

Ringling College of Art and Design

2008-2009 Trustee Scholars





The Trustee Scholarship

Each year, Ringling College of Art and Design's Board of Trustees is proud to award its highest honor—the Trustee Scholarship—to an exclusive group of outstanding students whose hard work, talent, spirit and dedication exemplify excellence. Each Trustee Scholar also receives a \$3,000 scholarship award.

Trustee Scholar nominees are selected by the faculty of each major and the Office of Student Life each spring. These nominees' names are then forwarded to the Board of Trustees for final selection, based on the following criteria:

1. Exceptional talent and distinction of mind
2. Contribution to the department and to the College
3. On-campus leadership, citizenship and mentorship

The 2008-2009 Trustee Scholars

We are proud to officially recognize Ringling College of Art and Design's 2008-2009 Trustee Scholars and invite you to learn more about the outstanding men and women in this program booklet.

Catherine Hicks

Computer Animation

Kayla Carlson

Fine Arts

Jihad Lahham

Graphic & Interactive Communication

Francis Vallejo

Illustration

Elizabeth Langford

Interior Design

Mariel Purdon

Interior Design

Sarah Bigelow

Photography & Digital Imaging

Jessalynn Graham

Student Life

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a brown short-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is sitting in a black office chair. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind her is a desk with two computer monitors displaying animation software. The wall behind the desk is covered with various posters, sketches, and small figurines. There are shelves with more figurines and a trash can to the left.

Catherine Hicks
Computer Animation

Catherine “Cat” Hicks is passionate about Ringling College. “Ringling gave me courage and ability. There’s electricity in the air here, a pounding ambition fueled by artists who wish to learn and create something incredible.” That’s her goal as a Computer Animation major. “I fell in love with animation’s power to connect us—visually and emotionally. We embrace the characters on screen; we learn from them and grow with them.” Cat wants to make the most of that power. “Animation creates an overwhelming opportunity to educate. It can introduce children and adults alike to the beauty of the world around them.” As Cat nears graduation, she looks back on her college days with fondness. “I only hope that I will love the places my career takes me at least half as much as I love Ringling.”

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a blue tank top and blue jeans, is standing in a studio. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind her is a black wall covered with various posters, sketches, and drawings. There are shelves with books and a stack of papers to the left. A large piece of paper with a drawing of a crab is visible on the wall to the right.

Kayla Carlson
Fine Arts

As the daughter of parents in the military, Kayla Carlson was raised in various locations. “I was looking for a place to call my own.” She found it at Ringling College. “A sense of community radiates from the faculty, staff and students here. It’s impossible to walk around campus and not run into a smiling teacher or student.” This nurturing environment helped Kayla grow and learn as an artist. “Ringling is a great place to create art, meet other artists, and encounter a broad range of artistic strategies.” Her experiences organizing a campus exhibition and participating in the New York Studio Program gave her a “deeper understanding of how the art world works.” To Kayla, a creative community makes art possible. “It’s important to generate a network of creative people—in Sarasota and beyond.”

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue button-down shirt and a black cap, sits on a tan couch. He is holding a spiral notebook. The background is a wall covered in various posters and artwork, including a large poster for 'illest of ill' and a poster for 'Musica'.

Jihad Lahham

Graphic & Interactive Communication

In his mind's eye, Jihad Lahham imagines a straight line from his first childhood drawing to his life at Ringling College—and beyond. On his first day here, the Syrian-born student felt like an outsider. “I was a foreigner. How would I communicate?” But his teacher’s words gave him instant relief. “He told me that his parents were also from the Middle East—to make me more comfortable.” From that day forward, Jihad experienced an exceptional level of personal and creative evolution. Along with other honors and achievements, he is a two-time recipient of the prestigious Rockport Student Design Challenge sponsored by *Fast Company* magazine. “From the moment I first picked up a pencil, I was drawing my future. Thanks to Ringling, that future looks brighter than I ever could have imagined.”

A young man with a cap, wearing a white t-shirt and shorts covered in paint splatters, stands in a studio. He is holding a large piece of artwork on an easel. The background shows a desk with a computer monitor and various posters, including one that says 'CALL FOR ENTRIES' and another that says 'DON'T TAKE PROTESTS... YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR... NO MATTER THE \$... KE PROTESTS... & EXCITED...'.

Francis Vallejo

Illustration

Francis Vallejo has loved to draw for as long as he can remember. Accepted into Ringling College’s Computer Animation program, Francis spent three years pursuing that major until he realized he wanted to concentrate solely on illustration. “I made the best decision of my life. Nothing can replace the joy I experience each day knowing I can draw for as long as I desire.” Ringling taught him lessons in artistic priorities. “One of the most important things I learned here is that art is not a job. It’s a lifestyle. A painter will never retire from his easel; a draftsman will never let go of his pencil. I feel privileged knowing that I’m on the path to living my life creating art and inspiring others along the way.”

Elizabeth Langford is standing in her interior design studio. She is wearing a black sleeveless dress and has her hands on her hips. The background is filled with various design materials, including a large wall of color swatches, a display of fabric samples from Wilsonart Contract, and a framed architectural floor plan. The studio is well-lit and organized, with shelves and racks holding numerous design resources.

Elizabeth Langford
Interior Design

Mariel Purdon is standing in her interior design studio. She is wearing a colorful, patterned dress and has her hands on her hips. The background is a blue wall with several fabric samples pinned to it, including a gold patterned fabric and a red fabric. Below the fabric samples is a shelf with books and a geode. The studio is well-lit and organized, with shelves and racks holding numerous design resources.

Mariel Purdon
Interior Design

Walt Disney was Elizabeth “Liz” Langford’s hero long before she came to Ringling College. “Other kids wanted to be doctors and teachers. At 10, I was creating theme parks out of Popsicle sticks!” Liz had enrolled in Kansas State University, but a stint as an intern at the Disney College Program convinced her to pursue a Computer Animation major at Ringling College. Once here, she realized that as much as she loved animation, she felt passionate about interior design. After careful consideration, she switched her major. She’s still creating moods, stories and worlds—only now in physical reality rather than on a screen. “I can’t imagine my life without Ringling and all of the people who make it what it is. I’m living my dream and becoming what I never dreamed I could be.”

Mariel Purdon always had an interest in art history and architecture. She was drawn to the study of interior design, although she lacked drawing skills. When she transferred from a community college to Ringling College, she worried about keeping up. Thanks to patient instructors, she found “an inner peace that comes with drawing.” She also acquired a respect for the field. “I discovered how challenging and important a designer’s job is.” That challenge only reaffirmed Mariel’s career path. Before she knew it, drawing and design became second nature to her. Mariel credits her own hard work, the support of her fellow students and the expertise of her instructors. “Ringling expanded my creativity, revealing new abilities and passions I can’t imagine living without. Since I enrolled here, my life has changed completely for the best.”



Sarah Bigelow
Photography & Digital Imaging

Ringling College taught Sarah Bigelow that photography “can take us places we’ve never been, show us things we can only dream of seeing, and document our own memories, thoughts and dreams.” Her experience at Ringling empowered Sarah with self-confidence and gave her the resources to make “my art the best it can be.” The College also broadened her horizons. Through her friendships, Sarah delved into different cultures, art forms and philosophies. “Exchanging ideas through different media and with people from different backgrounds helped me realize how vital diversity is.” As a Student Ambassador, Sarah became involved with community outreach programs and events. Ringling taught her to believe in her art—and herself. “I hope I can always use my talents to contribute to people around me. This is what defines the global artist.”



Jessalynn Graham
Student Life

Jessalynn Graham realized her passion for graphic design while attending Ringling’s PreCollege program. “In high school, I never felt like I belonged. That changed at Ringling.” The formerly shy student felt a blossoming sense of self-confidence, even becoming a resident advisor, and developing lasting relationships with peers and faculty. In her sophomore year, Jessalynn was elected student government president—but her deepest personal growth was in the classroom. “There’s more to art than I had previously understood. Art provides me with a sense of structure, order, and continuity. Ringling helped me realize that art goes far beyond technique and style; that art is a reflection of each individual’s unique identity. Without the Ringling PreCollege program or my subsequent experience as a student, I wouldn’t be the better person I am today.”



Quotes from faculty:

Catherine Hicks

I don't know if I have ever met anyone as enthusiastic about Ringling as Cat Hicks. Since she first set foot on this campus, she has completely immersed herself in everything that this institution has to offer. As a result, Cat has become one of the brightest, most talented and dedicated students in the Computer Animation department. She fully deserves this award because she personifies the Ringling College story.

—Jim McCampbell, Computer Animation Department Head

Kayla Lynn Carlson

While at Ringling, Kayla has worked in the registrar's office, the faculty office, and as co-director of the Crossley Gallery. Kayla probably knows more about Ringling and how a college functions than most faculty members. I mentioned to Kayla that I would like to develop a blog for Crossley Gallery. The next morning she showed me the blog that she and Reva Castillenti, her co-director at the gallery, had developed. Thanks to their dedication and effort, all of our shows are now documented on our website. Last year, Kayla was chosen to attend the New York Studio Program for a semester in New York. This year, Kayla won the competition for the Stanford Award at Ringling. Of course, along with all of this, Kayla is also a wonderful artist and is another in a great line of Trustee Scholars from the Fine Arts department.

—Mark Anderson, Fine Arts Interim Department Head

Jihad Lahham

Jihad is an incredibly creative wild man who eats, thinks and breathes graphic design. He is a class leader who always goes far above and beyond the expected. In spite of his many accomplishments, he's modest about his own work—even after winning the President's Award and Juror Award in the Best of Ringling show, or beating out students from the best design schools at the Rockport Competition—not once but twice! The faculty and I will truly enjoy following his career in the coming years. —Kim Elam, Graphic & Interactive Communication Department Head

Elizabeth Langford

In addition to her superior design abilities and accomplishments, Liz has demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities through her open-mindedness and willingness to help her fellow classmates. Liz typically plans ahead what she wants to achieve in her classes often coming prepared with a written list of questions. Now that's an ideal student! In addition to being named an Interior Design Trustee Scholar, Liz is a winner of the \$30,000 2008 Donghia Foundation Interior Design Scholarship. Liz was competing against senior portfolios submitted from students at accredited interior design programs across the United States. —Norman Hervieux, Interior Design Department Head

Mariel Purdon

Mariel's design work demonstrates creative and memorable solutions to design scenarios ranging from lighting design to residential design to healthcare design and more. The depth of her inquiry into the issues of design has always led to a level of comprehensiveness not often seen in student work. Her work has raised the bar of student expectations to an extremely high level and influences the work of those around her. Mariel's leadership was always evident in her work with design teams. All of this is offered with grace and humility. Mariel is a person one always wants to be around.

—Norman Hervieux, Interior Design Department Head

Sarah Bigelow

Sarah Bigelow has consistently achieved academic excellence at Ringling College and she has also displayed a superior work ethic. She is a perfectionist. Over the past few years, I've watched her take initiative learning the techniques and doing the necessary research to make her images as effective as possible. This tenacity of spirit, coupled with her passion for dance photography, should serve her well for many years to come. She has a bright future.

—Tom Carabasi, Photography & Digital Imaging Department Head



Francis Vallejo

Francis Vallejo joined the Illustration department after spending three years as a Computer Animation major and we're glad he did. He is becoming the consummate illustrator. Francis has already had work published in a variety of publications—and he's also a leader and involved student. He helped organize the 2008 Ringling exhibition "Illest of Ill." Francis also participated in the Illustration Academy at Ringling, and was accepted into last year's Society of Illustrators' Student Scholarship Competition. He was also awarded the prestigious \$20,000 Zankel Award by the Society of Illustrators. His hard work and drive epitomize all those attributes our department looks for in those we nominate for this prestigious honor of being our Trustee Scholar. Nicely done, Francis!

—Tom Casmer, Illustration Department Head

Jessalynn Graham

Jessalynn Graham exemplifies active engagement in Student Life in a socially responsible way. She serves as an outstanding student leader and role model through involvement as founding leader and president of the Student Government Association. She is also a third-year Resident Assistant, a Student Ambassador, and has been active in such groups and activities as FOCAS, AIGA, the Hip-Hop Club, and martial arts. Jessalynn is truly committed to making Ringling College an even better place through student-led initiatives and ideas related to campus life. She definitely models the way on leadership and involvement for all students! —Tammy Walsh, Dean of Students



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Design: Joanna Misiti '09, Graphic & Interactive Communication

Photography: Hadar Pitchon '09, Photography & Digital Imaging