



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM

**Search for the Director, Weisman Art Museum
The University of Minnesota**

THE SEARCH

The University of Minnesota, the public land-grant research university of the state of Minnesota, seeks a forward-thinking, visionary, and collaborative leader to be the next Director of the Weisman Art Museum. The Weisman is a dynamically engaged teaching museum and vital institution for the University and the Twin Cities region, creating art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation. The search for the next Director is a rare opportunity for an exceptional leader to take the reins of a well-stewarded institution and guide it into its next iteration.

There is expansive possibility for the Weisman in the current moment. The challenges of the past year have been layered and complex. As the world emerges from the throes of the pandemic, racial and historical reckonings, and myriad cultural and economic shifts, fundamental questions about the mission and purpose of museums have risen to the fore nationally and globally. The Weisman Art Museum is part of these ongoing conversations, and the next Director will find the Weisman leaning into questions of a dynamic museum's educational and cultural purpose as well as issues of diversity, justice, equity, access, and inclusion and a museum's role in advancing it. As a teaching museum reporting to the provost of a major research University, the Weisman has a unique role at the center of the University's mission of education, discovery, and reciprocal public engagement. With this as a backdrop, the next Director will be called upon to lead the Weisman in fully realizing its potential and meeting the moment.

The Director will be responsible for all activities of the Weisman, expected to work across the University and to provide strategic vision, direction, artistic oversight, and executive and administrative leadership for an organization that serves its campus and community. The next leader will build upon the Weisman Art Museum's strong foundation, energizing and expanding the Weisman's scope of artistic consideration and enlivening the fabric of the cultural and intellectual community it provides. The Director will prioritize building new partnerships and programming across the University and also will prioritize engaging diverse community voices, particularly those that have been historically underrepresented in museums and in art history, drawing upon and strengthening the Weisman's teaching and learning mission. The University seeks an experienced leader with the intellect and imagination to match and fuel the Weisman's ambitions; an energetic and compelling public advocate; a knowledgeable and sophisticated thought leader; an astute manager of financial, capital, and human resources; and an inclusive and accessible partner to University leaders and faculty, the Weisman staff, and larger community.

The University of Minnesota has convened a search committee to identify and review candidates for this position, and has retained the search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this effort. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as noted at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AND MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL

The University of Minnesota (UMN) is one of the most comprehensive universities in the country and ranks among the most prestigious research universities in the world. With five campuses located throughout Minnesota—the Twin Cities, Duluth, Morris, Crookston, and Rochester—the University advances discovery and innovation to improve society for all. The UMN system encompasses more than 67,000 students from 130 countries and over 27,000 employees across its five campuses; half a million UMN alumni live around the world. With an annual operating budget of \$4.2 billion, the University generates an estimated economic impact of \$9 billion for the Minnesota economy. The University has scholars of national and international reputation as well as a strong tradition of education and public engagement.

The flagship Twin Cities campus is a globally engaged R1 research and land-grant university and one of few research land-grant universities located in a major metropolitan area. It is situated in the heart of the dynamic Twin Cities of Minneapolis-Saint Paul (MSP), the 16th-largest metropolitan area in the United States with 3.6 million residents. A global economic leader and hub for education and culture, MSP has the fourth-largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies in the country and is also home to a strong entrepreneurial and small-business sector. The Twin Cities is ranked as one of the country's leading "creative economy" communities with a thriving arts and nonprofit sector, matched by a superlative culture of giving and a robust philanthropic sector as well as a strong tradition of civic engagement.

As the public land-grant and research university for the state of Minnesota, UMN plays a critical role in shaping an economically strong, culturally vibrant, and civically minded state. This role took on new meaning as 2020 laid bare longstanding public health, economic, environmental, and social and racial inequities in Minnesota and beyond. The MSP community has been the epicenter for a reckoning around issues of racial justice following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, which has spurred protests and civil rights activism across the globe. As a part of, and in response to, this reckoning, the University has intensified dialogue around racial justice, racial equity, and meaningful community engagement. Aligned with its mission, UMN has re-anchored its vigorous commitment to reciprocal public engagement by faculty, staff, and students to address important challenges of communities in the Twin Cities, state, and beyond.

The recently approved UMN system-wide strategic plan, [MPact 2025](#), reflects the University's commitment to world-class research, teaching, and service, undertaken in the spirit of the University's land-grant mission to equitably create access and innovation at home and with global impact. The plan emphasizes deepened commitment to forging and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships with underserved local communities and strategic partners to enhance access to higher education, increase intercultural competency, and reduce economic and social disparities.

The Twin Cities campus is located in an increasingly diverse region at the heart of an increasingly global Midwest, with 11 federally recognized tribal nations, the largest urban Native American population in the country, a dynamic African American community, and growing African, Latinx, Chicanx, and Asian American populations. The links between Minnesota communities and communities around the world are notable: Minneapolis-Saint Paul now has the largest number of people of Somali outside of Somalia, with a large Somali community located just a half mile from the Weisman; and the nation's largest urban Hmong-American population, centered just a few miles away in St. Paul. The region's internationally engaged businesses, small and large arts organizations, non-profits, and multifaceted communities comprise a rich backdrop for learning, partnerships, and engagement with local and global issues and perspectives. The University also ranks ninth nationally for students learning abroad and offers study abroad programs in more than 70 countries.

The University strongly embraces equity and diversity as foundational values, reflected in its mission statement and advanced on an institutional strategic level. Students on the Twin Cities campus include 25% students of color and 10% international students; 25% of all undergraduates are first-generation college students. UMN is located on traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of Indigenous people. The University resides on Dakota land ceded in the Treaties of 1837 and 1851. The University acknowledges that this place has a complex and layered history and is committed to ongoing efforts to recognize, support, and advocate for American Indian Nations and peoples. The University recently announced a search for the newly created position of new senior adviser to the president on Indian affairs with a focus on further strengthening the University's partnership with Minnesota Tribal Nations.

A new \$5M multidisciplinary initiative at the University, funded by the Mellon Foundation, will address racial inequities and create just futures through public humanities projects, including broadened partnerships with tribal communities across the state. Through its work and collaborations, [Minnesota Transform](#) will focus on developing new knowledge, visions and practices for inclusion and justice within and beyond the University.

University Leadership

[Joan T. A. Gabel](#) is the 17th president of the University of Minnesota and the first woman president. Prior to joining the UMN in July 2019, she served as provost at the University of South Carolina and as dean of the University of Missouri's Trulaske College of Business.

[Rachel Croson](#) is executive vice president and provost and chief academic officer. She joined the UMN in March 2020 from Michigan State University (MSU), where she served as dean of the College of Social Science and MSU Foundation Professor of Economics.

More information about the University can be found at <https://twin-cities.umn.edu/>.

THE WEISMAN ART MUSEUM

The [Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum](#) (the Weisman or WAM) was originally conceived of in 1934. For decades, a series of collections was sequestered in the narrow fourth-floor hallways of the campus's iconic Northrop Auditorium and maintained a modest footprint on campus. Lyndel King was appointed to the directorship in 1981, and over the course of the next four decades King led the

transformation of the gallery into a world-class museum to match the world-class university in which it was rooted—a catalyst and incubator for artistic discovery and engagement for the campus as well as a cultural and educational bridge between the University and the community.

At the time of her appointment King was one of very few women leading museums in the U.S. Under King's early leadership in the mid-1980s, Frederick R. Weisman, a Minneapolis native, entrepreneur, and noted art patron and philanthropist, provided generous financial gifts and other support, leading to the museum's naming. Following a successful fundraising campaign led by King, renowned architect Frank Gehry was chosen to design a \$18M building that would become the Weisman's permanent residence in 1993. The iconic curvilinear structure of rippling stainless steel and brick that Gehry designed on the University's East Bank Campus remains the Weisman's easily recognizable home and has anchored its identity. Strategically located in a heavily traveled area in Minneapolis-Saint Paul and overlooking the Mississippi River, the Weisman Art Museum building is a striking landmark for both the University and the Twin Cities region and has drawn global acclaim, as reflected in the New York Times declaration that the Weisman boasts the "best rooms for art viewing in the world."

Today, the Weisman Art Museum embraces with energy and imagination its mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation for the students, faculty, and staff of UMN as well as the Twin Cities community beyond. With its free admission policy, the Weisman is an accessible entry point into art for the campus community, often engaging students who have had no connection to a museum prior to their first visit to the Weisman. Over four decades, the Weisman has hosted over 200 exhibitions and brought over 1.7 million visitors through its doors. The Weisman has become one of the top teaching museums in the country, creating innovative exhibitions, programs, and partnerships. It presents and interprets works of art, offering exhibitions that place art within relevant cultural, social, and historical contexts. Several major exhibitions are offered each year, as well as organized lectures, symposia, tours, and special events focused upon chosen educational themes. The Weisman draws on the exceptional breadth and depth of the University of Minnesota and over time has worked with more than 50 academic departments, presenting the ideas of a great university in multi-disciplinary and widely collaborative projects. The Weisman's active touring program serves the cultural and educational needs of rural and exurban communities primarily in the Upper Midwest, as well as national and international audiences.

The Weisman celebrates art across traditions and genres. The permanent collection includes over 30,000 works of art and is especially rich in the areas of American modernism, ceramics, and Korean furniture. It also carries significant collections of Marsden Hartley, Alfred Maurer, and Charles Biederman. The variety and breadth of the Weisman's collection of traditional Korean furniture, which came as a bequest from Dr. Edward Reynolds Wright Jr. in 1988, is unmatched in the United States and is perhaps unrivaled outside Asia. Beyond its walls, the Weisman has created an impressive [Public Art on Campus](#) program, which was established in 1988 and has since led to the installation of more than 35 public works of art in highly visible and trafficked spaces, integrating art into the daily lives of the campus's 80,000 constituents.

In the vibrant and expansive arts and culture ecosystem surrounding the Weisman, the campus community and Twin Cities visitors and residents alike enjoy many galleries, arts programs, and museums, including [many on the University's Twin Cities campus](#). The Twin Cities campus also is

home to [Northrop](#), a dynamic educational and cultural hub for the campus and region, and the [Bell Museum](#), the state's official natural history museum and planetarium. The Weisman is part of a distinguished trio of major Twin Cities arts museums that includes the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), a leading regional art museum with 90,000 works and one of the Midwest's largest arts educators; and the Walker Art Center, a multidisciplinary contemporary art center considered among the nation's preeminent museums for modern art. The relationships among the Weisman, MIA, and the Walker are strong, and the Weisman also participates in regular meetings of MN Cultural Organizations, a large group of museums, performance companies, and other organizations across the region.

The Weisman operation is, like many university museums, remarkably lean. The Weisman has an annual budget of approximately \$4M and is supported by about \$8M in (largely restricted) endowed funds and \$3M in quasi-endowment. The Weisman is run by an extraordinarily efficient and high-functioning 24-person staff, many of whom serve as single-individual departments supported by part-time student employees. The Director serves ex-officio as a member of a 25-member Colleagues Advisory Board (WAM CAB), which has served as a body of philanthropic and advisory stewards since 1984.

THE CURRENT MOMENT

The year 2020 brought the Weisman significant challenges. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Weisman closed its doors to visitors in March 2020 and began the hard work of adapting to the new realities at hand. The loss of revenue from a small retail shop as well as event income was a financial setback, but the University's support for the Weisman's place within the University mission has allowed it to continue operations and avoid staff layoffs. In the past year, the Weisman has been open to the public under strict public health guidelines, reducing hours and limiting capacity to 25 percent. With safety, access, and comfort in mind, the staff have worked tirelessly to bring the vast majority of the Weisman's programming and events online and to innovate new multidimensional ways of engaging with students as well as diverse community audiences. This time has driven innovation and sparked investments in digital storytelling, including the creation of a student-led digital-content team. The Weisman has benefitted from grants awarded during the pandemic, including an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) CARES Act grant to create accessibility resources and to activate the public art collection in new ways.

In the months following the racial justice reckoning sparked by George Floyd's murder, the Weisman has leaned into its relationship with the Twin Cities community, in alignment with its mission as a teaching museum. The Weisman has deployed its power to engage and speak on the social issues of our time, racism and anti-racism central among them. The University is also currently deeply involved in a process of [repatriation](#) compliance with respect to the collection of pottery and artifacts belonging to the Mimbres people that has been housed at the Weisman since 1992. This large assortment of Mimbres cultural material (ca. 1000-1150) resulted from excavations in southern New Mexico conducted by UMN faculty and students from 1928 to 1931. More than 2,000 Mimbres objects and more than 150 human burial remains came to the University as a result of those excavations. These materials include more than 1,000 painted bowls, some of which were on view at the Weisman until 2019. The vigorous work to conduct a comprehensive inventory of Mimbres cultural materials

and to comply fully with NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) is ongoing. An advisory committee of University scholars, including several Indigenous scholars, has been convened by the president and provost to guide senior University leadership in completing this institutional process.

The repatriation work and racial justice concerns have highlighted the importance of building broader and deeper engagement with campus and external communities, particularly at this moment of deep reflection and change nationwide. As a teaching museum, the Weisman is in a unique position to engage with these critical issues and to foster candid and responsive collaboration and reparative work across and among museum staff, faculty, students, community partners, and University leadership.

As planned, Lyndel King stepped down from her leadership of the Weisman in June 2020. Karen Hanson, the UMN executive vice president and provost from 2012–20, serves as interim director and will continue to provide transitional leadership until a successor is appointed at the end of the search.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Executive Vice President and Provost, the new Director of the UMN Weisman Art Museum will be responsible for leading a core staff of 24 individuals and providing oversight and leadership across all activities and functions: administrative, operational, curatorial, and programmatic. This includes leadership for collections and exhibitions, in collaboration with the Weisman’s curatorial staff; and leadership and oversight for activities spanning development and fundraising, campus and community engagement, communications and marketing, facilities and capital resources, registrar, retail functions, and other areas.

The Weisman’s next Director will provide strategic and inspiring leadership for developing a unifying, purposeful vision for the Weisman’s future aligned with its core mission. Reflecting the Weisman’s unique role and opportunities as a teaching museum situated within the academic affairs portfolio of the provost, the Director will collaborate with colleges, centers, and supporting units across the campus to respond to teaching, research, and engagement priorities and to broaden and deepen engagement with diverse communities.

The Director will work to address the following important challenges and challenges and opportunities:

Lead a comprehensive and inclusive strategic visioning and planning process.

This leadership transition calls for reflection on the way forward. The next Director will convene, consult, and animate the conversations with the provost and UMN academic leaders, the Weisman staff, Colleagues Advisory Board, and the broader Weisman and University community necessary to establish a clear vision for the Weisman’s next chapter. This particular historical and cultural moment has given way to broad conversations across the museum world about the foundations of museum practice and function of the past, and how it ought to be shaped for the future. The next Director is expected to lead the Weisman and its stakeholders through this moment of reflection, revisiting its role and identity as a teaching museum and reinvigorating its mission to *create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation*, integrating with the University’s academic mission and linking the campus with the community.

The Director is expected to lead strategic planning, engaging staff and constituencies in shaping a vision for the Weisman that brings into sharper focus its educational and cultural purpose as a University-situated teaching museum and supports the UMN strategic plan. This includes working to identify and implement measures that will sustain and enhance programmatic excellence, integration with the University's teaching and learning mission, robust public engagement, diversity and equity, and financial sustainability. The strategic plan for the Weisman will provide focus and direction for the curation of future exhibitions and ongoing development of programs, as well as a roadmap for enhanced engagement with UMN faculty and students, building on exceptional opportunities for collaboration across the University as well as engagement with diverse local and global communities. To accomplish this, the Director will provide creative, courageous, and persuasive leadership. The Weisman must consider and adopt approaches that are novel and forward-looking. The Director will make certain that the strategic plan properly aligns with University and Weisman values and resources, establishes clear goals, tracks progress, and adapts as required.

Foster a culture and practice of inclusive excellence.

Issues of equity and justice have moved more to the forefront, both for the University of Minnesota and for the Weisman Art Museum. As a teaching museum, the Weisman places a premium on excellence, diversity, engagement, and equitable and inclusive programming, aligned with the UMN mission and strategic plan. The Weisman is working to find more opportunities in its programs, exhibitions, research, and collections to make space for and elevate a diversity of artists, artistic traditions, and perspectives. The next Director will facilitate ongoing conversation and work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) ambitions and goals, building on conversations and planning by the Weisman's senior leadership team and staff; the Director will also work with intention and care to recruit and retain an increasingly diverse staff team.

Amplify the Weisman's visibility and reach.

Ensuring that the Weisman engages with the campus and community in ways that support learning will be central to the next Director's work. The Director must take advantage of the rich intellectual capital of the University and develop innovative academic collaborations that engage faculty and students and deepen connections across the campus. The Director will situate the Weisman at the center of educational activities and initiatives on campus and advocate for the Weisman's involvement in important community conversations.

While focusing on its integration with the University's academic mission, the Weisman is also in the position to emphasize its reputation and role as a teaching museum and regional leader in the arts, beyond the campus to the Twin Cities and beyond. There is significant opportunity to establish and deepen relationships with the diverse communities of people who live and work in Minneapolis/St. Paul, as well as more broadly. The Director will be particularly attentive to engaging individuals and communities historically underrepresented in museums (including Black, Indigenous, People of Color communities, women, LBGTQI communities). Furthermore, the Weisman can and must expand its presence on a national and an international stage. The University is a globally engaged institution, as is the Weisman Art Museum. The next Director will raise the profile of the Weisman in the many communities to which it belongs. Strengthening existing relationships in these ecosystems, and developing strategic, symbiotic partnerships, is a key priority.

Expand the Weisman's fundraising base.

Over the last 40 years, the Weisman Art Museum has been the recipient of several major gifts, including the naming gift from the Weisman family. The Director will be expected to continue to nurture these existing loyal and generous donor relationships. Looking to the future, the next Director will need to expand on this solid foundation, and will be expected to partner with the University and the UMN Foundation, the WAM Colleagues Advisory Board, and the Weisman's development and marketing teams to do so. The Director serves as the Weisman's lead fundraiser. Current philanthropic projects include raising funds to endow the Director position and taking part in the University's *Driven* capital campaign, which is expected to reach its \$4 billion goal as it concludes this year. The next Director should leverage the success of the campaign over the next two years while planning major initiatives for the next campaign. To members, donors, arts leaders, and the broader audience, the Director will be a compelling advocate, trumpeting a renewed vision, connecting the Weisman's stories to their own, and cultivating increased patronage and support.

Manage the organization's operations, finances, and facilities.

While the Weisman receives a healthy financial allocation from the University, the Director will initiate and drive discussions within the organization and University about how best to strengthen the financial base of the Weisman in addition to fundraising. As a teaching museum integrated with the University's educational mission, the Weisman does not charge an entrance fee. There is an opportunity for the Weisman to increase income through grants, partnerships, and entrepreneurial activities. The next Director must effectively manage and protect the Weisman's financial position and ensure that all programs are operating effectively.

Additionally, the Director will be charged with addressing the Weisman's physical space and its current and future needs. The Weisman lives inside a striking and beautiful building designed by Frank Gehry, which includes an 8,100 square-foot expansion completed in 2011 that doubled the size of the galleries. The Weisman and University are working together to address capital upgrades that are needed, including a replacement of the Weisman building's fire safety and sprinkler system. Related work is scheduled to be under way in summer 2021. The Director will address efficient and effective use of the current spaces, consider expansions of the footprint, and think creatively about storage space for the collections. The Director should approach the development of new and renovated space with a wide-angle view of the potential synergies with the campus and potential partners across the Twin Cities.

Lead a collaborative, supportive, high-functioning team of staff.

Among the Weisman's greatest assets is its energetic, loyal, and talented staff. The Director will be fortunate to collaborate with and lead this group. The Director will demonstrate a full understanding of their work, thereby promoting institutional cohesion and a cooperative, shared sense of the Weisman's future. The University seeks a leader for the Weisman who will inspire staff and connect the various constituencies, groups, and departments comprising the Weisman, and think across disciplines and paradigms. The Director will oversee and engage deeply with the Weisman's excellent curatorial team on the management of collections and the development of exhibitions to collaboratively chart the museum's artistic direction. The Director will be simultaneously inspiring and pragmatic, empowering and accessible, while fostering a culture of accountability and

transparency. Through the collaborative leadership of the Director, the Weisman will build capacity, strengthen its processes and systems, and clarify communication and decision-making paths, reinforcing a unified view of the Weisman's strengths and its work ahead.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The University of Minnesota and the Weisman Art Museum seek a leader with vision, curiosity, and energy. The new Director will have genuine enthusiasm and a passion for art as a creative, intellectual, and community endeavor. The new Director will have a track record of successful leadership in arts and culture settings, an understanding of the full range of strategic issues in such organizations, the ability to build strong alliances among disciplines and organizations, and the experience to execute plans with fiscal responsibility.

The Executive Vice President and Provost and the Search Committee are open to a variety of professional backgrounds in candidates and expect that the new director will bring many of the following skills, experiences, and personal qualities, understanding that no single candidate will have all of the ideal qualifications:

- A deep, lived passion for and understanding of the arts;
- A record of demonstrated scholarly, artistic or professional accomplishment; an advanced degree in a related field is preferred but not required;
- Demonstration of visionary organizational leadership in a museum or comparable arts organization;
- Experience building, developing, or refining educational programming;
- Significant managerial experience and the proven ability to manage teams of staff and indirectly manage multiple stakeholder groups, both internal and external;
- A record of dedication to and success in the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Ability to model and establish a culture of mutual respect, transparency, and empowerment;
- A natural affinity for relationship building and broad network engagement; experience working with a variety of constituencies to create and support symbiotic external partnerships;
- Proven fundraising and/or business development skills, including the strategic expansion of a funding base or revenue streams; fundraising from individuals, corporations, government, or other granting organizations;
- Understanding of and appreciation for the role of a University-situated teaching museum and its integration with the academic mission of a large public research University;
- Significant and tested financial management acumen;
- The capacity to represent the Weisman compellingly to donors, University constituents, and the wider public.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Inquiries, applications, and nominations may be sent in confidence to the following:

Sheryl Ash, Ben Tobin, and Chloe Kanas
Isaacson, Miller
263 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02210
617-262-6500

Applications should include CVs/resumes and cover letters. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. **Electronic submissions are strongly preferred;** please direct to www.imsearch.com/7467. Inquiries and nominations should be made via the same web address.

The University of Minnesota shall provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, familial status, disability, public assistance status, membership or activity in a local commission created for the purpose of dealing with discrimination, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. This document is available in alternative formats upon request.