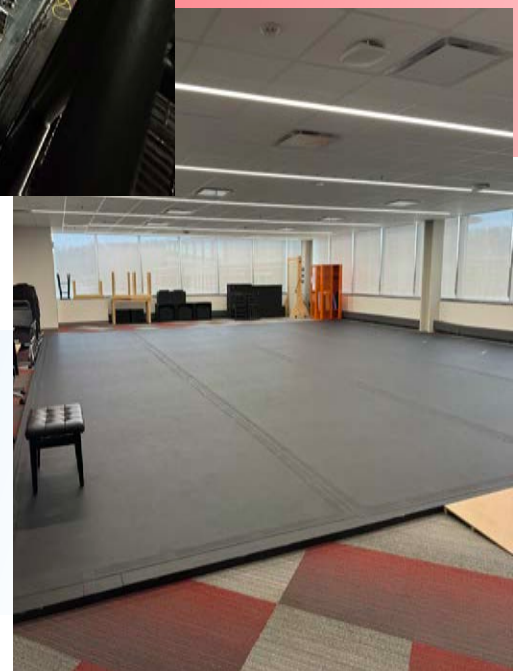
Reinforced catwalk



Stage below the catwalk



Woodshop area of Scene Shop



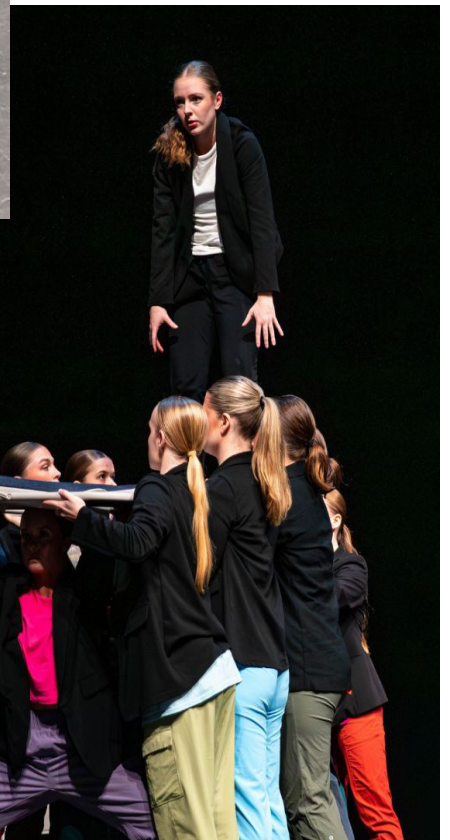
New sprung floor in 352

We have also been working intentionally to upgrade the facilities in the Covington Center, a high-use building whose teaching, rehearsal, and performance needs are uniquely complex. We aim to modernize instructional technology in the large rehearsal halls and improve the lighting in the Davis Recital Hall—projects that have moved forward thanks to the dedicated efforts of Chair Wayne Gallops and the strong partnership of Academic Affairs and Facilities. One highlight of the year is that the Covington Center organ is now fully functional again, restoring an important resource for both teaching and performance.

In Theatre and Dance, physicality is central to training and to creating performances that truly captivate audiences. To support this work, we have brought in visiting artists to provide specialized training for students and faculty in boundaries, intimacy direction, and somatic awareness. We recognize that our students may one day work with individuals who have not been trained in these areas, or they may engage in community-based projects connected to social issues such as domestic violence or trauma. Many will become teachers themselves and encounter these challenges in their classrooms. Ensuring that our students and faculty are equipped to advocate for both physical and emotional safety is essential to their long-term success.



Stage Combat Workshop



Fall Dance Festival



Moon Over Buffalo, sword fighting scene

In addition to supporting the physical facilities and training needs of our students, we are equally committed to fostering their mental and emotional well-being. This work takes many forms, including our participation in the weekly Food for Thought breakfast program through RISE which often is a time for students to connect with faculty and each other. I also want to highlight the important efforts of the faculty leading the Art and Wellness Center. Professors Robyn Berg, Rachel Rotert, and Denise Bernadini have been central to this initiative, developing a wellness-focused newsletter filled with insightful articles connecting the arts, health, and resilience. They have also organized a variety of activities designed to help students manage stress, build community, and develop healthy habits.

We have also seen tremendous success with the Mid-Day Music Program, curated by Professor Matt Cataldi and featuring performances by many of our music faculty. This program has become a beloved tradition on campus, drawing students, faculty, and staff from across the university for a restorative musical break in the middle of the day. Its popularity underscores the essential role that the arts play in creating moments of calm, connection, and well-being for our entire community. The series has featured the following musicians: Matt Cataldi, Ed Knoeckel, Sheldon Johnson, Denise Bernadini, Dayl Burnett, Wes McCune, Will Newton and Robert Trent.

Our Maker's Space has also had an exceptional year. Kaelum Hasler has worked tirelessly with facilities to complete the shop space. In addition to that his skills have been instrumental in crafting bespoke items that have helped us complete a number of technical projects related to facilities and equipment in music and theatre. He has also helped numerous students discover the joy of design through individual projects.

Finally, Radford University's motto, Find Your Place Here, is at the heart of everything we do in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. We work intentionally to ensure that every student feels a sense of belonging, purpose, and community from the moment they arrive. One of our most successful initiatives is the Community of Artists for first-year students, supported by four outstanding peer mentors under the leadership of Kaelum Hasler. Throughout the year, students participated in a wide range of engaging activities designed to help them explore the arts and build meaningful connections—learning the choreography to Thriller with Professor Amy VanKirk, creating their own T-shirts, and painting a mural together. All participants live in Trinkle Hall, creating a vibrant residential community centered on creativity and shared experience.

The bookend to this first-year experience is our exceptional group of CVPA Ambassadors, dedicated student leaders who volunteer their time to support the college through Highlander Days, ushering at performances, and assisting with special events. Their commitment to service extends beyond campus; this year they sponsored a campus-wide Trunk-or-Treat that welcomed children and families from across the Radford community. Together, these programs help students feel that they are not just pursuing a major, but becoming part of a dynamic, supportive, and inspiring artistic community. Some of our students struggle with the social pressures of being part of a community. Our faculty have responded to this and we have partnered with CITL and CAS to host a study group related to encouraging and providing a successful experience for students who identify as neurodivergent.

Safety, wellness, and well-being are foundational to the work of the visual and performing arts, where learning and creation often involve physical rigor, emotional vulnerability, and complex collaborative environments. Students and faculty regularly engage in physically demanding activities—building sets, practicing stage combat, dancing for extended periods, or working with specialized equipment—and these practices require thoughtful safety protocols to prevent injury and create spaces where creativity can flourish. Equally important is the emotional landscape of artistic work: the arts ask individuals to take risks, explore personal experiences, and navigate ambiguity. Supporting mental and emotional well-being ensures that artists can engage deeply and sustainably in their craft. When our community feels safe, supported, and cared for, the arts become not only a means of expression, but also a pathway toward resilience, confidence, and personal growth.

Goal 3: Engage the public and foster community connections

As long as I have worked in higher education, I have understood that the public experiences our campuses through many different entry points. One of the most powerful and meaningful of these entry points is the arts. Artistic experiences open doors, build relationships, and create lasting impressions of who we are and what we value. As a college, we have made a deliberate commitment to serve as a regional hub of artistic excellence, to offer affordable and accessible arts opportunities, and to be leaders in community engagement. This work not only enriches the cultural life of our region—it strengthens our mission, expands our impact, and connects our students and faculty to the communities we serve.

Over the past year, our faculty and students have shared their artistry generously across Southwest Virginia and beyond. In November 2025, Professor Ji-Eun Lee and our RU dance students brought an electric K-Pop performance to the students of Blacksburg Middle School, introducing them to dynamic movement, global culture, and the joy of dance.

In Music Therapy, Professor Rachel Rotert, Ryan Rodgers and several students traveled to multiple high schools in the Richmond area. This tour highlighted the transformative power of music therapy, offering students engaging, hands-on experiences while raising awareness of a field rooted in healing, compassion, and creativity.

The Porterfield Ensemble once again took their artistry on the road, loading the van at 7:30 a.m. each morning to share Poe: Dark Genius, written by ensemble director Wesley Young, with public schools across the region and at the Virginia Theatre Association Conference in Norfolk. This ensemble has a long tradition of touring, consistently demonstrating how live theatre can spark imagination and intellectual curiosity in young audiences.

In the visual arts, the Art Department and the RU Museum welcomed approximately 30 Pulaski Middle School students for a hands-on watercolor workshop inspired by the Virginia Watercolor Society exhibition. The excitement and engagement of the students—paired with the joy shared by our faculty and staff—were so meaningful that we have committed to making this an annual event.

Our Theatre Department's children's production, Lily and the Magic Stones, delighted nearly 1,000 elementary school children over the course of one week in November. The story, characters, and enchanting set captured young imaginations and reminded us of the unique ability of theatre to foster wonder and creativity.

Music performances across the college continue to be offered free of charge, ensuring open access to the arts for all. This year alone, Davis Recital Hall has hosted more than 35 performances. In February, Radford University welcomed over 300 middle and high school singers for the 2026 VCDA District 6 All-District Choir event—a two-day workshop culminating in an inspiring final performance that showcased the remarkable vocal talent of our region's youth.

Our Design Department also extended its impact through meaningful, community-centered creative work. Professor Joan Dickinson's class designed and built a series of innovative dog houses, each incorporating comfort-enhancing systems for canines. Displayed on the Bonnie Plaza, the project raised awareness about pet welfare and generated support for the Mountain View Humane Society.

We also established a new partnership with the Radford Fiddle and Banjo Jam, a beloved Bluegrass group that has been gathering for more than twenty years. CVPA is now their new home, and every Monday night, between 12 and 30 musicians come together on campus to share music, fellowship, and tradition. Finally, our faculty and students took part in Radfest this past fall, staffing an information tent that allowed us to meet community members, share our programs, and celebrate the strong connection between Radford University and the arts.

We also hosted a signature arts event for the first time this year, Radfordton, based on the world of Bridgerton. This event included collaborations with the New River Valley Historical Costume Society, local musicians, historical dancing, and showcased the talent in all of our departments within CVPA. We had nearly 200 people attend, dress in historical ball wear, dance together, and enjoy an evening of fantasy and fellowship.

Our University Performance Series also featured two amazing performances, Alvin Ailey II and Great Expectations. We provided a number of free tickets to non-profits in the area to share with their staff and clients. We are re-imagining the performance series within CVPA in order to capitalize on our connections to performers and alumni across the United States. We also hope to tailor some events in order to showcase our connections to the Crooked Road, Floyd Country Store, Appalachian Studies. We plan to work this year to really strengthen our partnership with the Floyd Country Store and Appalachian Studies in order to showcase the historical and local arts of our region. Our students have benefited from this. This year dance majors participated in a workshop on Appalachian dance under the instruction of Becky Hill (<https://www.rebeccahill.org/>) is a nationally known percussive dancer, square dance caller, choreographer, community organizer, and educator.

Taken together, these initiatives illustrate something essential: the arts are not separate from community life—they are at the heart of it. Every performance, workshop, exhibition, and school visit nurtures creativity, builds relationships, and invites people of all ages into a shared cultural space. Community engagement is not an add-on to our work in the arts; it is foundational. It allows us to serve, to inspire, and to demonstrate the profound value of the arts in building vibrant, connected, and flourishing communities.



Our Dance students performing a K-Pop inspired piece for an audience at Blacksburg Middle School.

Personal Goals of the Dean

To strengthen a culture of care in the college by meaningfully recognizing faculty excellence and providing the support needed for our educators to thrive.

Recognition and support of faculty excellence remain among my highest priorities as dean. I am committed to honoring the outstanding work already taking place across the college while ensuring that faculty and staff have the resources needed to advance our educational mission. Over the past year, I have devoted considerable time to learning about the remarkable accomplishments of our faculty and staff and to identifying ways to further strengthen equity, transparency, and celebration within CVPA. One of my key goals is to standardize faculty workload expectations across the college to promote fairness and to expand opportunities for recognizing faculty and staff contributions.

Under the leadership of our new Associate Dean, Dr. Jennifer McDonel, we have continued to elevate faculty excellence through the Distinguished Faculty Award program. Last year, Professor Amy VanKirk received the award for her extraordinary creative scholarship and her excellence in teaching and service. I have also prioritized supporting faculty travel through dean's office funding and participating actively in the evaluation process by providing meaningful, individualized feedback based on each person's FAR materials. In addition, I have worked to create more consistent opportunities for staff connection and communication, including regular lunch gatherings and ongoing updates from the dean's office.

Looking ahead, I hope to nurture interdisciplinary teaching and research groups within the college, supported by funding incentives and structural support. I envision workgroups that focus on key areas of strength and growth for CVPA, including:

- Place-Based Learning
- Community Engagement through the Arts
- Arts and Innovative Technology
- Scholarly and Historical Approaches to Preservation and Artistic Traditions
- Arts and Well-Being
- Arts Education and Pedagogy
- Creative Praxis in the Arts

These groups will provide opportunities for faculty to collaborate, share works in progress, and form meaningful scholarly and creative communities. I also hope to establish shared language around research and creative scholarship in the arts to guide the development of both graduate and undergraduate experiences. A major priority for the coming academic year is to standardize workloads across the college. Each discipline approaches pedagogy differently—particularly regarding contact hours and the substantial “shadow hours” required to produce ensembles, recitals, exhibitions, and performances. To move toward greater equity and clarity, I intend to draw on the American Council on Education's 2022 report, *Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads: What We Can and Should Do Now*, and promote the following six principles:

Transparency: Make information about faculty work activities widely accessible within each department.

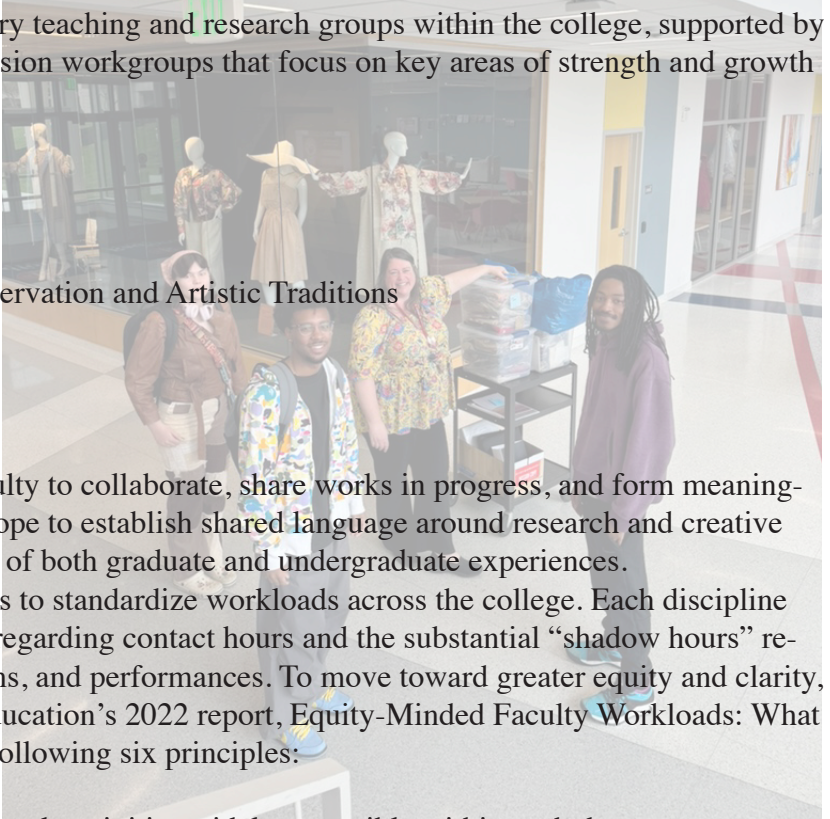
Clarity: Establish clear and well-understood benchmarks for all types of faculty responsibilities.

Credit: Recognize and reward faculty who contribute significantly in particular areas.

Norms: Build and reinforce shared expectations for equitable workloads across departments.

Context: Acknowledge that faculty have different strengths, interests, and demands—and provide flexibility that reflects these differences.

Accountability: Ensure that faculty responsibilities are fulfilled and that all labor is recognized and credited appropriately.



These goals reflect my commitment to fostering a fair, supportive, and thriving academic environment in which faculty and staff can excel—and in turn, provide our students with the highest quality education in the arts.

To Strengthen Donor Engagement and Celebrate Generosity

This year has been a truly wonderful one for our engagement with University Advancement and our community of supporters. Through thoughtful collaboration and intentional outreach, we created meaningful opportunities to connect with donors around the extraordinary work happening every day in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Whether gathered around performances, exhibitions, or college initiatives, these moments allowed us to celebrate generosity while showcasing the talent, dedication, and creativity of our students and faculty. Most importantly, they gave us the opportunity to express heartfelt gratitude for the ways our donors continue to change students' lives.

We were especially delighted to welcome 37 new donors this year, expanding an already strong and deeply committed community of alumni and friends who believe in the power and value of arts education. This growing circle of support speaks to the trust our donors place in the college's mission and to their shared commitment to sustaining creative excellence for future generations.

Our fundraising results this year are nothing short of remarkable. Together with Advancement, we raised \$1,079,539.43 in support of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. Of that total, \$246,344 was dedicated to scholarships, providing vital support for our students and helping to reduce financial barriers to access, persistence, and success. These gifts directly impact our students—artists, designers, musicians, dancers, therapists, and performers—allowing them to focus more fully on their education, creative practice, and professional growth.

It continues to be a privilege to share the story of CVPA with alumni and donors while also listening to their experiences and enduring connections to the college. We are fortunate to build upon a strong legacy of philanthropic support, and this year's engagement has reinforced both the generosity of our community and the tremendous potential ahead. As we look forward, we remain excited about deepening relationships, welcoming new supporters, and continuing to build a culture of philanthropy that sustains, strengthens, and celebrates the creative spirit at the heart of the College of Visual and Performing Arts

To broaden opportunities for students to connect their experiences in the studios, shops, stages, and galleries, at Radford University to professional experiences in the arts in the United States and abroad.

This year, our students traveled across the country and around the world to connect the work they are doing at Radford University with professional experiences. Students attended festivals, conferences, and professional gatherings, including the International Medieval Drama Festival at the University of Toronto, the Percussive Arts Society conference, the Mu Phi Epsilon International Conference, and advocacy events in Washington, D.C. in support of our university and the arts. Students also attended undergraduate research conferences and presented their work at professional conferences such as the College Art Association Conference and the Virginia Theatre Association Conference.

In addition, we brought visiting artists to Radford University to work directly with our students and to help them better understand professional opportunities and career pathways. This spring, we welcomed Amy Miller, a choreographer whose work also focuses on supporting survivors of gender-based violence. We also continue to benefit from the generous support of the Ross family, who sponsor a visiting artist each year in visual arts. This year, we were fortunate to work with MJ Neuberger, who taught classes, created her own work, and collaborated closely with our students.

Our Design Department has developed a strong advisory board made up of working designers and alumni. These board members generously share their time and expertise to help students build professional connections, practice industry skills, and learn about career paths in the design field after graduation. The Graphic Design program also connects students with professionals through participation in the ADDYs. The culminating regional event is a gala attended by hundreds of designers and design firms, providing an excellent opportunity to showcase student work and expose students to current trends in design.

Because professional engagement has been a priority, we made it the focus of Highlander Giving Days. Through this effort, we raised over \$10,000 to support student travel to professional conferences, participation in residencies, and completion of internships in their fields. We hope to continue expanding these opportunities for our students in the coming years.

Art professors Carlee Bradbury and Stuart Robinson were joined by Ashley Palazzo, the Archivist at McConnell Library and Morgan Gilbert, professor of Art at Southwestern Community College in Abingdon in March to

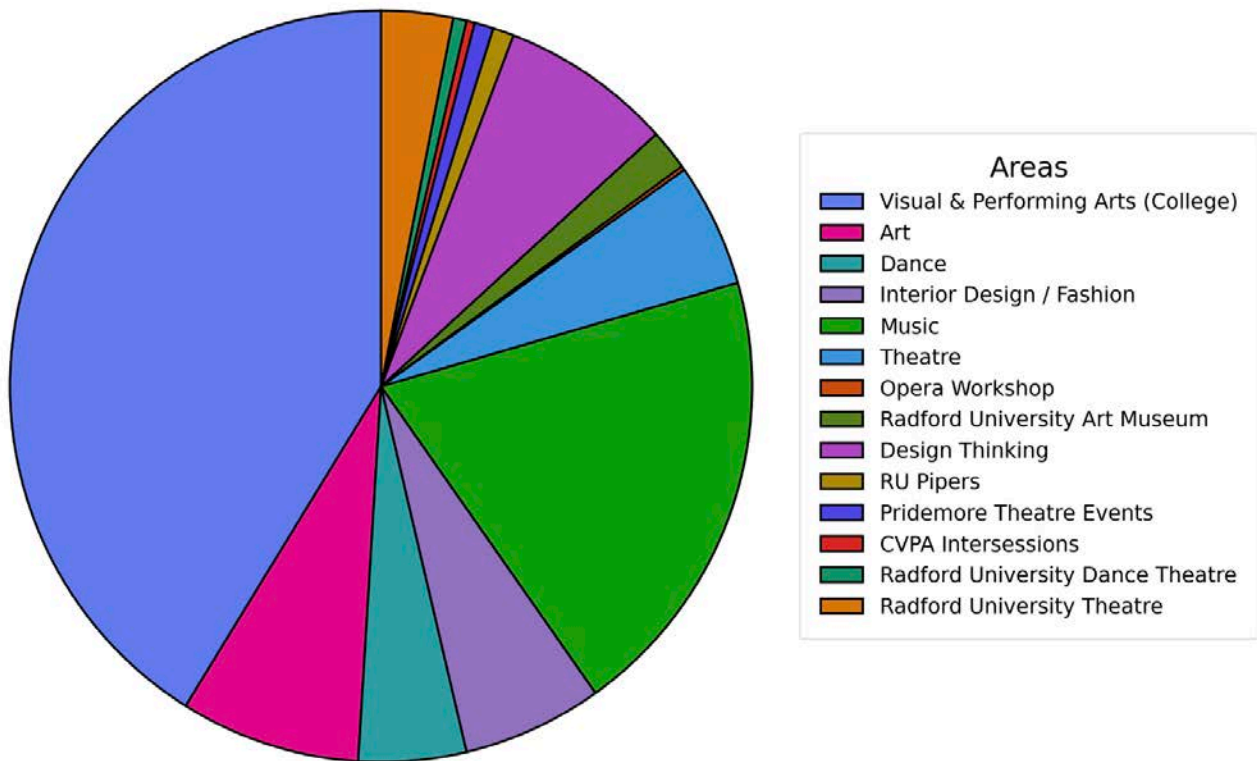


To manage the college's E&G budget transparently and strategically through collaborative resource sharing, intentional faculty deployment, and flexible reallocation of funds that support academic integrity, operational efficiency, and emerging institutional priorities.

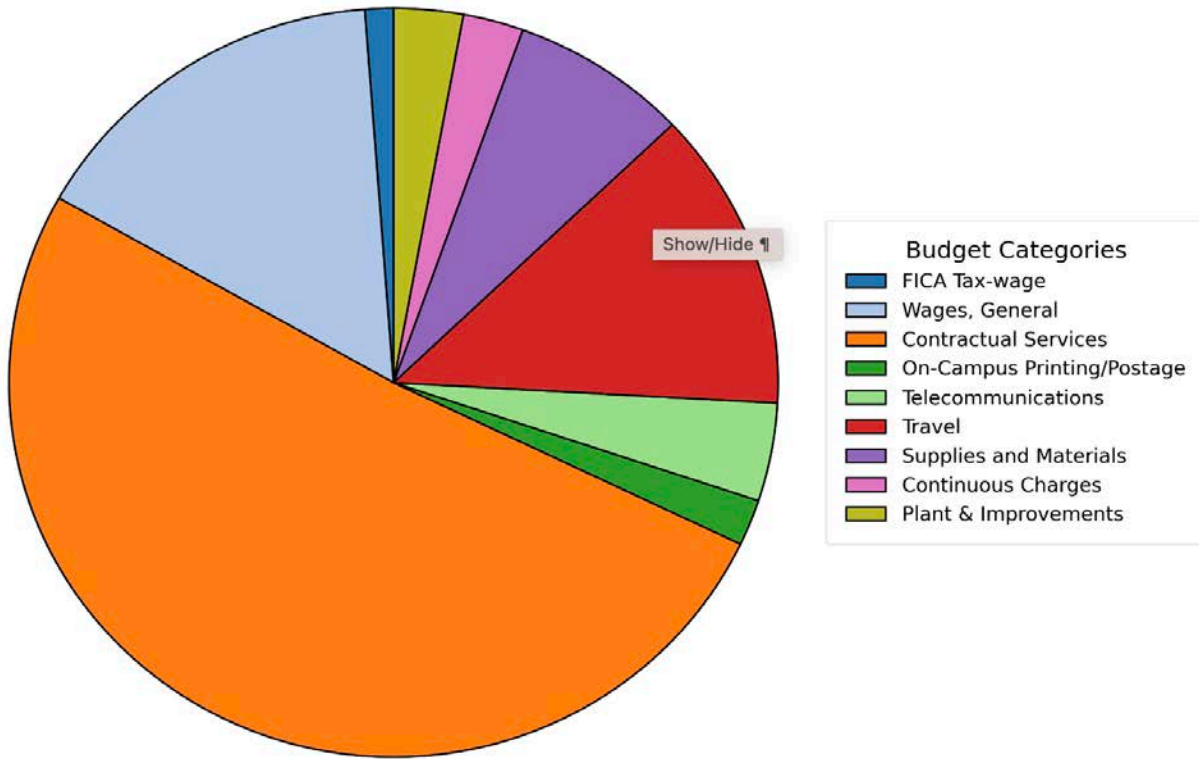
Over the past year, the college leadership team has taken deliberate steps to enhance transparency in budgeting across departments while strengthening collaboration around shared resources and major purchases. Departments have also demonstrated thoughtful stewardship of human resources by coordinating instructional efforts and, when appropriate, encouraging faculty to teach across departmental lines. These decisions are guided by careful alignment among course content, faculty expertise, and required credentials, ensuring both operational efficiency and academic integrity.

The following charts illustrate how the Educational and General (E&G) budget is allocated across each area of the college. As the year has progressed, funds have been strategically reallocated from the CVPA college budget to other units to support institutional priorities, including equipment and supplies, wages, travel and research, recruitment and outreach efforts. This flexible and responsive approach to budget management has allowed the college to address emerging needs while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

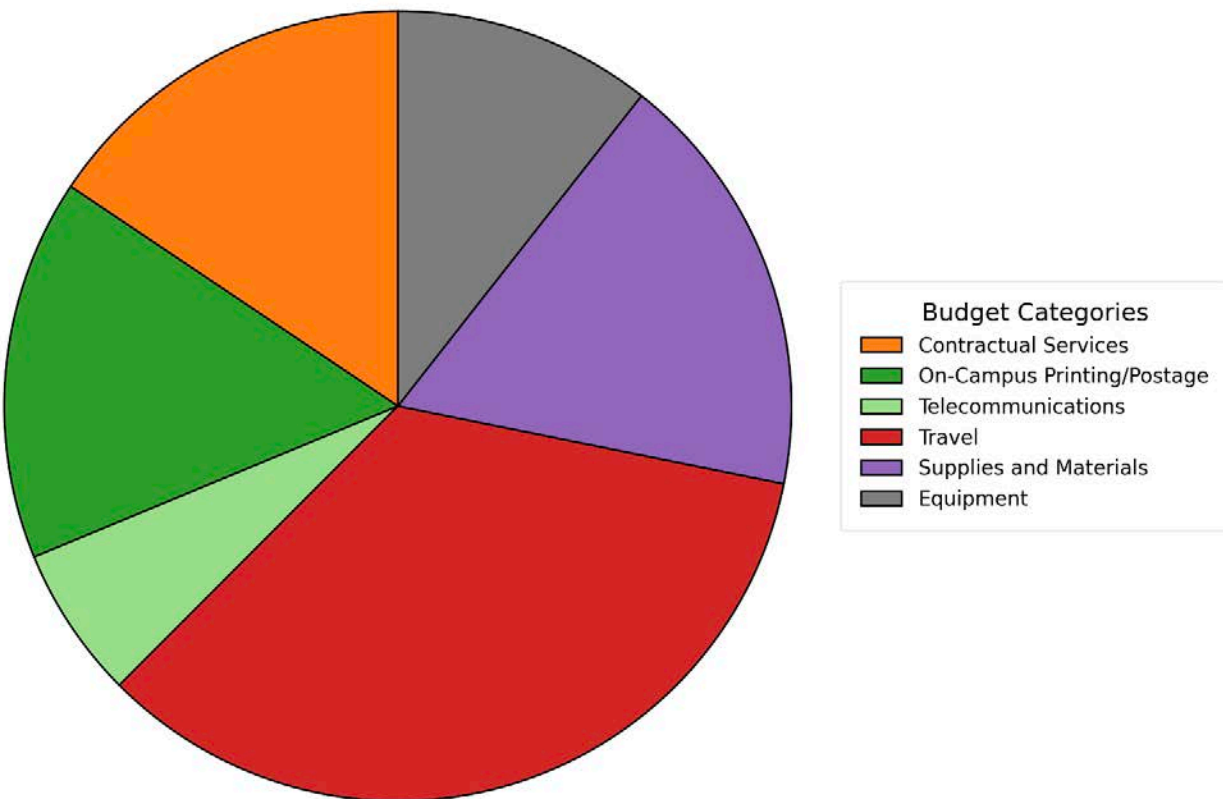
CVPA Budget Allocation of E&G funds for each area as of July 1, 2025



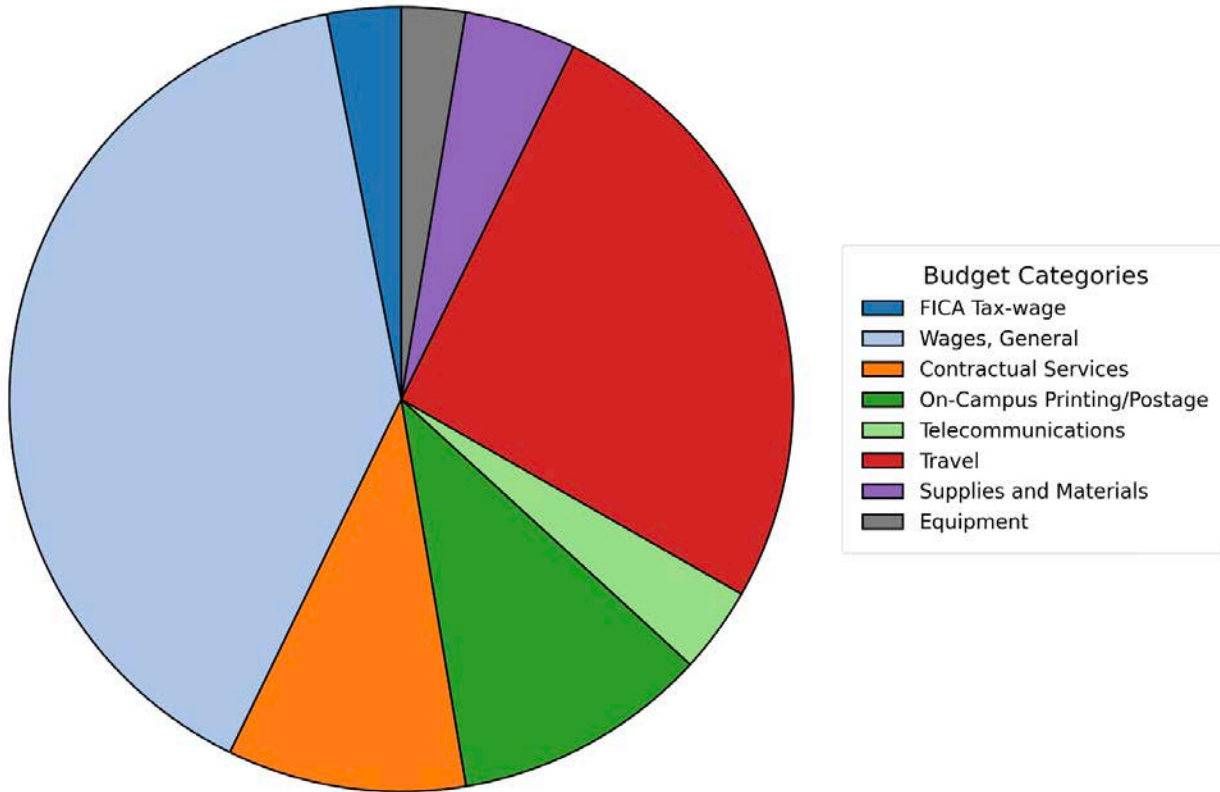
Music Department



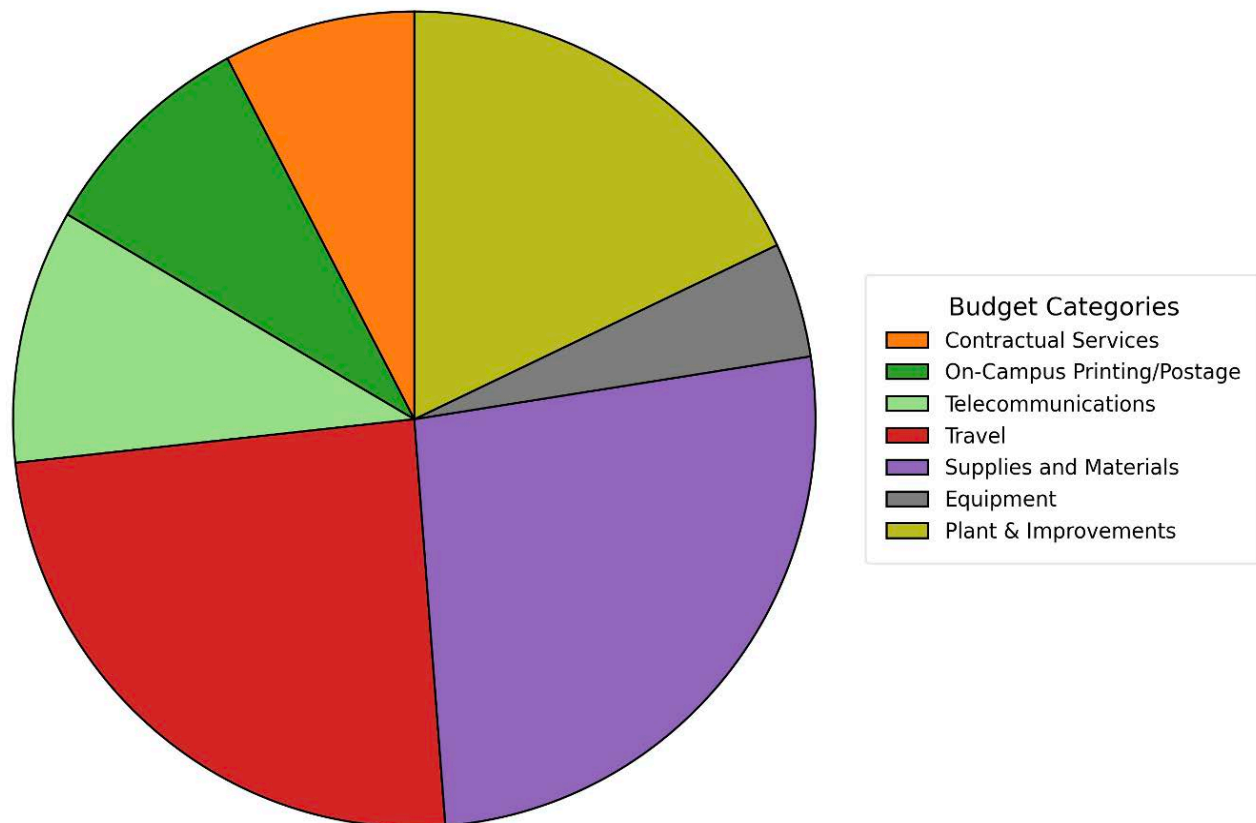
Theatre Department



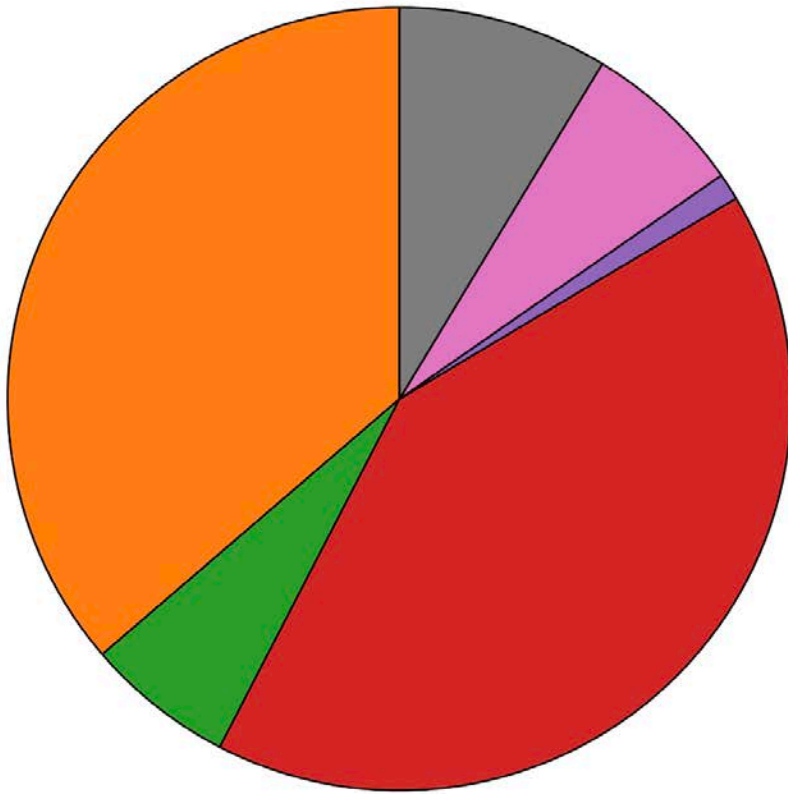
Dance Department



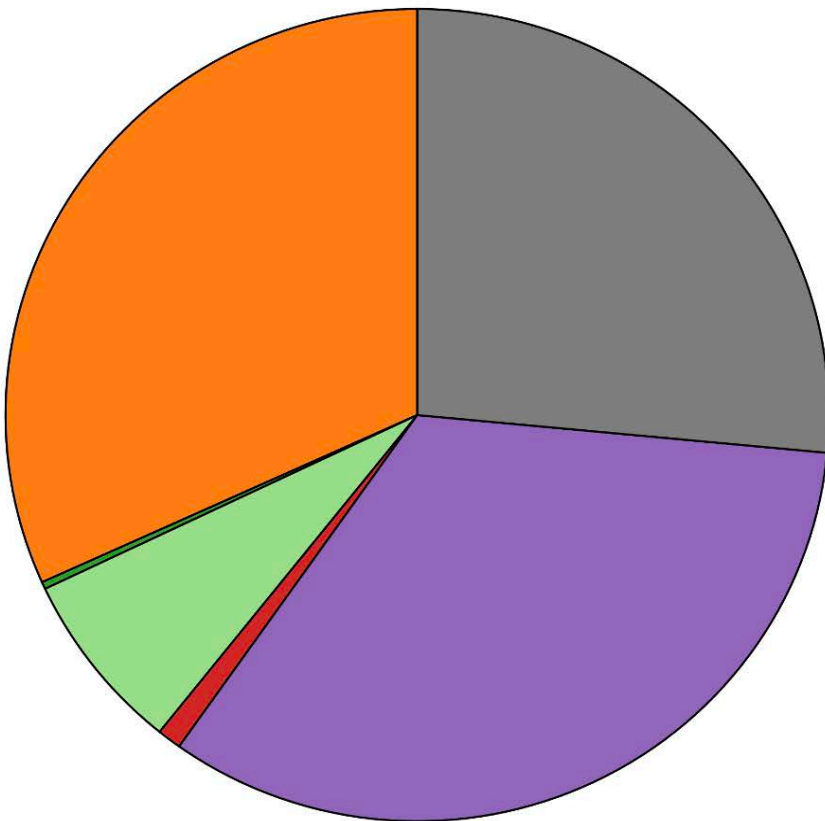
Design Department



Design Thinking



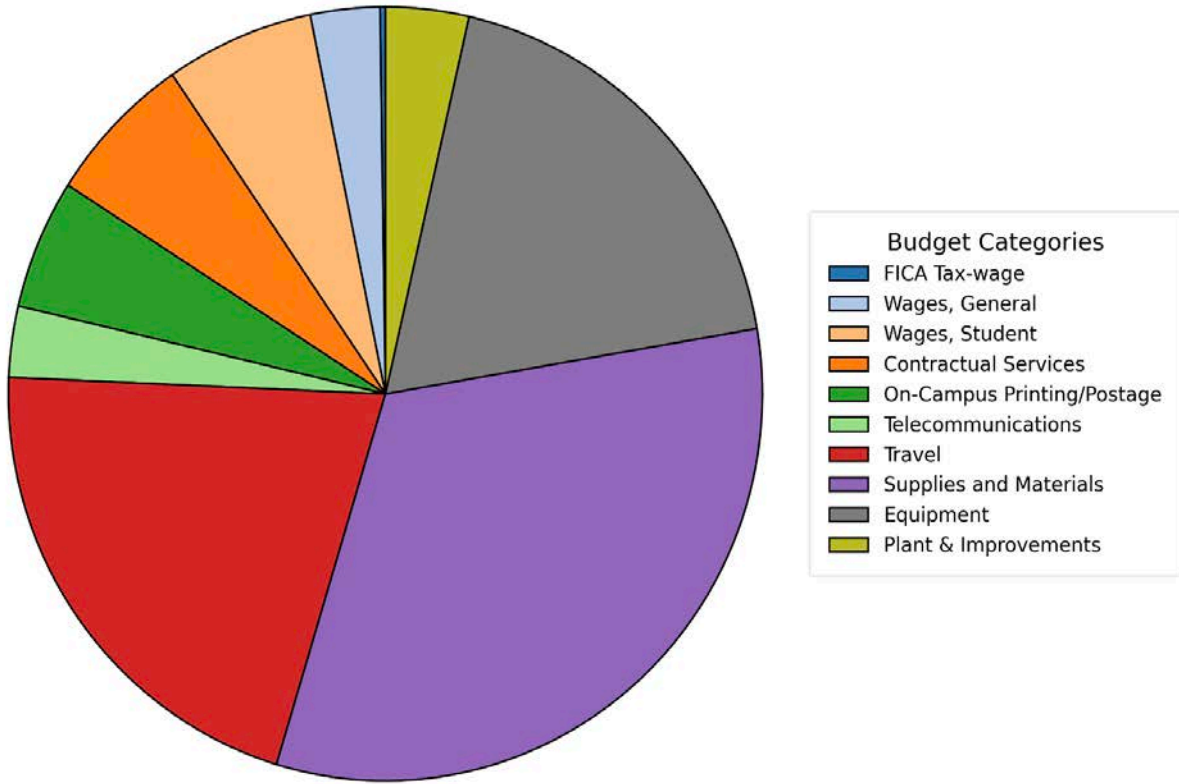
RU Art Museum



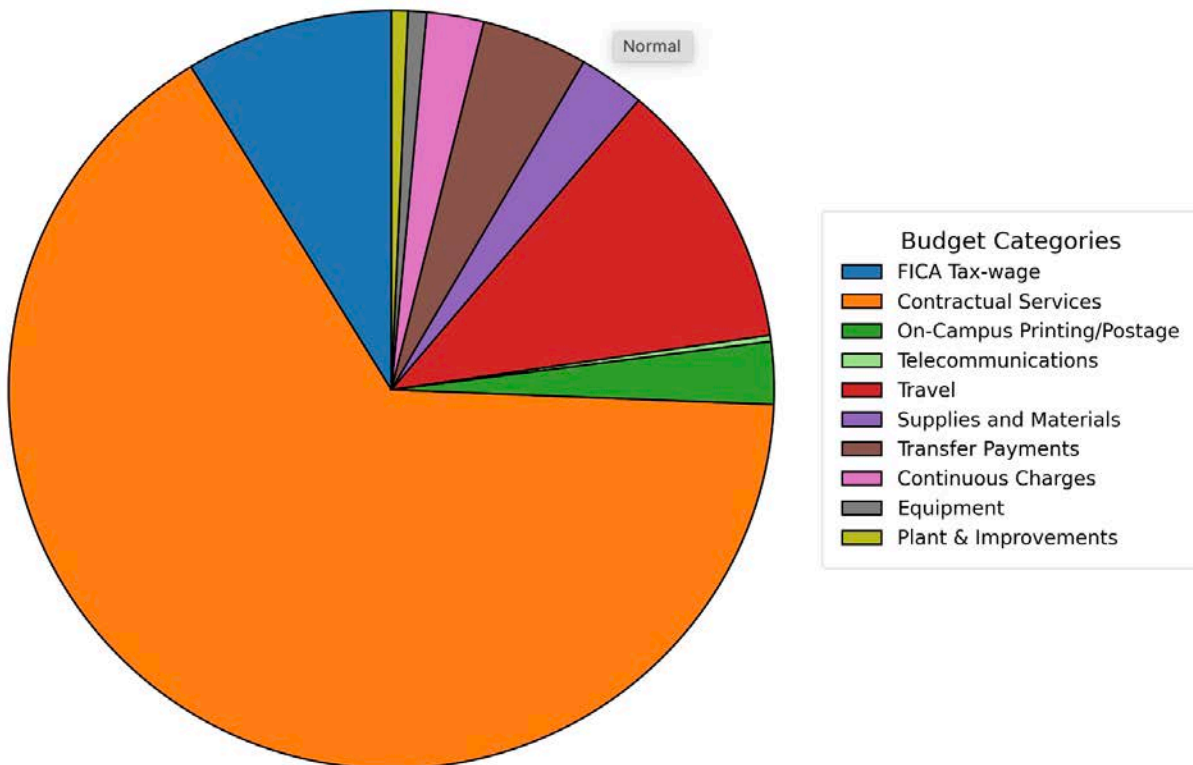
Normal



The Art Department



CVPA College Budget (Dean's Office)



Looking Forward

Our College has accomplished so much this year. In addition to the fulfilling the educational goals of our faculty and students through instruction, creation, production, and reflection we have also reached beyond our walls and windows to welcome in community members, make connections to other professionals in the arts, and make our college a hub for the arts in SWVA.

The Summer Residential Governor's School for Visual and Performing Arts and Humanities

The Summer Residential Governor's School for Visual and Performing Arts and Humanities is the result of a long-standing partnership among Radford University, the Virginia Department of Education, the College of Human and Behavioral Science (CHBS), Sponsored Programs, Conference Services, and the College of Visual and Performing Arts. This year, the program served more than 300 rising juniors and seniors from across the Commonwealth of Virginia and was directed by Dr. Tay Keong Tan. Dr. Tan was supported by an amazing group of faculty members as well as by Dean Jeff Aspelmeir and Dean Tim Channell.

Through interdisciplinary engagement in the arts and humanities, students explored complex “wicked problems,” cultivated intellectual curiosity, and became part of a broader statewide network of Governor's School alumni. The program featured multiple showcases, including performing arts presentations, a comprehensive visual art exhibition, and a highly successful Governor's School Wicked Festival. Leadership from across the region and the university actively supported the program, contributing to an exceptional and transformative experience for participating students. This year, Dr. Tan also collaborated with the Office of Admissions to leverage the residential Governor's School as a recruitment opportunity, intentionally connecting students' immersive experiences at Radford University with pathways to undergraduate enrollment following high school graduation. We hope that this year is as successful as last year. Our new Executive Director is Melissa Gerth. She is a visionary leader with strong organizational skills and a passion for education and the arts.

New River Valley Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities

The New River Valley Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities is a collaborative partnership among Radford University, New River Valley Community College, Radford City Schools, Giles County Public Schools, Floyd County Public Schools, Pulaski County Public Schools, and Montgomery County Public Schools. This innovative program provides a rigorous and immersive educational experience that allows selected high school students from nine public schools to earn up to 30 university credits, potentially achieving sophomore standing upon enrollment at Radford University or other Virginia colleges and universities.

The curriculum integrates university-level coursework with specialized instruction in the arts and humanities, enabling students to develop both practical skills and theoretical knowledge in their chosen fields. Through interdisciplinary collaboration that bridges the arts, humanities, and broader academic disciplines, students are challenged to think critically, creatively, and holistically.

A defining feature of the program is its partnership with regional arts and humanities organizations, businesses, and nonprofit institutions. These partnerships offer students hands-on learning opportunities through internships, mentorships, and collaborative projects, exposing them to real-world applications of their studies and viable career pathways within the region. By combining rigorous academic credentialing with experiential learning and community engagement, the program cultivates creative and critical thinkers who are well prepared for success in higher education and gainful employment in the arts and humanities sectors.

The program emphasizes portfolio development, capstone projects, and sustained engagement with professional practitioners, ensuring that students graduate with tangible credentials alongside their academic achievements. At the same time, it fosters meaningful connections among educational institutions, cultural organizations, and the regional creative economy, reinforcing a culture of collaboration, innovation, and lifelong learning.

This year, the leadership team worked closely with the President's Office, Academic Affairs, Superintendent Robert Graham, Laura Purcell, and leadership within the College of Human and Behavioral Science (CHBS) and the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) to successfully launch the program. A key milestone in this effort was the hiring of an exceptional Executive Director, Dr. Roxanne Souma. Dr. Souma brings extensive experience as an assistant principal, history teacher, curriculum leader, and specialist in gifted and special education, providing strong instructional, administrative, and programmatic leadership as the Governor's School moves forward.

We sponsored two visit days for prospective students with over 75 attendees and President Danilowicz joined me at information sessions at Pulaski High School, Montgomery County High School, and Radford High School. We excitedly anticipate having our first class of 40 students starting in the fall of 2026.

Accreditation and Academic Excellence

All programs within the College of Visual and Performing Arts are accredited by external professional accrediting agencies, in addition to meeting the standards required for SACSCOC accreditation. During the past year, the Department of Music successfully completed reaccreditation with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). The Interior Design program, accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), completed its self-study this year and is currently undergoing a site visit. Theatre has completed its self-study for reaccreditation by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and anticipates a site visit in 2026. These programs deserve recognition for the significant effort required to meet and maintain the highest professional standards. Accreditation work demands substantial time, research, and coordination from faculty and department chairs, as well as sustained support from the Provost and Dean. Our continued engagement with these rigorous accreditation processes is a clear testament to the college's commitment to academic excellence, professional preparation, and continuous improvement.

Appointment of new Associate Dean

This year, our college was especially fortunate to welcome Dr. Jennifer McDonel of Music Education to the leadership team as CVPA's new—and first—Associate Dean. A professor of music and longtime director of Music Education at Radford, Dr. McDonel is nationally recognized for her work in early childhood and elementary music education, music learning theory, and teacher preparation. She brings decades of experience as an educator, researcher, and mentor, along with a distinguished record of scholarship, creative activity, and professional service, including national teacher training and award-winning teaching excellence. Combining this depth of academic and artistic expertise with exceptional organizational skill, enthusiasm, and the deep respect of her colleagues, Dr. McDonel strengthens and elevates our leadership team. We are thrilled to welcome her and are confident that CVPA will benefit greatly from her insight, energy, and brilliance.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to share my experience as the Dean in collaborating with the faculty and staff of the College of Visual and Performing Arts to develop and deliver educational opportunities of the highest quality, aligned with the college's mission and the broader strategic goals of the university. Together we have strengthened our culture of collaboration, excellence, and care, supporting faculty innovation, interdisciplinary engagement, and transformative learning experiences for students. As a dean I have sought to support faculty and staff—active professionals, performers, scholars, and designers—in their work through visiting artists, research opportunities, curricular innovation, and partnerships that enrich student learning and professional preparation in the arts.

This report highlights the Dean's responsibility for procuring and stewarding the fiscal, human, and physical resources necessary to sustain and advance the college's mission. Strategic investments in facilities, safety, and specialized instructional spaces have enhanced artistic excellence across disciplines, while careful budget management, faculty workload initiatives, and academic planning have supported enrollment stability, retention, and student success. Despite enrollment fluctuations across some programs, CVPA continues to outperform the university average in retention and has achieved notable growth in select undergraduate and graduate areas. As a representative of the college, I have actively tried to advance CVPA's goals and needs to both internal and external constituencies. This includes deep partnerships with regional schools and communities, expanded Governor's School initiatives, donor engagement and philanthropic growth, collaboration with admissions and university leadership, and robust public outreach through performances, exhibitions, and festivals. These efforts strengthen the college's visibility, reinforce the arts as a public good, and position CVPA as a regional and cultural leader.

Finally, I hope this report reflects my commitment to promoting the overall excellence and welfare of the University by aligning college priorities with institutional strategy, upholding rigorous accreditation standards across all programs, and fostering a community grounded in resilience, equity, and care. Through sustained attention to academic quality, student well-being, professional excellence, and civic engagement, the college is well positioned to reimagine its future while continuing to contribute meaningfully to the intellectual and cultural life of the university and the region.

Go Highlanders!

