

Savannah College of Art and Design Statement

July 8, 2026

Savannah Agenda

For over 47 years, SCAD has contributed vastly to the revitalization of Savannah's economy, cultural identity, and desirability as a home for its residents and destination for visitors. The university is proud of its continued growth enrolling over 18,000 students, employing over 2,300 professionals, and directly impacting 12,000 jobs across the state.

SCAD is an accredited, private, non-profit university. This means the U.S. government has reviewed both SCAD's mission and its ongoing fulfillment of that mission, to educate students and prepare them for their creative careers. In fiscal year 2025, SCAD invested net assets from operations back into the institution to enhance student resources and educational needs as part of this mission, including over \$175 million in scholarships.

Starting in 1979, the university has adaptively rehabilitated more than 100 buildings worldwide and more than 60 historic properties in Savannah. None of these buildings were occupied at the time of the university's acquisition, and the majority of which were derelict and had been abandoned for years and left to ruin. SCAD owns .18% percent of all parcels in Savannah and just 3% of tax-exempt parcels. A number of these parcels owned by SCAD were historically tax-exempt, therefore were not removed from City of Savannah and Chatham County tax collection upon acquisition by the university.

[A 2023 study](#) by Tripp Umbach (the leading national consulting firm for not-for-profit, arts, and tourism sectors) found SCAD has a tremendous positive influence on the vitality of the economy in the state, through jobs, student and visitor spending, events, construction, alumni earning power, public safety, and charitable giving. The report for the 2023 fiscal year (July 2022-June 2023) found SCAD's annual economic impact for the state of Georgia is 1.3 billion dollars. Roughly 1 billion of these dollars refer to the economic impact for the Savannah area. These findings were a 70% increase from the most recent study conducted in 2019.

In addition to the economic impact, SCAD has awarded more than \$2.6 million through the university's SCAD SERVE Community Fund to Savannah and Atlanta city and non-profit organizations in the last 2 years. Established in 2024, the fund supports organizations addressing critical community needs in the areas of food, shelter, safety, education, and access to essential services, reinforcing SCAD's 48-year legacy of civic engagement and community impact. Awards have included a \$972,000 grant to the city of Savannah for enhanced public safety measures, a \$200,000 award to the Savannah Police Department and City of Savannah for the Forsyth Park Safety Initiative, and a \$372,000 award to Union Mission to implement a

new 8,200-square-foot Day Center for individuals experiencing homelessness. Other organizations that have been awarded include America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia, Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless, and City of Refuge. SCAD has further committed to an additional \$7 million community support through this initiative in upcoming years.

Since 2000, SCAD founder Paula Wallace has served with distinction as the university's president at the direction of the SCAD Board of Trustees, building upon 22 years of previous experience as academic dean and provost. As one of the longest-serving women presidents in the history of U.S. higher education, SCAD is grateful to President Wallace for her tireless efforts to bring to life her vision for the most comprehensive art and design university in the world.

Under President Wallace's leadership, the university is delighted to welcome new and returning students and families back to Savannah and Atlanta for the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year.

-Savannah College of Art and Design