Top 11 Graphic Design Schools in Florida (2021 List)

Looking to study graphic design? If you want to become a graphic designer, then studying for a degree in graphic design is definitely a good start. But, where to do your degree? There are countless options of where to study—both at home or abroad. How about The Sunshine State? Florida is a great place to study and live—with a subtropical climate and 237 days of sunshine a year. Not to mention its incredible beaches, extensive orange orchards and 21 theme parks in Central Florida alone. There are quite a few graphic design schools and colleges in Florida so here we will take you through 11 of

the best—and offer some attractive alternatives.

Though, did you also know that you don't actually need a degree to be a graphic designer? There are some excellent graphic design short courses and bootcamps out there that mean you can become a graphic designer without investing the huge amount of time and money it takes to gain a degree. The best of these courses is Shillington's innovative graphic design course that gets you fully prepared to work as a graphic designer in a seriously short amount of time.

Read on to discover the 11 best colleges to learn graphic design on the Panhandle.

1. Miami International University of Art & Design

Location: Miami, Southern Florida
Course Duration: 3-4 years

Miami is a city that needs no introduction, but did you know it has its very own International University of Art and Design? Well, it's one of the best graphic design schools in Florida. Founded back in 1965, Miami International is part of The Art Institutes, which is made up of eight different institutions across the Southern states of America. As part of its Visual Design department, Miami International offers a Graphic and Web Design Bachelor's of Fine Art degree, alongside their Visual Arts and Design and Media Managements offerings. With this course you can choose whether or not to focus predominantly on graphic design or web design. With Graphic Design Concentration where you will focus on things like advertising concepts, packaging design and art direction. Whilst Web Design Concentration which covers things like information architecture, design for mobile and web page design. There are also shared courses for both Concentrations which contains modules applicable to both graphic design and

web design, for instance color and design fundamentals.

This 180 module course takes place over 3-4 years. Miami International does not require an existing design portfolio for entry on the course, but you will need to submit an application, your high school transcript or equivalency certification and an essay on you and your career goals and undertake a phone or in-person interview to see if you're the right fit for the college.

2. University of Florida

Location: Gainesville, North Central Florida
Course Duration: 3-4 years

A large campus university in Gainesville, North Central Florida, the University of Florida that has existed in its current location for over 100 years, since 1906. It is the fifth largest public university by enrollment in the USA. It's best known for the Florida Gators, their intercollegiate athletic teams but they also have a well established School of Art and Art History within their College of the Arts. Within this School, UF offers a BFA (Bachelor's of Fine Art) degree in Graphic Design/Design & Visual Communications. One of the best graphic design programs in Florida, UF's undergraduate degree covers branding, experience design, UX/UI (user experience and user interface) design and loads more. It aims to provide its graduates with the skills and abilities they need to build a career in graphic design, whilst building a community within the university and fostering independent thinking. It is a 120 credit degree, which takes 4 years of study on average.

UF's Graphic Design/Design & Visual Communications program is a limited-access program—meaning that they only accept a certain number of students a year. To get onto the course, you'll need to submit an application and a portfolio. The latter of which is reviewed to see whether you'll be a good

fit for the course. You'll also need to purchase a computer and have access to the Adobe Creative Cloud for the duration of the program.

3. Flagler College

Location: St Augustine, North-Eastern Florida
Course Duration: 3-4 years

Flagler College is a Liberal Arts College founded in 1968. It's one of the best regional colleges in the Southern states of America and one of the best graphic design colleges in Florida. Based in St Augustine, on the State's Atlantic coast, Flagler has a 19 acre campus centred around the Ponce de Leon Hotel, a former luxury hotel in the Spanish Renaissance style. Flagler also offers Graphic Design as a major and a minor. If you're looking to become a graphic designer, then their major could be the way forward. The program starts with foundational knowledge, tackling drawing, art history, design theory and visual culture before introducing more specific elements of graphic design. This includes typography, branding, web and mobile design and more. The college prides itself in the balance of old and new in its graphic design major. The course culminates in a senior portfolio exhibition, where you will get the opportunity to show your work to the Flagler community.

A typical major at Flagler College will last between 3 and 4 years. There are no specific prerequisites for admission to the program, though there are set essential foundational modules which all students must undertake to advance on the course.

4. Ringling College of Art & Design

Location: Sarasota, Western Florida
Course Duration: 3-4 years

Ringling College of Art & Design, founded in 1933, is a private college that focuses predominantly on art and design and is one of the best graphic colleges in Florida and one of the top design schools in the world. Based in Sarasota on the Gulf Coast, it has been ranked the second best design school in the South and its students have one several GDUSA awards. Ringling's Graphic Design BFA Degree kicks off with giving students a strong understanding of the design thinking process and then works this into a variety of applications and media, including computer-based and off-screen techniques. Ringling alumni have gone on to work as graphic and product designers, art directors, visual designers or chosen the freelance route and worked for themselves. There's also great opportunities to intern at the Ringling College Design Center whilst studying at the college and tour some of the major design studios in cities like New York, Chicago or San Francisco. They also have designers visiting the campus to offer guest lectures. Previous guests include Ken Barber of House Industries and Will Miller of Firebelly.

As with other programs on this list, the Ringling Graphic Design degree is the same length as a standard degree. You'll need both an application form filled in and a portfolio of your existing work to apply.

5. University of Tampa

Location: Tampa, Western Florida
Course Duration: 3-4 years

Another college on the Gulf Coast, the University of Tampa was founded in 1931. The central building of the campus is Plant Hall, formerly the Tampa Bay Hotel, whose famous Moorish minarets have become an iconic symbol of the Floridian college. Despite having over 200 programs of study, it's BFA in Graphic Design makes it one of the best graphic design colleges in Florida. Tampa's graphic design programme aims to

produce talented graduates that are “lifestyle designers”. One of the unique things about Tampa’s graphic design degree course is that it incorporates design elements, including design thinking, process and actual making, with teachings in entrepreneurship and business management. The program therefore creates well rounded graduate designers who are able to understand the practical sides of both design and business. Previous graduates have gone into publication design, art direction, information design and lots more. Want to freelance? Then the business-focused modules of Tampa’s graphic design course could be perfect.

Another standard degree program, the University of Tampa’s graphic design BFA takes between 3 and 4 years to complete. You can apply through UT’s website—make sure to have everything you need ready to go.

6. Keiser University

Location: Fort Lauderdale, South-Eastern Florida
Course Duration: 3-4 year

Another graphic design college in Florida on our list is Keiser University, which was founded in 1977. The main campus is based in Fort Lauderdale on Florida’s Eastern coast but has satellite sites around the state, including a residential campus in West Palm Beach. One of the best graphic design schools in Florida, Keiser offers a program in Graphic Arts and Design that can be undertaken on its campuses in Lakeland, Pembroke Pines or Port St Lucie. Keiser’s graphic design course is aimed both at people who have no art or computer experience or have been tinkering with design software for a while—as long as they have the push to scratch that itch. The course just requires students to have a desire to learn, a willingness to work and an open mind. For this reason, Keiser’s Graphic Arts and Design program balances both the relevant knowledge and practical skills that its graduates

need to be on the way to working as a designer. You'll also learn how to properly critique your own work and the work of others, and how to properly communicate your work, both visually and verbally.

The program takes 3-4 years to complete and there are no prerequisites to studying at Keiser—which makes it one of the best graphic design schools in Florida.

7. The Art Institute of Tampa

Location: Tampa, Western Florida
Course Duration: 2-4 years

Like the aforementioned Miami International University of Art & Design, The Art Institute of Tampa is part of The Art Institutes and a branch of the Miami International on Florida's sunny west coast. At 17 years old, it was founded in 2004, it is the youngest of the graphic design schools on our list, but this doesn't mean it's not one of the best graphic design colleges in Florida. Similarly to Miami International, The Art Institute of Tampa has a Graphic and Web Design course as part of its Visual Design offering. The program promises to "turn your creativity into marketable design skills". Unlike the other institutions on this list, The Art Institute of Tampa offers both a Bachelor of Fine Arts in graphic design and an Associate Degree in graphic design. The latter of which is just 90 credits, rather than 180—so could be a quicker way to start a career in graphic design. At The Art Institute of Tampa, there is again the choice to focus on either graphic design or web design. Though both routes share the same foundational modules, before splitting off into more specific modules for your chosen concentration.

Depending on whether you choose an Associate Degree or a Bachelor's, the course length at The Art Institute of Tampa varies. With an Associate, it can be as little as 2 years, whilst with a Bachelor's it can be up for to 4 years. There is

not a portfolio required for an application to The Art Institute of Tampa.

8. University of South Florida

Location: St Petersburg, Western Florida
Course Duration: 2-4 years

Founded in 1956, the University of South Florida is America's fastest-rising university, with campuses in Tampa, Sarasota and St Petersburg, all located in the Tampa Bay area. Among its over 200 degree offerings, it offers degrees in Graphic Arts with Concentration in Graphic Design and Graphic Arts with Concentration in Illustration. Given this is an article on the best graphic design colleges in Florida, we will focus on the former—which is based out of the USF Campus in St Petersburg in the Tampa Bay Area. This course centres around a studio format, where students work, learn and discuss their way to a career in graphic design. There is also a great opportunity to put learnt skills to the test and actively create and design whilst studying.

Taking the length of a typical degree, studying graphic design at the University of Florida will see you graduating in 3-4 years. And applying to the course? You'll need to submit both an application and a portfolio of your existing work to the university, as well as having an overall GPA of 2.5 or higher.

9. Barry University

Location: Miami Shores, Western Florida
Course Duration: 2-3 years

Barry University was founded as a Catholic women's college in 1940 but over the last 71 years has developed into a liberal arts university—which offers over a 100 degree programs to around 7000 students. One of these programs is Barry's Graphic

Design BFA—which makes the college one of the best graphic design schools in Florida. Keeping its eye on the industry, Barry's program analyzes the latest trends in design, as well as trends from the past and future predictions, to ensure their students come out on top. The University all prides itself on its small class sizes, all of which have access to a state of the art computer lab, which gives students access to all the technology and software they need as designers. Students graduate from Barry with a professional portfolio that is developed through the course of their studies, including a Senior Project. This will also be displayed at a graduate exhibition at the end of your studies at Barry.

Students can expect to study at Barry for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 4 years. To study at Barry, you do not need an existing portfolio of design work—it is a standard university application.

10. Full Sail University

Location: Winter Park, Central Florida
Course Duration: 2-3 years

A part of the Florida college network since 1980, Full Sail University began as a school teaching recording arts and audio engineering—it has since expanded into offering much more diverse degree offerings and launched its online degree program in 2007. One of these additions is Full Sail's Graphic Design Bachelor's Degree course—which is offered both on campus and online, the only college on this list to do so. This flexibility makes Full Sail one of the best graphic design schools in Florida. Full Sail's graphic design program, whether on campus or online, aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the field of design—it covers print, UI, packaging and more. Both Full Sail's on campus and online programs, also offer multiple start dates throughout the year—so you aren't tied down to the standard academic

year.

How long the course takes depends on whether you want to learn in person or online. The on campus course can be completed in 20 months, while the online course takes a little longer and can be completed in 29 months—just shy of three years. For the Full Sail course, you don't need an existing portfolio and the application is a lot less rigorous than other colleges on this list.

11. Palm Beach Atlantic University

Location: West Palm Beach, South-Eastern Florida
Course Duration: 2-3 years

Home of the PB Sailfish, Palm Beach Atlantic University was founded in 1968 before moving to the campus where it is now housed in 1982. Through its College of Fine Arts, Palm Beach Atlantic offers a BFA in Graphic Arts—Graphic Design that has post-graduation employment as the driving force behind it. Previous graduates have become graphic designers, art directors, animators and multimedia artists through a comprehensive course of study that covers both information and experiences in graphic design. According to Palm Beach Atlantic's website, their degree program will train you in page-layout for magazines, books, advertising and corporate design. The college's focus on getting its graduates jobs is what makes it one of the best graphic design colleges in Florida.

If taken as a major, Palm Beach Atlantic's Graphic Arts-Graphic Design degree program can take up to 4 years, as is the standard with degree programs in the USA. As with other programs on our list, you don't need to submit a portfolio of previous design work as part of the application process.

There you are—the eleven best graphic design colleges in Florida. But, wait, what if we told you that there was a

cheaper, faster way of becoming a graphic designer? One that fully prepares you for a job in the design industry? Sounds good to be true but it’s not. Shillington’s graphic design course covers everything you need—from design theory to design programs.

Whether on campus or online, you’ll learn from experienced, practicing designers before immediately applying your skills in a studio environment. And, this all happens in just three months full-time or nine months part-time. There’s six campuses around the world—in New York, London, Manchester, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane—so you can choose your nearest campus or even study abroad. Or, if you’d rather study online, there’s three different time zones to choose from so you can study whenever is best for you.

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