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Graphic designers are involved in almost everything we watch, watch, or read, from designs to books, how websites navigate, break advertisements, logos on business cards. Graphic designers are visual wizards who make sure that every concert poster and user interface of the app has an impact and conveys the desired message. If this sounds attractive to you, you may wonder how you can become a graphic designer. Well, you're going to school! In this article I will discuss what graphic design program is, how I created this list, the best schools of graphic design, and how to choose the right program for you. What is a school of graphic design? Graphic design, or communication design, is the use of image, text and media to convey information or ideas. Graphic designers are strategic communicators who design advertisements, book jackets, posters, websites, application interfaces, layout publications, album art, logos and so on and so forth. If you're creative and innovative, especially if you're also interested in technology, graphic design can be a good option for you. To become a professional graphic designer, you will need a strong portfolio of work to show potential employers what you could theoretically do on your own or by obtaining a law degree. But if you want to be fully fleshed out of the college experience, guaranteed a strong portfolio, and a willing communications industry, consider getting a bachelor's degree or BFA in graphic design or design communications (the name and specific type of degree depends on the school). Graphic design programs can be found both in art schools and as departments at major universities. They are even found in some technical schools! This list includes graphic design programs of all types, but these are all great places to get a graphic design education and learn the skills needed to launch a design career. Ranking Graphic Design School Methodology How do I compile these graphic school design rankings? First, I found so many lists of the best graphic design schools that I could find. I have excluded those that seemed to come from less reliable or less reputable sources (such as personal blogs) or who have already aggregated lists from other sources (since they would be redundant). This left me with rankings from all kinds of sources with all kinds of data -- trade magazines, graduate ratings, student satisfaction, and so on. The U.S. News and World Report did not rank the Bachelor's graphic design programs, but there is data on freshmen retention rates, which I also accounted for in. Schools are then ranked based on the average score, how many lists they have appeared in (so a school that appeared in spots 5 and 6 on two lists, but appeared on no other not necessarily to beat the school, which appeared in spots 7, 8, 7 and 8 in the four lists). Freshman retention rates were used to sever ties in close close In general, the rating reflects a fairly holistic indicator of recognition of prestige/name, student satisfaction, evaluation of graduates of the program and return on investment. Was this layout designed by a master graphic design student? You decide. Best Graphic Design School Here are 20 of the best graphic design programs. The price of each entry includes the location of the school, information about the school, its admission and the proposed degrees. All admission rates for autumn 2019, unless otherwise stated. I'm affiliated with our admissions pages for all these schools, but these pages are mostly focused on GPA and tests. Keep in mind that when applying to a graphic design program, a strong portfolio of your past creative work is likely to be more important than classes or GPA. The best general programs are programs with high name recognition, consistently high ranking, and notable faculty and alumni. Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) - Providence, Rhode Island RISD is essentially Harvard Art School in terms of name recognition and famous alumni (including, but not limited to, Airbnb founders, animator/comedian Seth MacFarlane, actor James Franco, and fashion designers Nicole Miller and Jill Stewart). Graduates also received a number of genius MacArthur grants. If you attend RISD, you can expect well-funded programs and teachers at the very top of their disciplines. It's no surprise, then, that RISD has been consistently at the top of the school rankings for graphic design. It is one of the most competitive schools on this list and has a heavily established, well known graphic design program. Students apply to RISD in general and do not choose specialties until the middle of the first year of study. Graphic Design is one of the largest undergraduate faculties in RISD, with about 165 students. Students graduate with a BFA degree. Parsons School of Design (New School) - Manhattan, New York Parsons is another school with lots of name recognition and top-notch faculty, and they are constantly appearing at the top of the rankings of the best programs. In 2019, the school was named the best design school in the United States by the ranking of universities in the world, and the third best in the world, mainly in recognition of its interdisciplinary focus on nuts and bolts technical and design-functional. The school's four-year BFA communications design program (graphic design equivalent) has delivered graduates to Google, Facebook and New York Magazine, and has produced a healthy crop of entrepreneurs and freelancers. Pratt Institute - Brooklyn, New York Pratt Institute - another prestigious program located on a historic campus in Brooklyn, NY. They are invested in the philosophy of poetic pragmatism in which artistic vision is associated with practical skills. Many teachers work as professionals in their The Pratt Institute offers the BFA in a design communication-interdisciplinary program focusing on advertising, illustration, and graphic design (you choose to focus on one of three areas). Graduates praise the program for preparing them for a career in their fields and for its innovative and frontier focus. Hey, maybe you're crossing this bridge to get to Pratt! Highly valued programs These programs are well resourced and well known in the industry. Many offer their own unique spin on graphic design or have a special focus not found in many other institutions. ArtCenter College of Design - Pasadena, California ArtCenter's Undergraduate Program in Graphic Design provides extensive training in old and new media, creating comprehensive practitioners with skills covering all areas of graphic design as a discipline. ArtCenter encourages an experimental and socially conscious approach. The school also offers a greater return on investment, with graduates making higher salaries than graduates from peer-to-peer institutions. Graduates end up in a variety of industries and fields; Currently graduates work for many different companies such as Nike and NASA. Want to build the best college application? We can help. PrepScholar Admission is the world's best admissions consulting service. We combine world-class reception consultants with our data-driven reception strategies. We watched thousands of students wash up in their best schools, from public colleges to the Ivy League. We know which college students want to accept. We want you to go to the schools of your dreams. Learn more about prepScholar admissions to maximize your chances of getting an inch of the Maryland Institute of Art College (MICA) - Baltimore, Maryland MICA has a modern, urban campus in Baltimore and offers a craft-oriented BFA in graphic design that aims to develop both your creativity and your craftsmanship with technology. MICA also offers juvenile liberal arts such as gender studies and critical theory. In addition, it has a unique interdisciplinary BFA program in humanistic research that combines your graphic design education with an interdisciplinary focus on the humanities and humanities. California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) - Valencia, Santa Clarita, CA If you dream of attending an art school founded by Walt Disney, CalArts is for you. Disney envisioned CalArts as a place where students from all artistic disciplines could develop into a collaborative, workshop-centered environment. The BFA Graphic Design Program is quite small and only has about 12-20 new students each year. Many work in film, television and major technology companies. If Hollywood calls you, CalArts can be a great choice! Carnegie Mellon School of Design - Pittsburgh, PA You may be surprised to see a large research university known for its program on the graphic design list. But don't be! Carnegie Mellon has an innovative approach to the study and craft of graphic design; Graduates praise the integration of the art design points program with cutting-edge technology. Instead of the BFA, the Carnegie Mellon School of Design offers BDes, or Bachelor of Design. It also offers an interdisciplinary degree in design combined with another student choice course, which should be very attractive to students with multiple interests. Finally, it's a great choice if you want an art education school, but a great research university experience. Overall, Carnegie Mellon provides an advanced, solid foundation for a design career. School of Visual Arts - Manhattan, New York School of Visual Arts offers BFA in graphic design, with the ability to specialize in graphic design in areas such as packaging design, website design, book jacket design, and so on. Graduates praised the school's amazing networking opportunities - SVA has a robust internship program, holds professional-level student exhibitions and annually sends graduate student collections to industry giants in the Senior Library. SVA is a good choice if your main concern is currently commercially in the market and networking; it may not be the school for you if you are interested in practicing design on an artistic and/or theoretical level. Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) - Savannah, Georgia Savannah College of Art and Design is unusually large for an art school, with more than 11,000 students enrolled. You can get a bachelor's degree in visual communication (with a focus on graphic design) or a BFA in graphic design, so your options are flexible. Professors have considerable industry experience and you will have the opportunity to study abroad at the global SCAD campuses in Hong Kong or Lacoste, France. Overall, SCAD is a solid design school that offers many opportunities for motivated students. At SCAD, you could have access to these trees all the time! Virginia Commonwealth University - Richmond, Va. Is another great choice if you want art school chops with great university experience: VCU is a major public university with over 30,000 students. VCU offers BFA in graphic design, but you have to complete the Art Foundation sequence before you can apply to the major. Is Hollywood beckoning? Well-Regarded Programs This section includes some eminent art schools whose graphic design programs are not quite as well established as their other programs, as well as some up-and-coming graphic design programs that are just now gaining momentum. Otis Art and Design - The Los Angeles, California BFA program in graphic design at Otis is in the design department of Communications, which also houses programs in illustration and advertising design. Otis primarily prepares its graduates for work Professional sphere; Past graphic design graduates have worked for Apple, Anthropologie, Conde Nast, Disney, Interscope Records, Mattel, Sony and Target. This is a good choice for students who would like to do design work for large companies and are interested in some of the most commercial aspects of graphic design. University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Arts and Planning - Cincinnati, Ohio If you want to combine the experience of participating in a large NCAA division-1 school with a high-quality design program and want to be able to take courses in many different disciplines, the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning can be a good fit for you! Unlike many other programs that the BFA offers, the University of Cincinnati offers a bachelor's degree in communication design as a graphic design degree. Many students go on to work in the health care industry, for governments, or for NGOs. So if you are interested in design in these areas, this school is a great choice. California College of Art (CCA) - The Oakland, California-based CCA offers a BFA in graphic design that prepares students to work in multiple design disciplines. It also has a robust internship program for fourth-year students that ensures that you finish with practical, real professional experience. In addition, CCA focuses on social justice-oriented and socially conscious design practices. In fact, students get a little bit of everything: a wide range of skills, professional experience and public consciousness. Yale University School of Art - New Haven, Conn. Students with a degree in graphic design and a bachelor's degree. Interested students should be aware that they will need to apply for a basic enrollment in their sophomore year. As with many other programs at Yale, the graphic design program is very focused on craft and design theory, as opposed to its more practical and commercial application. Thus, this program is best suited for students whose interests are academic and artistic, as opposed to technical and/or commercial. In addition, Ele also has snowy winters in New England. College of Creative Studies - Detroit, Michigan College of Creative Studies offers BFA in graphic design. They have a unique focus on the experience of design, or immersive, multimedia design experiences. If that interests you, CCS is the place to go, since programs focused on design experience are

few and far between. Ear focuses on community participation as a whole. Graphic design graduates have worked at Dreamworks, Google, Nike, Disney, Fox, Microsoft, as well as universities and libraries. Many have founded their own design firms, too. Chicago School of Art Institute - The Chicago, Illinois School of The Art Institute is a school affiliated with the renowned Museum of the Chicago Institute of the Arts. SAIC offers BFA's visual design connection, with a focus on physical and virtual design environments. The department facilitates student freelance work and internships so that students graduate from school with real professional experience. The Department also holds an annual series of lectures by invited designers doing innovative work in this area. And, of course, the campus is located in the heart of Chicago, a city where many cultural and artistic institutions are located. Also, Chicago has beans-I mean, Cloud Gate. Solid programs In these schools, name recognition is on the bottom side, but you get a solid educational foundation from which to start your graphic design career. Ringling College of Art and Design - Sarasota, Fla. Ringling isn't exactly the name of many schools' recognition further on this list, but it has a solid, comprehensive program. The school offers BFA in graphic design, which aims to turn students into visual storytellers. Students have the opportunity to study abroad in Europe during their time at Ringling. In addition, graduates have won prestigious industry awards and work at Instagram, LinkedIn, Yahoo, Birchbox, Trader Joe's and leading design firms. University of the Arts (UArts) - The Philadelphia, Pennsylvania BFA program in graphic design at UArts teaches students in old and new media. Students have the opportunity to work on real, practical projects based in the wider Philadelphia area as part of their coursework. The department also hosts an annual spring seminar with a well-known visiting design teacher. This is another program that focuses more on practical and commercial than artistic and theoretical. Art University Academy - San Francisco, California Academy of Arts, BFA University's Graphic Design focuses on the intersection between art and commerce. There's also a focus on professional readiness and creative and marketing competence. Overall, this school is more about giving you action-working skills and connections than developing your exquisite artistic sensibilities as a designer. Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) - The Rochester, N.J. Graphic Design BFA's RIT is broad in professional education and interdisciplinary in coverage. Students have unique opportunities to cooperate with other departments and disciplines on projects, especially in technical and engineering departments. Students are also encouraged to consider the social, ethical and environmental impact of design. RIT is a good option for students who are interested intersection between technology and design. Admire this very important and cutting-edge part of graphic design. How to choose the right graphic school design for you with so many options, it can be overwhelming to try narrow the field down to a few programs that really interest you. I strongly recommend attending school, using information sessions near you, and talking to current students and recent graduates. If you don't know the graduates personally, try the Reddit Graphic Design Forum! Also, here are some key questions to consider as you compile your list of graphic design programs to apply to #1: How strong is my portfolio? Can I get into the competition program? To get admitted to more competitive programs, you will often need a strong art and design portfolio. Are you taking art classes, so how could you hold a pencil, or graphic design a relatively new interest for you? To get feedback on your portfolio, I advise taking it to any portfolio review session you may find. Sometimes art schools send representatives across the country to review student portfolios at a portfolio fair, where you can get feedback from many schools in one day about how your portfolio stacks and what you can do to strengthen it. Otherwise, try contacting your local school of art and design to try to get a portfolio of feedback and a clear idea of how competitive your portfolio can be. #2: Am I more interested in the artistic or commercial side of design? Some programs, like the one in Ele, are much more concerned with the high and artistic side of graphic design and its theoretical applications, while other programs, like the School of Visual Arts, are more focused on transforming you into commercially trained practices. One is not necessarily better or more useful than the others, but it could be better aligned with your goals. Dreaming of experimental installations in an art museum or advertising for Target? Do you want to learn how to draw the outline of an art line or do you prefer to learn seven principles of design? If the first, more artistically oriented program may be for you. If later, a more commercially oriented option is a safer bet. Want to build the best college application? We can help. PrepScholar Admission is the world's best admissions consulting service. We combine world-class reception consultants with our data-driven reception strategies. We watched thousands of students wash up in their best schools, from public colleges to the Ivy League. We know which college students want to accept. We want you to go to the schools of your dreams. Learn more about admission to PrepScholar to maximize your chances of enrolling: Do I want to attend art school? Graphic design programs tend to fall under the categories: those housed in specialized art schools like RISD, and those housed in major universities like Carnegie Mellon. If you have a heart set on a more traditional college experience, you might be better off going to a big university that offers offers design programs. If, however, you are interested in a smaller institution with other art and design-minded people, you can attend a special art school as well. Also, if you don't necessarily need a typical university experience, but you don't want to attend a super-small institute either, consider a large art school like SCAD. This seems like a very real and official lecture at art school. #4: Am I interested in interdisciplinary research? What about cutting-edge technology? Some programs offer more flexibility to explore other interests. Carnegie Mellon, MICA and RIT, for example, all offer more flexibility in investigating other interests (especially the technology in Carnegie and RIT) than other, tougher programs. You should also consider if you want a program that is clearly focused on training students in new media and the most advanced graphic design technologies like the College of Creative Studies. #5: Is there a special faculty I want to work in? Check out the biographies of professors and faculty in all the programs that interest you. Who does the job that interests you the most? Be sure to mention any faculty you're impressed with and want to work with in your app, too! #6: Do I want to study abroad? If you have a heart set to study abroad, your options are somewhat limited. Both SCAD and Ringling have established study options abroad, but you'll probably need to do some research to find out whether going abroad is possible at other schools as well. #7: Do I have geographical preferences? Last but of course, not least, where do you want to live while you attend college? There are plenty of options in California and the East Coast (NYC in particular), but you're not necessarily confined to these places. Many programs on this list are as far away as Sarasota, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; and Savannah, Georgia. If you want to go to the Big Apple, you have a lot of options. Key takeaways: The best graphic design school graphic designers are involved in pretty much all the ways we consume information: they design publishing layouts, book jackets, album art, websites, application interfaces, advertisements, event posters, company logos, and so on. Being a graphic designer includes creativity, technical mixing and professional acumen. If this sounds like a career you're interested in, go to a graphic design school! There are many great graphic design programs housed in art schools, major public universities, technology schools, and even the Ivy League. With this handy list, you'll be sure to find a program that is right for you! What's next? Still not sure about college? Or still School? See our guides on whether you should go to college and the best way to do college studies. Need help narrowing the final list of schools? Learn how to choose college colleges to, and get tips on how many schools to turn to as well! Given what to study and worry about your future income? Check out our list of the highest paid college majors to help you decide whether you should study one of them. Want to improve your SAT score by 160 points or your ACT score by 4 points? We have written a guide for each test about the 5 best strategies you should use to have a chance at improving your score. 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