



Donors Invest \$25 Million in RISD's Future

Institutional Advancement wraps up the second-best fundraising year in the history of the institution and recognizes growing alumni engagement.



Photos by Jo Sittenfeld

PROVIDENCE, RI (September 21, 2021) – The Division of Institutional Advancement is pleased to announce that RISD alumni, families and friends have invested more than \$25 million in gifts and pledges to RISD during fiscal year 2021, making this the second-best fundraising year in the history of the institution. This remarkable achievement is part of a new era of successful fundraising that began in 2019 and has ushered in the three highest-yield years to date.

Innovative approaches—such as an 1877 Society-led challenge offering \$100,000 if 300 new donors would make a gift of any size in the month of June—helped encourage 410 new donors to give. This broadening of RISD's philanthropic community has also allowed the college to allocate the largest amount of financial aid in

its history—an increase of 23 percent over two years—and to institute its lowest tuition increase since 1975.



“We thank the many members of our global community who made the year’s fundraising such a resounding success. This collective generosity is all the more remarkable during a period of such economic turbulence,” says RISD Trustee **Stacey Nicholas** P 21. “Together, we are moving RISD to a new level of excellence for the extraordinary students and future creative leaders of art and design.”

A number of exceptional gifts are funding such institutional priorities as dismantling systemic racism in the fields of art and design, contributing to a sustainable planet and increasing support for students. RISD Trustee **Kim Gassett-Schiller** P 14 and **Philip W. Schiller** P 14 established the Schiller Family Professorships in Race in Art and Design, which forms what is believed to be the largest community of scholars focused on the topic in the US. The Metcalf family established the Houghton P. Metcalf Professorship in Sustainability, harnessing the collective power of RISD’s current faculty and students with an interest in combating climate change and protecting the future of our planet. And former trustee **Sarah Sharpe** 94 GD established the Rosanne Somerson Sustainability Innovation Fund to provide seed funding for faculty and student research.



“These investments in RISD’s future come at a pivotal time,” says Interim President [Dave Proulx](#). “The outpouring of philanthropic investment from our community has been critical as we have simultaneously navigated the pandemic and accelerated progress toward making RISD more accessible to the most talented students.”

As areas of inquiry broaden, RISD is also investing in its making and learning spaces on campus. An anonymous \$4 million gift is supporting the beginning of a transformative renovation of the Jesse Metcalf Building, located in the heart of campus at 7–14 North Main Street. The [multiyear renovation](#) will transform the building that is home to Ceramics, Furniture Design, Glass, Jewelry + Metalsmithing, Sculpture and Textiles—nearly a third of RISD’s academic departments.



Also in support of students, RISD launched its [First-Generation to College Pre-Orientation Program](#), a three-year pilot that offers integrated and inclusive advising and support essential to the success and wellbeing of students. The program was made possible through a bequest by late alumna **Rachel Doane** 64 LA and recognizes the varied cultural backgrounds, experiences and forms of knowledge first-generation students bring to RISD.

RISD's philanthropic success is propelled by a broad and growing network of alumni and family volunteers across the globe. Volunteers are leading regional clubs, affinity groups, service activities and a range of digital and in-person events, and they're serving as mentors to current students. RISD now has 34 regional clubs and 17 affinity groups that serve alumni around the world, including the newly formed RISD Alumni for Social Impact and RISD Alumni in Immersive Experience (VR/AR) groups.



“Our progress is thanks to the dedication of our alumni and family volunteers,” says **Hillary Blumberg** 92 FAV, RISD trustee and co-chair of the RISD Alumni Club of New York City. “They contribute to our success in many ways. Organizing alumni programs, mentoring students, supporting families of incoming students and providing guidance on advisory councils are just a few of opportunities to give back to RISD. The sky really is the limit when it comes to getting involved and making a difference.”

Rex Siu Han Wong BArch 03 is the newest president of the Alumni Association and will serve through June 2023, and **Shefali Khushalani** P 22 is chairing the RISD Families Association. **Deb Mankiw** P 23 is co-chairing the RISD Fund Steering Committee, joining **Ryan Cunningham** 02 FAV, who has served in this role for several years.

Students and alumni are also connecting with each other through the [RISD Network](#), a digital platform that brings together experienced alumni creatives with recent alumni and students still building their careers. As of May 2021, over 2,300 alumni and 770 students had enrolled, and more continue to join. [Alumni + Family Relations](#) is focused on developing scalable career programming for alumni across all stages of life, but with a special focus on recent graduates. Topics for forthcoming events include entering the workforce, searching for jobs, continuing education, career transitions and networking.



Alumni volunteers are also serving three-year terms on the newly formed Architecture Advisory Council, helping to inform the future vision of the Architecture department by providing valuable feedback as well as mentoring and career opportunities for current students. Other departments are forming their own advisory councils as well.

And finally, Alumni + Family Relations launched a new podcast in March, *Pulling on the Thread*, exploring how creativity really works. Each 30-minute episode features host **Lois Harada** 10 PR and a different alum discussing a specific body of work, entrepreneurial idea or creative pursuit. Inaugural guests included **Roz Chast** 77 PT, **Bob Dilworth** 73 PT, **Jill Greenberg** 89 PH, **Angela Guzman** 06 ID/MFA 09 GD, **Brian Johnson** 05 GD, **Silas Munro** 03 GD and **Rose B. Simpson** MFA 11 CR. Stay tuned for season two, which launches on October 4 with Shepard Fairey 92 IL.

About Rhode Island School of Design

RISD's mission, through its college and museum, is to educate students and the public in the creation and appreciation of works of art and design, to discover and transmit knowledge and to make lasting contributions to a global society through critical thinking, scholarship and innovation. The college's strategic plan NEXT: RISD 2020–2027 sets an ambitious vision for educating students for the future and bringing creative practices to bear on the creation of just societies, a sustainable planet and new ways of making and knowing. RISD's immersive model of art and design education, which emphasizes critical making through studio-based learning and robust study in the liberal arts, prepares students to intervene in the critical challenges of our time. Working with exceptional faculty and in extraordinary specialized facilities, 2,225 students from 60 countries engage in 44 full-time bachelor's and master's degree programs. RISD's 30,000 alumni worldwide testify to the impact of this model of education, exemplifying the vital role artists and designers play in today's society.

Founded in 1877, RISD (pronounced “RIZ-dee”) and the RISD Museum help make Providence, RI among the most culturally active and creative cities in the region. Find more information at risd.edu.

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