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Art Institutes prepares for opening in Overland Park

By: Jessica Marshall, Managing Editor



Ben McCall/Sun Photo TRYING TO PREPARE for the fall semester, Brad Kinder, Azcar Digital Products, finishes installing audio-visual equipment in the film lab Aug. 8 at Art Institutes International, 8208 Melrose Drive, Overland Park.

The Art Institutes International enters the Kansas City arts education market with a 32,000-square-foot facility at 8208 Melrose Drive, Overland Park.

Enrollment still is open for classes, which begin Aug. 21.

The school offers bachelor's degree programs in advertising, culinary arts, digital filmmaking & video production, Web design & interactive media, graphic design, fashion marketing, and interior design; and associate's degree programs in culinary arts and graphic design.

"I am looking forward to growing our institution in the Kansas City area, to serve a broad audience of students and employers through our programs in the creative arts," Susanne Behrens, president of The Art Institutes International-Kansas City, said.

Administrative staff and faculty started moving in Thursday and held an open house for enrolled and potential

students Saturday. The Overland Park campus includes classroom, computer lab, library and office space.

"We're still enrolling every day; it's a moving target," Behrens said. "I have a 32,000-square-foot building and we want to fill it up, that's my goal."

Behrens said interested students should call and schedule an appointment for an interview.

"Every student who is enrolled at the institute is interviewed. It introduces the student to who we are as a school and the career that they can expect upon graduation, matching what we do as a school and what we offer grads to what their expectations are for what they will do with their future," she said. "But we're also looking for students who are passionate about art and passionate about what they're trying to accomplish. That's a very key component to being successful here."

Behrens said The Art Institutes is known for "student outcomes," with a goal of seeing all students employed in their field of study within six months of graduation.

"Obviously, students have a huge role in that, too. They are definitely participants in that process," she said.

Other benefits are small class sizes and professional faculty, Behrens said.

"The people we have in the classrooms have been in the industry before and they are sharing with these students how to be successful out there," she said.

"It's amazing to walk around the classrooms and have the industry professionals in those classrooms. As a student, if I am learning culinary arts, I'm learning from a chef who knows what he's doing. The same goes if I'm in interior design or fashion ... these guys know their industry. That is so important and relevant to students who are looking to build a career."

The Art Institutes, accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools and approved by the Kansas Board of Regents, belongs to a network of 43 schools nationwide.

"So students have access to the other schools and those resources," Behrens said. "If a student in Kansas City wanted to live in New York or Seattle or L.A., they have access to those campuses as an alum."

Prior to becoming president of the Kansas City location, Behrens served as admissions director at The Art Institutes of Houston, where she oversaw admissions, new program development, co-wrote career development curriculum and textbooks, and launched the school's alumni organization while working as career services director.

She also has worked as career and technology education director for Alief Independent School District and an instructor for Katy Independent School District in Texas.

Behrens has a master's degree in hospitality management and a bachelor's degree in hotel and restaurant management from the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of Houston.

"I was the student in high school who really wanted to make sure that my education had an impact on my life later on," she said. "I wanted to see the return on that investment. So my entire career in education has been focused on career and technology education. We do that very well here. That was the biggest draw for me to work for The Art Institutes."

To find out more:

www.artinstitutes.edu/kansascity

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