



About COCA

COCA (Center of Creative Arts) is a leading, multidisciplinary community arts organization committed to enriching lives and building community through the arts. As an innovative model for arts education and nationally accredited for artistic and educational excellence, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds and skill levels.

The organization was founded in 1986 with the intention of being a place of artistic learning that would transcend the boundaries of geography, race, and class. COCA celebrates diversity in perspectives, backgrounds, artistic disciplines, and experiences, and believes everyone should have access to the arts. COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of more than 200 artists at the heart of its work in schools, community centers, local businesses, cultural organizations, and onsite at its campus in University City.

VISION

Use the power of the arts and education to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected, and inclusive

MISSION

To enrich lives and build community through the arts

We Value...

- The creative potential of everyone and the transformative power of the arts to change lives
- Both the artistic process and the artistic product
- Inclusiveness and removing barriers to make the arts accessible
- Diversity and serving as a bridge to connect people
- Collaboration
- Innovation and delivering thought-provoking, relevant programs and experiences to the communities we serve
- The people who work and volunteer to support our mission
- Our unique St. Louis home and the community that is created when people learn together through the arts

Core Programs



COCA offers classes, camps, and workshops in dance, theatre, vocal music, culinary arts, and art & design.



Dance and theatre artist students receive advanced arts training and performance opportunities.



COCA's performance season brings thought-provoking programming to the St. Louis community with a selection of work from local, national, and student artists.



The Millstone Gallery presents innovative exhibitions and educational programs featuring the work of regional, national, and international visual artists.



COCAbiz delivers arts-based professional development for individuals and organizations that combines authentic arts teaching with business-focused facilitation to achieve business results.



COCAedu is a nationally recognized model of excellence for arts education that provides arts programming to students and educators.





Accessibility

COCA uses the power of the arts and education to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected, and inclusive. COCA has been an advocate of equity, accessibility, and inclusion in our community for more than 30 years and works to bring transformative arts education and experiences to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. COCA provides opportunities for more than 4,000 children from schools and communities around St. Louis to experience, learn from, and excel in the arts.

National Recognition

COCA has gained national recognition through grants from the Hearst Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation

In 2003, COCA received a Coming Up Taller Award from the White House for the Pre-Professional Division Dance Program

In 2014, COCA was invited to speak to the National Council on the Arts at their biannual meeting

In 2016, the Chairman of the NEA, Jane Chu, along with United States Senator Claire McCaskill, visited COCA on a limited tour of select St. Louis arts organizations

COCA was featured as one of 19 case study sites in Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education (2009)

COCA was listed as a model organization in the Kresge Foundation's Non-Profit Finance Fund's Building a Culture of Capitalization in Your Organization (2015)

In 2016, COCA earned accreditation from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools (ACCPAS)

COCA received the Anti-Defamation League David M. Grebler Award

COCA received the Who's Who Diversity in Color Award

In 2019, COCA was named a What's Right with the Region Award recipient by FOCUS St. Louis

COCA was honored by Paraquad with the Shine the Light Award

COCA's expanded Ferring East Wing was awarded a 2021 Building St. Louis Award

Equity & Inclusion

COCA is committed to actively and intentionally operating as an anti-bias, anti-racist institution. As such, we promote policies, practices, and programs that create courageous spaces for our COCA community to dialogue toward understanding.

We know art is a powerful instrument for social justice. It is a means for people to share history, culture, and perspectives, celebrate differences, challenge assumptions, and find common ground. We aim to be a home to people from all backgrounds.

We do not discriminate based on race, national or ethnic origin, citizen status, veteran status, ancestry, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other basis of discrimination.

COCA is dedicated to advancing anti-bias, anti-racism work as we grow. As a learning institution, we understand that this work is an iterative journey. We will continue to evolve our strategies in collaboration with our communities in order to remain relevant and impactful.



FY2024

\$7.7
MILLION

Total Operating Budget

\$2.8
MILLION

Earned Income

\$3.3
MILLION

Contributed Operating Income

\$1.1
MILLION

Event Income

\$6.9
MILLION

Endowment Value



STAFF, FACULTY & BOARD, FY2024

41

Full-Time
Staff

22

Part-Time
Staff

233

Teaching
Artists/Faculty

33

Board
Members