

SpencerStuart



Fashion Institute of Technology

President Position Specification

Prepared by Spencer Stuart



The History of FIT

With qualified fashion and apparel workers dwindling in the 1940s, a group of industry leaders, led by Mortimer C. Ritter, an educator with an interest in programs for young working people, and Max Meyer, a retired menswear manufacturer, set about organizing a school to ensure the vitality of their businesses. With the creation of the Educational Foundation for the Apparel Industries, the New York State Board of Regents granted the Foundation to establish a “fashion institute of technology and design” and the institute opened in 1944 with 100 students.



Soon, supporters wanted to bring greater prestige to the industry by having the institute become a college with the authority to confer degrees. Industrialists and educators decided on two majors: Design (with programs in apparel, millinery, and textiles) and Scientific Management. In 1951, three years after the state law had provided for the creation of community colleges, FIT became the second SUNY community college empowered to grant the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree. By then, there were four hundred students and about 1,000 evening students.

By 1957, FIT received accreditation, and the College moved in 1959 to its first real home on Seventh Avenue in the heart of the garment district. While initially planned to accommodate 1,200 students, by 1963, the College had over 4,000 students enrolled and continued expanding its programs to include photography, advertising, and interior design.

The College wanted to further expand its curriculum by offering bachelor’s and master’s degrees— something that “was just not done” by a community college, according to the State University’s former chancellor. Representatives of the College and supporters in the industry and government lobbied to be granted authority to confer these degrees and by 1975, an amendment was made to the law allowing FIT the ability to grant associates degrees to allow B.S. and B.F.A. programs, which was followed closely by a second amendment in 1979 permitting FIT to grant master’s degrees.

With the campus expanded to seven buildings, including two dormitories and the Shirley Goodman Resource Center, which houses the Gladys Marcus Library and The Museum at FIT by the 1980s, the school continued to grow by adding modern facilities, like the Design/Lighting Research Laboratory and the Annette Green Fragrance Foundation Studio (the first of its kind on a college campus). The College continued to add programs including international opportunities.

Today, FIT is a global leader in education for creative minds offering twenty-nine undergraduate and seven graduate programs and serving more than 8,000 students. To learn more about FIT, please visit: <https://www.fitnyc.edu/>

FIT Today

FIT: Where Creativity Gets Down to Business

The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) is an internationally recognized college for design, fashion, communications, and business located in New York City. FIT prepares students for professional careers in design and business through rigorous academic programs that emphasize experiential learning and partner with creative industries.

Today, the College is a center for innovation, a cutting-edge destination for research, sustainability, and excellence, and a premier educational institution with tremendous influence in the world of art and design.

FIT now offers nearly 50 majors that blend hands-on, practical experience with theory and a firm grounding in the liberal arts and sciences, preparing students for professional success and leadership in the creative industries. Students can also choose from 40 academic minors to tailor their education to their interests, as well as from 60 clubs and a roster of NJCAA Division III athletic teams.

As part of the SUNY system, FIT remains affordable and accessible, while its reach is truly global. Students hail from all 50 states, plus territories and commonwealths, and 84 countries. The College collaborates with institutions all over the world, offering 50 study-abroad programs. Faculty consistently earn Fulbright Awards for international research.

FIT alumni lead major global companies and innovate as entrepreneurs. They make headlines as designers and artists, C-suite executives, and marketing gurus, and they consistently return to FIT to help lift the next generation of graduates.

FIT Facts

FIT Facts

FOUNDING DATE
1944

PROGRAMS

- 15** Associate in Applied Science
- 14** Bachelor of Fine Arts
- 12** Bachelor of Science
- 3** Master of Arts
- 2** Master of Fine Arts
- 2** Master of Professional Studies
- 9** Credit Certificate

ENROLLMENT

- 4,147** Associate's
- 3,428** Bachelor's
- 265** Master's
- 269** Nonmatriculated
- 8,108** Total

COLLEGE FACULTY

- 250** Full-time
- 748** Part-time

DEGREES AWARDED 2022-23

- 1,840** Associate's
- 1,703** Bachelor's
- 112** Master's
- 12** Certificates
- 3,667** Total

DIVERSITY

- 13%** Asian
- 9%** Black
- 23%** Hispanic
- 12%** International Students
- 5%** Multiracial
- 38%** White
- 82%** Female
- 18%** Male

ACCREDITATIONS

- Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design
- Accreditation Council for Business School and Programs
- Council for Interior Design Accreditation
- American Alliance of Museums

ACADEMIC DIVISIONS

- School of Art and Design
- Jay and Patty Baker School of Business and Technology
- School of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- School of Graduate Studies
- Center for Continuing and Professional Studies

Governed by a 16-member Board of Trustees, FIT has an annual operating budget of \$250M and \$60M endowment.

Click [here](#) for 2023 Annual Report

The Museum at FIT

The Museum at FIT, accredited by the [American Alliance of Museums](#), is one of a select group of specialized fashion museums, including the Musée de la Mode, the Mode Museum, and the Museo de la Moda. Each year, over 100,000 people visit The Museum at FIT. We work to create exhibitions, programs, and publications that educate, inspire, and advance recognition of the cultural significance of dress and fashion. The mission of the museum is to promote original research, creative thinking, and lifelong learning among diverse and inclusive audiences.

The museum's permanent collection encompasses some 50,000 garments and accessories from the 18th century to the present. Important designers such as Adrian, Balenciaga, Chanel, and Dior are represented. The collecting policy of the museum focuses on aesthetically and historically significant directional clothing, accessories, textiles and visual materials, with emphasis on contemporary avant-garde fashion.

There are three galleries in the museum. The lower-level gallery is devoted to special exhibitions. The Fashion and Textile History Gallery provides on-going historical context through a rotating selection of approximately 200 historically and artistically significant objects from the museum's permanent collection. And lastly, Gallery FIT, is dedicated to student and faculty exhibitions, such as the Art and Design Graduating Student Exhibition every May. Students from FIT's School of Graduate Studies also collaborate with the museum's staff to mount a professional museum exhibition once a year.

In addition to its three exhibition galleries, the museum is composed of a conservation laboratory, photographic studio, workshop, more than 14,000 square feet of on-site storage space, three classrooms, and offices for 30 full-time employees. Members of the staff of The Museum at FIT have specialized skills in the conservation, documentation, exhibition, and interpretation of fashion.



Candidate Profile and Key Selection Criteria



Overview of the FIT President

The President is the chief executive officer of FIT and is responsible for the leadership, creative direction, and overall administration of the College. In collaboration with the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff, the President will develop and implement sustainable strategies to ensure the long-term viability, distinctive programming, financial strength, and standing as the leading college of design and business in the country.

The President will have a strategic, global mindset and the ability to be a compelling advocate for the College and its mission. They will champion a strong faculty in a range of arts- and business-related disciplines with respect and understanding of the integral role the liberal arts have in the education of creative professionals. The ideal candidate will be adaptable and flexible to keep up with the changing needs in higher education for students and the people who work in it.

Reporting to the FIT Board of Trustees, the President of the College will be responsible for thirteen direct reports and foster strong relationships with the SUNY Chancellor and key SUNY leaders, the City of New York, the State of New York, and global industry partners.



Key Priorities for the President

- Developing a forward-thinking vision that embraces innovation and enhances FIT's distinctiveness and position as a global pioneer in education for the creative economy.
- Working productively with the Board, administration, and union leadership to advance the interests of the College.
- Strengthening FIT's financial position by inspiring philanthropic support and careful stewardship of resources.
- Breaking down organizational silos and cultivating a culture of collaboration and partnership.
- Recruiting, retaining, and developing a high-caliber and effective leadership team.
- Ensuring that FIT's values of diversity, equity, and inclusion are not just upheld but actively championed.
- Leveraging further FIT's global alumni network for partnerships and fundraising opportunities.
- Building trust and rapport with students, faculty, and staff, and a culture that embraces creativity and individuality.
- Serving as the institution's confident, compelling face, effectively communicating its vision, successes, and unique offerings internally and externally.
- Addressing the physical plant and challenges of operating in a condensed urban footprint, supporting improvements to classroom facilities and technology resources.

Key Selection Criteria

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

- **Senior leadership experience:** Senior leadership experience within a comparable organization of similar complexity and scale. Experience in academia is preferred but not required.
- **Industry knowledge:** Expertise in fashion and design desired; at minimum, passion for design education and the industries FIT serves.
- **External and community engagement:** Experience serving as the spokesperson and key representative for organizations attuned to the interests of divergent internal and external stakeholders; ideally, experience and networks in the city of New York.
- **Fundraising experience:** Experience raising significant financial support from individuals, corporations, institutional donors, and through government funding.
- **Knowledge of shared governance:** Understanding of effective, shared governance; ideally, experience in a unionized or highly regulated environment.
- **Proven strength in effective marketing and communications:** Experience in successful marketing of a major brand, entity, organization or institution.

Critical Leadership Capabilities

Strategic Vision and Leadership. The new President must be bold and able to position the College as the definitive global thought leader and industry collaborator within the areas of art, design, science, and business by:

- Leading the institution through strategic planning and organizational development to capitalize on key strengths, incorporating insights and trends for higher education and the creative industries.
- Implementing long-term financial planning strategies to ensure fiscal sustainability and growth.
- Championing advancements while preserving FIT's legacy of excellence, adaptability, and forward-thinking education.
- Continually challenge the status quo to bring FIT to new levels of academic innovation, creative use and application of technology, that furthers its achievement and reputation at intersection of design, fashion, and business.

Collaborating and Influencing. In an increasingly competitive environment, the President must build the relationships and resources necessary to keep FIT at the forefront of design and business education and research, and enhance the profile and reputation of the College by:

- Developing and leading a strong, proactive advancement program to engage donors, alumni, and parents, as well as community, foundation, and political leaders to support FIT's ambitious agenda.
- Strengthening and increasing FIT's stature globally and the visibility of its brand and unique culture, attributes, and programming.
- Serving as the chief spokesperson for the College, and maintaining a strong network in design education, the creative industries, and the cultural community locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Seeking opportunities to partner with other academic and cultural institutions, foundations, and non-profits.

Critical Leadership Capabilities - *continued*

Leading People. In an organization that has benefited from the leadership of a long-term president and highly committed Board of Trustees, the new President must have the confidence, emotional intelligence, and skill to lead the College through a major leadership transition by:

- Establishing credibility with trustees, faculty, staff, and students by exhibiting strong listening skills as well as a transparent and collaborative leadership style.
- Identifying, recruiting, and retaining top talent and delegating effectively.
- Cultivating an inclusive and collaborative community of lifelong learners where access, connection, curiosity, risk-taking, and respect are valued.
- Understanding and addressing the needs of faculty, staff, and students through shared governance and effective partnership with union leadership.
- Modeling caring, empathetic leadership with the ability to connect to all members of the FIT community with authenticity and intention.

Candidate Character Profile		
Energy, verve, and charisma	Commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion	Integrity
Decisiveness	Savvy negotiator	Strong people leader



Board of Trustees

FIT Board of Trustees

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