POSITION DESCRIPTION
AND
IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE

POSITION: Executive Director

CLIENT: Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University

LOCATION: Framingham, Massachusetts

BACKGROUND

Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University (the Danforth) is seeking a visionary, innovative and collaborative Executive Director to lead the organization as it embarks on its new life as part of Framingham State University (FSU or the University). As its chief executive, she/he is responsible for the Danforth’s artistic excellence and intellectual direction.

The Danforth (and its associated Danforth School) reopened in several steps with the School reopening in Spring 2018 and the entire Museum reopening in April 2019 in state-of-the-art FSU space to great acclaim and celebration. Having faced the shock of losing its home in 2015 when the aging city-owned building housing the Danforth lost its occupancy permit, the committed Board of Directors and now-retiring Executive Director’s creative energy navigated the several-year, complex process to save and move the Danforth, its collection and the School – all while maintaining part-time programming and exhibitions.

Established in 1975 by a local group of educators, business people, artists and art lovers, the Danforth and the Danforth School had become a vital and highly regarded regional cultural resource. Framingham, Massachusetts, is just 20 miles west of Boston and appreciation was growing in the region for the Danforth’s vibrant exhibits and educational experiences in the visual arts, engaging the public through its collection of American art, changing exhibits of contemporary artists, classes and workshops in the School, and a variety of community outreach programs.

With a collection of American art ranging from the early 19th Century to present day, a primary focus for the Danforth is showing the very best examples of contemporary art by both emerging and established artists primarily in New England. The new space at FSU has allowed the Danforth to showcase the Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller Collection. Fuller (1877-1968) is known for groundbreaking sculptures depicting and celebrating African-American heritage, with her early work anticipating themes of the Harlem Renaissance. The Danforth is proud to be the caretaker for the largest Fuller collection in existence, now fully on view and including a re-creation of her first studio in Framingham.
The Danforth’s collection is owned by the Framingham State University Foundation, Inc., an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit that raises and manages funds on behalf of the University. The Foundation is a party to the Founding Agreement that governs the merger of the Danforth into the University in that it now owns and manages the Museum’s core assets. The Foundation’s Board of Directors has final authorization for all acquisitions and deaccessioning, but only does so on the recommendation of the Executive Director and the Danforth Collections Committee. The Foundation also holds all funds related to the collection and the building.

The Danforth Art Museum Advisory Board provides counsel and support to the Executive Director, and its Collections Committee provides recommendations on acquisitions and deaccessions, as noted above. The Advisory Board has five members, two of whom are appointed by the President of the University, one who is appointed by the Executive Director, and two who are appointed by the Danforth Art Alliance, Inc. The Alliance is a 501(c)3 organization independent of FSU, providing counsel and support to the Executive Director for fundraising and community-building.

With the inspired and dynamic partnership with FSU, the Danforth will develop an ambitious strategic direction aiming to showcase the 3,500-work permanent collection together with new exhibitions, expand all-ages education for the public and integrate with FSU’s life and curriculum. The new Executive Director will have the opportunity to lead and shape a newly energized organization within an enthusiastic university community and appreciative town and region. The downtown location of the Danforth allows for the greater Framingham community, students and faculty to visit, engage with the visual arts and enjoy its varied programs.

Since merging with FSU, the Danforth School and its Director operate under FSU’s Continuing Education Department while continuing the Danforth School’s important, close collaborative relationship with the Museum to offer studio programming for children and adults, related to the Museum's special exhibitions.

The Danforth Museum operates with a $500,000 budget, of which approximately half is provided by FSU. The remaining amount is derived from private contributions, memberships and a percentage of the earned revenue from the Danforth School.

The merger with FSU establishes the Danforth as the fine art museum of a world-class public university. With an illustrious history since its 1839 founding as the nation’s first teachers’ college, FSU has grown into serving 4,000 undergraduates and 1,500 graduate students in multiple disciplines. It is an important educational and cultural center in the MetroWest Region of Massachusetts. FSU is an inclusive, collaborative community and has received more annual awards for excellence in diversity than any other public university in Massachusetts.

FSU’s merger with the Danforth is an integral dimension of the FSU 2017-2022 Strategic Plan stressing expanded broad-based, innovative experiential educational and cultural experiences for the student body and for the region’s population. There is great excitement and anticipation in the FSU community for student/faculty and Museum collaborations and the enhancement of its cultural/arts education programs through the synergies with the Danforth.

More information is at https://danforth.framingham.edu.
THE POSITION

Reporting Relationships/Primary Responsibilities

The Danforth Executive Director will report to the FSU Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations, who is also the Executive Director of the FSU Foundation. The Danforth Executive Director will have a close working relationship with and support of the staff of the FSU development office. Working relationships include the Provost, Chair of the Department of Art and Music, the Dean of Arts and Humanities, as well as faculty on collaborative programming. Those reporting to the Executive Director include the Curator, Collections Manager, Visitor Services Coordinator (part-time) and Membership Coordinator (part-time). Students are employed in support of a variety of tasks. She/he will lead a devoted, professional team to ensure the success, reach and impact of the Danforth within the FSU community and the public regionally.

The Executive Director develops and implements the Danforth’s strategic direction and is accountable for all aspects of the Museum’s operation, with special priority on planning, fundraising and campus and community engagement, in addition to programming, financial management, marketing. She/he is expected to be an engaged member of the Framingham community and is the Danforth’s public face and ambassador; ensures fiscal soundness through significant fundraising and earned income; and is responsible overall for the proper stewardship and growth of the collection; ensuring use of the collection, changing exhibitions, programs, to educate the public and support FSU’s curriculum.

She/he will cultivate productive relationships with donors and art patrons, collectors, artists, volunteers, the FSU community at large, and other cultural institutions within the wider region and nationally.

Immediate Priorities

During the first several months of the Executive Director’s tenure she/he will focus on learning every aspect of the Danforth’s organization, programs, finances, collections, fundraising and facilities. She/he will supervise and support a highly professional staff, and will encourage or introduce best practices with regard to overall management, exhibitions and collections, and development. She/he will develop effective working relationships with key FSU departments, constituencies and colleagues.

The Executive Director will be pro-active in establishing her/his presence in Framingham with the public and cultivating relationships with patrons, funding sources and the many long-time friends and supporters of the Danforth. She/he will take a leadership role cultivating fundraising relationships, working in collaboration with the FSU’s Director of Development and Senior Development Officer to develop and implement fundraising strategies for seeking support from individuals, corporations and foundations. She/he will develop initiatives that build on the Danforth’s reputation and its enhanced profile as a result of its merger with FSU, to expand contributed and earned income.
Ongoing Responsibilities

As leader of the Museum, the Executive Director is responsible for the following activities:

- Builds and maintains effective relationships with important local and regional constituencies and other cultural institutions within the wider region and nationally.
- Ensures the fiscal health of the Danforth through the implementation of an effective fundraising program, including the ongoing successful personal cultivation and solicitation of prospective individual, corporate and foundation donors.
- Works with appropriate staff to develop new earned income opportunities from membership programs and special events.
- Working with the University’s Business Office, prepares the annual operating budgets, monitors income and expenses, and oversees the Danforth’s financial performance through the review of monthly financial reports.
- Hires and supervises the Danforth’s staff and enables them to meet the Danforth’s mission through an ongoing schedule of engaging exhibitions and programs that will support the University’s curriculum, increase public audiences, and enhance the visitor experience.
- Ensures the proper care and conservation of the permanent collection and the cultivation of collectors for gifts of art works to the Danforth.
- Oversees the Danforth’s marketing and communications strategies, ensuring they strengthen the Danforth’s identity and positioning; Danforth’s marketing will also be supported by FSU’s development staff, including through FSU’s contracted vendors.
- Develops and implements policies and procedures for the effective operation of the Danforth.
- Works with the Provost, the Dean of Arts and Humanities, and the Chair of the Art and Music Department on collaborative programming.
- Works closely with the Director of the Danforth School on developing mutually beneficial programming.
- Serves as a designated Title IX Responsible Employee and Clery Act Campus Security Advisor.
- Is accountable for ensuring that affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity are integrally tied to all actions and decisions in areas of responsibility.
- Promotes and maintain practices that encourage open communication, cooperation, and teamwork among staff.
- Serves as mentor and manages staff to assure optimal performance, professional growth and satisfaction; conduct staff evaluations annually or more often, as needed.
Ideal Qualifications and Characteristics

The Executive Director will play a critical role in every aspect of the Danforth’s future success and financial stability as an important and highly regarded cultural venue in its new stage of growth as part of FSU. We seek an individual who will combine excellent people skills, managerial savvy and artistic perception. She/he will be enthusiastic, results-oriented and decisive, with a collegial, team-oriented working style and an engaging public presence. She/he will have at least seven years’ experience in a senior-level position in an art museum or related organization with knowledge of curatorial, museum education, marketing and fundraising functions. Master’s degree in Art History or another relevant field is required. Prior work experience within a university or college setting or similarly complex institution is a plus.

Among the important qualities the successful candidate must have are a sincere appreciation for the Danforth’s collection, mission and role within and without the University; leadership skills, a deep familiarity with the visual arts, programmatic creativity, and enthusiasm for leading the Danforth to its potential. She/he will be goal oriented, a self-starter who takes the initiative to develop and test ideas, and have the capacity to engage, lead, mentor, listen and build collaborative relationships.

The Executive Director will have:

- A record of successfully setting and meeting goals, managing people and operations
- Demonstrated track record of success in fundraising, donor cultivation and solicitation
- Experience working within a complex, multi-faceted organization
- Strong leadership, motivational and coalition-building skills
- Ability to function in an external relations capacity
- Knowledge of the history of art, especially American art
- Strong writing and public speaking skills

In addition she/he will have:

- Passion for the visual arts
- Maturity and confidence in decision-making
- Ideally, prior experience in a museum affiliated with a college or university and higher education teaching experience
- A roll up your sleeves work ethic, positive outlook and sense of humor

Compensation and benefits are competitive and commensurate. Framingham State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Members of underrepresented groups, minorities, women, veterans, persons with disabilities, and all persons committed to diversity and inclusive excellence are strongly encouraged to apply.
LOCATION

Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University is located in Framingham, Massachusetts. Twenty miles west of Boston, Framingham enjoys easy access to metropolitan resources while experiencing a vibrant cultural renaissance of its own. Since April 2019, the Danforth has been located on the Framingham Centre Common, the original town green and center of the historic district.

Framingham, founded in 1700 and the home today of 72,000 residents, is the center of the MetroWest area of Massachusetts, comprising a broad and diverse set of communities with a total population of about 184,000, ranging from Carlisle and Sherborn to Westborough and Waltham. Most of the highest income communities in Massachusetts are clustered in MetroWest, including Weston, Dover, Sherborn, Wayland, Sudbury, Wellesley, Lincoln, Southborough and Concord.

While each town has its own unique charms and history, the quality of life in most is uniformly high with successful educational systems; amenities such as restaurants, cinemas and community theatres; artist collaboratives and galleries. Framingham itself is home to an increasingly diverse population and a revitalized downtown. The Framingham Centre Common Historic District, in addition to Framingham State University and the Danforth, houses the historic village hall and the Framingham History Center.

The universities of Boston and Cambridge are accessible to Framingham, as are all of the other features of Boston-Cambridge’s many museums, concert venues, and other cultural institutions. Boston and Cambridge are cities with neighborhoods offering a great variety of choices of atmosphere for exploring as well as potential places to live if one prefers to reside in a more urban setting and still be within a half an hour commute of the Danforth.

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Framingham State University has retained Opportunity Resources Inc. to execute the search for the Executive Director of Danforth Art Museum at FSU.

Inquiries, nominations and applications (current resume and letter of interest) should be sent, electronically and in confidence, attention: Freda Mindlin or Linda Leonard, Opportunity Resources Inc., at search@opportunityresources.net.