This booklet provides an overview of the Dept. of Medical Illustration and the Medical Illustration Graduate Program at Augusta University. Details and dates in this brochure are subject to change; for the most current information about our admission requirements and the application process, please visit our website. For other questions about the program, please contact Prof. Bill Andrews, Chair & Program Director, at bandrews@augusta.edu.

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What is Medical Illustration?

“Watch what’s never been done, draw what’s never been seen, and tell thousands about it without saying a word.”
—Association of Medical Illustrators

Medical illustration is a truly interdisciplinary field.
It is a synergistic combination of the visual arts, the health sciences, education, and communications. Historically, its roots were fully evident by the Renaissance, as seen in the work of research anatomists and educators such as Andreas Vesalius and in the artwork of the great figurative artists such as Leonardo DaVinci. Today, medical illustration—and biomedical communications in general—is essential for the growth and effectiveness of the healthcare system in the United States. Medical illustration supports and enhances:

- Medical & Health Science Education and Training
- Clinical Practice
- Patient Education
- Health & Life Science Research
- Public Health Information
- Biotech, Medical Device, and Pharmaceutical Marketing

Medical illustration is an international field.

- For more information about the international field of medical illustration, please visit the Association of Medical Illustrators.
- For more information about the field in the European Union, please visit the Association Européenne des Illustrateurs Médicaux et Scientifiques.
- For information about the field in the United Kingdom, please visit the Medical Artists’ Association of Great Britain.
- For information about the field in Australia, please visit the Australian Institute of Medical and Biological Illustration.
Who are Medical Illustrators?

“Dispel from your mind the thought that an understanding of the human body in every aspect of its structure can be given in words; for the more thoroughly you describe, the more you will confuse: it is therefore necessary to draw…”
—Leonardo DaVinci, Artist, Anatomist & Inventor

Medical illustrators are specially trained artist-scientists. Entry into this unique field requires not only a talent for the graphic arts and visual storytelling but also an affinity for science. Medical illustrators use various media and techniques—from colored pencils to silicone, and from 2D artwork to 3D animation—to solve complex communication and education problems in the life and health sciences.

There are undergraduate programs in medical illustration; however, a graduate education in this field is strongly recommended and is required by many employers. Augusta University is the only institution in the world to offer the Master of Science in Medical Illustration (MSMI) degree.

You do not need to be licensed to be a medical illustrator. However, after graduation, many professionals become Certified Medical Illustrators. CMI status offers employers and clients assurance that a medical illustrator meets or exceeds the standards for the profession. Our students usually take the CMI exam right after graduation. They routinely score in the top 5% of all those attempting the exam.

View MI Student Video

What does it take to be a Medical Illustrator?

Each medical illustrator is a unique visual storyteller. Most successful medical illustrators embody many of the following characteristics:

• A curiosity and passion for understanding the human body and how it works, both in health and in sickness;
• An ability to visualize objects and render them in a realistic manner, often without the benefit of any physical references (i.e., drawing from the imagination);
• A desire for accuracy in the artwork and animations they create;
• An affinity for and natural curiosity about science;
• An ability to listen carefully, a need to understand fully, and the drive to seek out answers to remaining questions;
• A strong ability to communicate and explain, through the written word and with visuals;
• A desire to continue learning throughout one’s life;
• An ability to learn and adopt new tools and technologies;
• Self-confidence, strong self-esteem, and an ability to receive criticism and feedback while keeping a cool head;
• Self-motivation and ambition to be an outstanding visual storyteller in the health sciences;
• Common sense and practicality; and
• A desire to help others through the illustrations, animations or models they create.
Where do they work?

“Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.”
—Hippocrates, Physician

Medical illustrators work in a variety of places and venues. Wherever there is a need to tell clear visual stories about complex health science, you may find a medical illustrator. Here are a few of the many arenas where medical artists might work:

- Medical, dental and veterinary schools
- Hospitals and specialty medical centers
- Health science research institutes
- Government agencies and departments of health
- Publishing houses
- Pharmaceutical, medical device and biotechnology companies
- Advertising and marketing agencies
- Law firms and legal exhibit companies

Our graduates work throughout the US, as well as in Canada and Europe. Here are just a few of the places where our alumni work:

- Arthrex
- Barrow Neurological Institute
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- The Cleveland Clinic
- Duke University School of Medicine
- Elsevier Publishing
- The Mayo Clinic
- The University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine

In addition, many of our graduates enter into private practice. Here are just a few of the many businesses created by our alumni:

- A.D.A.M. Images
- Amicus Visual Solutions
- iSO-FORM, LLC
- MediVisuals, Inc.
- Microverse Studios
- Nucleus Medical Media, Inc.
- Vessel Studios
- Westwood Medical Communications

What do they earn?

“Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.”
—Hippocrates, Physician

Salaries vary by location, education level, and experience. According to the 2018 industry survey by the Association of Medical Illustrators, the median salary for all medical illustrators in the US was $70,650.

Among our graduates over the last 5 years, the median starting salary for an entry level position was $75,000, with a range from $55,000 to $95,000, and a mean of $63,000.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.”
—Gen. Colin L. Powell

On average, at least half of our graduates have secured employment within 60 days of graduation. Unless they are seeking additional education, nearly 100% of our grads will have accepted a position within six months.

“COVID-19,” by A. Eckert (’06) & D. Higgins, CDC.
Medical Illustration Graduate Program at Augusta University

“We are the oldest graduate program at Augusta University.”
Founded in 1948, the Medical Illustration Graduate Program (MIGP) is one of the few such programs in the US. We have a well-earned reputation as the premier training center in the southeast for visual communications in the health sciences.

The MIGP features a synergistic multidisciplinary curriculum. Students take courses in the medical sciences, communications, graphic arts, and business. We focus on the conceptualization, planning, design, production, implementation and evaluation of visual solutions for complex communication and education problems in the life and health sciences.

We provide a generalist degree suitable for entering the widest variety of positions as a professional medical illustrator. While we teach the most commonly used tools and techniques, our forte is problem-solving and visual story-telling.

Our program has particular strengths in anatomical and surgical illustration, storyboarding and animation (2D and 3D), and business management. Our award-winning faculty have noteworthy experience in cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, neurosurgery, and plastic and reconstructive surgery, as well as animation and anaplastology.

Completion of the program results in the awarding of the prestigious Master of Science in Medical Illustration (MSMI) degree.

Program Accreditation
We were the first program to be independently accredited. We have exceeded the high standards for graduate education in this field for over 65 years. We are accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs.

“Our medical illustration students visualize better health.”
—Lester Pretlow, Dean of College of Allied Health Sciences

What is the MIGP curriculum?

“The curriculum is 5 consecutive semesters of in-person study.
Entry into the 21-month MIGP occurs only in the Fall (mid-August).
We emphasize anatomical, surgical, and pathological illustration for print and electronic publication. Because of the importance of good drawing skills, our students learn a variety of traditional and digital illustration techniques. Image design and production for print, projection, animation, and multimedia are extensively integrated into the curriculum. We emphasize the media, styles, and techniques used by contemporary professional medical illustrators.

Visual problem-solving is a crucial skill for the professional medical illustrator. Throughout the curriculum, the faculty work with the students to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Course assignments are designed to give them not only theoretical knowledge but practical experience as well. Students also participate in our Student Medical Illustration Service, in which they create illustrations for actual university clients.

In addition to being skilled artists, medical illustrators must be knowledgeable in anatomy and the health sciences. Our students study graduate-level science courses, such as gross anatomy, neuroanatomy, cell biology, pathology, and surgical techniques. Because surgical illustration is one of our strengths, students spend time in the operating room observing and sketching.

In addition to didactic classes, our students also undertake a Master’s Project, in which they independently conceptualize, plan, design, produce, implement, and evaluate a visual solution to a complex education or communication problem in the health sciences.”

First Year—

Fall Semester
- Human Gross Anatomy I
- Medical Illustration Techniques IA
- Electronic Media I

Spring Semester
- Human Gross Anatomy II
- Neuroanatomy
- Medical Illustration Techniques IB
- Electronic Media II
- Surgical Techniques

Summer Semester
- Cell Biology & Histology
- Medical Illustration Techniques IIA
- Multimedia I
- Surgical Observation & Sketching I
- Elective: Medical Sculpture

Second Year—

Fall Semester
- Pathology I
- Medical Illustration Techniques IIB
- Multimedia II
- Surgical Observation & Sketching II
- Business & Resource Management I
- Investigation of a Problem I

Spring Semester
- Pathology II
- Business & Resource Management II
- Investigation of a Problem II
What are the MIGP admission requirements and process?

“Admission to the Medical Illustration Graduate Program is very competitive—just meeting the requirements does not guarantee admission. We can only accept up to 9 students a year.”
—MIGP Admissions Committee

The application deadline is January 10th.

Application for admission to the MIGP is done exclusively online. In order for an application to be considered, all required materials must be received by the deadline of January 10th. Note: specific details and requirements are subject to change—the most current info is included on the Admissions page of our website.

Entry into the program occurs only in the Fall semester, in mid August. To assure the richest, most valuable educational experience, the MIGP is offered exclusively via in-person instruction.

Specific admission requirements include:

Degree Requirement— At least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. To satisfy degree requirements, a formal evaluation of foreign educational transcripts must show degree earned that is the U.S. equivalency. We do not require a specific undergraduate degree.

GPA— Cumulative undergraduate GPA (must include all colleges and universities attended) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. Meeting the minimum requirement is not a guarantee of interview or admission. Keep in mind the competitive nature of this program. The average cumulative GPA among successful applicants over the last 3 years was 3.6.

Science GPA— A minimum science grade point average (GPA) of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. We define the science GPA to include only Biology, Physiology, Zoology and closely related courses. Meeting the minimum requirement is not a guarantee of interview or admission. Keep in mind the competitive nature of this program. The average cumulative Science GPA among successful applicants over the last 3 years was 3.14.

Standardized Test Requirement (GRE)— A combined verbal and quantitative score of 300 on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is required. The average GRE score among successful applicants over the last 3 years was 306.

Official Transcripts— Official transcripts are required from all universities and colleges ever attended. Only in the case of transcripts from international colleges/universities will an official course-by-course transcript evaluation be accepted in lieu of an official transcript. Official transcripts should be sent to Augusta University’s Office of Academic Admissions. To remain official, all transcripts must remain in the original, unopened, sealed and stamped/signature envelope from the Registrar’s office of the issuing institution. Alternatively, Augusta University will accept official electronic transcripts from the registrar’s office at your prior institution. Electronic transcripts should be directed to graduateadmissions@augusta.edu.

Transcript/Credential Evaluation of Foreign Transcripts— An official, professional course-by-course evaluation based on official transcripts and documents is required for all foreign educational transcripts and documents from one of the following three credentials evaluation services: Josef Silny & Associates, Inc., World Education Services (WES), or Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE). Silny and WES are recommended. Official transcript evaluations based on unofficial transcripts, documents or copies will not fulfill this requirement.

TOEFL— The official Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test scores are required for applicants whose first language is not English. The TOEFL exam must be taken within 2 years prior to application. The Augusta University institution code for submission of TOEFL scores is 5406. Please do not select a department code. The minimum scores are:

• 213 computer-based
• 79 internet-based
• 550 paper-based (PBT; prior to October 2017)
• No minimum for the revised paper-delivered test (PDT; October 2017 and later)

References/Recommendations— Recommendations (which include a reference form and letter of recommendation) from three individuals are required. Referees should be individuals qualified to critically assess the applicant’s prior academic (usually college professors), employment, artistic, research and/or clinical experience (clinical or research supervisor/manager) and qualifications (as applicable) as well as the applicant’s potential as a graduate student in the field/program selected.

Recommendations can be submitted online only. Within the application, you will provide the names and current email addresses for three individuals you have asked to serve as your recommenders. Once your application is submitted, each recommender will receive an email notification directing them to the online site where they can complete their recommendation. To change a recommender after the application has been submitted, log into your ApplyWeb (CollegeNet) account and make updates. Status updates of your recommenders’ submissions will be provided to you directly from ApplyWeb (CollegeNet).

Prerequisite Science Courses— The following sciences courses are required and must be completed before program entry:

1. Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy (or Vertebrate Morphology) with student dissection of a mammal (for example, a cat, rabbit or piglet), and with a grade of “B” or better.

2. Human Physiology with a grade of “B” or better.

   Note: A combined Human Anatomy & Physiology 2-part course with lab may be an acceptable substitute for both of these prerequisite science courses. Substitution is subject to review and approval by the MIGP Admissions Committee.

In addition, we recommend—but do not require—any of the following science courses: Histology, Embryology (Human Development), Invertebrate Anatomy, Cell Biology, Molecular Biology, Genetics, Immunology, Basic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Organic Chemistry.

Recommended Art Courses/Training— We do not require any formal art training. We do, however, strongly recommend formal art training in realistic drawing and painting. Note: we do not teach basic drawing and painting; rather, we expect applicants to demonstrate confident competency in the fundamentals of realistic drawing and painting via their Applicant Digital Portfolio.

The following art and graphics courses are strongly recommended:

- Portrait drawing and/or painting; and,
- Computer graphics, including Photoshop® and Illustrator® (or equivalent).

In addition, we recommend any of the following art courses: Animation, Architectural Drawing, Cinematography, Color Theory, Drafting, Design (Graphic, Interface, Media, Set/Stage, 2D, 3D, Type, Web, etc.), Media Arts, Sculpture, Photography, Perspective, Print Making (Engraving, Intaglio, Lithography, Serigraphy, etc.), Technical Drawing, Time Arts, Typography, Videography.

Portfolio of Original Artwork— An Applicant Digital Portfolio of original artwork must be submitted by the application deadline of January 10th. (See details below.)

Personal Interview & Formal Portfolio Review— If the basic requirements are met, the applicant may be granted a personal interview. Interviews are by invitation only. During the interview, the applicant’s portfolio will be reviewed by the faculty. Successful completion of the personal interview with the program faculty is required for admission. Interviews are by invitation only.

Application Review— Only complete applications filed by the deadline of January 10 will be considered. The MIGP Admissions Committee will review your application and all supporting documents and materials. If appropriate, an interview will be scheduled. The whole of your application should demonstrate substantial preparation for graduate study in the field.

Student Selection— This is a very competitive program. Applicants come from diverse backgrounds in the fine arts, biology, and human and veterinary medicine. Each year 40 to 50 individuals apply. Of these, 20 to 30 individuals are invited for an interview and formal portfolio review. Based on the overall strength of the application and interview, the MIGP Admissions Committee selects a class of up to 9 students. We are not required to take 9 students.

Apply Online Now

What goes into a successful portfolio?

“A thing well drawn is always well enough painted.”
—Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, Artist

Applicants must submit a portfolio of original creative work.
The Applicant Digital Portfolio (ADP) must be submitted online following the instructions for the MIGP Applicant Digital Portfolio. The ADP must be submitted as a PowerPoint, using the MIGP PowerPoint Template. The ADP must be received by midnight on January 10. All artwork must be drawn or painted from direct observation (not from photographic reference unless the photograph is taken by the applicant). The portfolio must include the following 20 pieces:

Five (5) life drawings (figure studies), including at least two long poses (at least 3 hours in total duration)— We request drawings and/or paintings of the human form because they demonstrate an applicant’s ability to perceive and render functional human structure and proportion as well as light on form in a realistic manner. Rendering of fine detail is of secondary concern, but it is still important. Images should be drawn from direct observation of a live model and without the use of photography or video. (If, due to COVID, you had to use a photo or video source, please note this fact on the artwork.) Full-figure nude (undraped) drawings are preferred. However, in-depth studies of limbs or isolated features may also be submitted. Portraits, including self-portraits, are encouraged. We also like to see fore-shortened views of the figure. These figure studies do not need to have been drawn during a formal class. Click to see additional examples of figure drawings from successful applicants.

1. Female torso study by A. Choi ('19).
3. Seated male figure by J. Thornton ('21).
4. Female figure with ball by M. Neace ('19).
5. Reclining female figure by B. Brown ('20).
Three (3) gesture drawings (may be on the same page)—We request gestural figure drawings of the human form because they demonstrate an applicant’s ability to perceive and capture dynamic forms in a variety of quick poses. Typically, a gestural drawing is rendered in 1 to 5 minutes. Full-figure nude (undraped) drawings are preferred. Groups of gestural drawings on a single page may be submitted. Click to see additional examples of gesture drawings from successful applicants.

Two (2) drawings of hands—We request drawings and/or paintings of hands because they also give us an idea of an applicant’s ability to perceive and render functional structure, proportion and light on form in a realistic manner. In addition, asking applicants to submit images of hands better allows us to qualitatively and objectively compare and contrast between applicant portfolios. Rendering of fine detail is of secondary concern, but it is still important. Images must be drawn from direct observation and without the use of photography. We prefer tonal studies, but drawings may be either in black & white or in color. Hands should be drawn approximately life size, and may be shown in repose or in action. You may also submit studies of feet. Click to see additional examples of hand drawings from successful applicants.

Three (3) realistic still-life studies—We request realistic still-life drawings and/or paintings in color because they give us an idea of an applicant’s ability to perceive, render and use color as well as portray light on form. Still-life studies also afford us an opportunity to assess the applicant’s skill with design and composition. In addition, we look at the applicant’s use of perspective. Images must be drawn from direct observation and without the use of photography. Note: please do not include medical illustrations. Click to see additional examples of still-life studies from successful applicants.

3. Hand studies by E. Miller (‘22).
One (1) vector-based computer-graphic image—We request at least one image created with vector- or bézier-based software, such as Adobe Illustrator or Corel Draw, because it will demonstrate an applicant’s experience or skill level in digital image creation using only bézier curves (splines), lines, and/or shapes. While we use Illustrator as one of our standard tools, you may use whatever vector-based software to which you have access. Click to see additional vector art examples.

One (1) raster-based computer-graphic image—We request at least one image created with raster- or pixel-based software, such as Adobe Photoshop or Corel Painter, because it will demonstrate an applicant’s experience or skill level in digital image creation. While we use Photoshop as one of our standard tools, you may use whatever raster-based software to which you have access. Note: Do not submit photographs that have been merely traced, processed, or interpreted through the software. Click to see additional raster image examples.

7. Shell study by W. DeWolff ('20).
Two (2) additional examples of realistic drawing or painting—While we want to see additional examples of realistic artwork, the media and choice of subject are up to the applicant.

2. “Goldfinch & Thistles,” by L. Pederson (’21).

Three (3) additional examples of artwork of the applicant’s choice—We ask for these pieces to make sure that an applicant has an opportunity to show us their favorite work. These pieces might include imaginative/fantasy artwork, comic book images, sculpture, graphic design, photography, animation, or the like.

Optional sketchbook images—To provide us with a more complete picture of an applicant’s conceptualization skills and their creative process, the applicant may also include up to five (5) examples of sketchbook pages (or other preliminary drawings). These additional five pieces are optional.

What is the tuition?

“The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.”
—Henry David Thoreau, Author

The MIGP offers an exceptional value in education.
Augusta University is part of the University System of Georgia, consequently tuition and fees are very reasonable and competitive. In 2021, the in-state tuition for the entire 5-semester program was $25,530. With mandatory fees, the entire cost for the MIGP is currently about $31,000. For more information, please visit the AU Tuition & Fees webpage. In addition, students are required to have health insurance. Student Health Services hosts a FAQ page about student health insurance coverage and related issues.

Students with permanent residence in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia may be eligible for in-state tuition through the Academic Common Market.

International students and those from US states other than those listed above may be eligible for special out-of-state tuition waivers. Note: Only accepted students may apply for waivers.

Those students who qualify through the Office of Student Financial Aid may be able to participate in the Federal Work-Study Program. All of our Work-Study students work within our department.


Do you offer scholarships?

We understand the rising costs of a college education.
At this time, however, our department does not offer any scholarships. There are a number of scholarships available through the Office of Student Financial Aid on the Scholarship Opportunities page.

In addition, the Vesalius Trust for Visual Communications in Health Science sponsors scholarships and research grants for those students who have completed at least one year of study in medical illustration.
Who are the faculty?

“When one teaches, two learn.”
—Robert Heinlein, Author

Prof. Wm. “Bill” M. Andrews, MA, CMI, FAMI. Bill serves as the department Chair and Program Director. He earned his Master of Arts in biomedical communications at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. He is working on a PhD at the Univ. of South Carolina.

Assoc. Professor Amanda Y. Behr, MA, CCA, CMI, FAMI. Amanda earned her Master of Arts in medical and biological illustration at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. She is working on a PhD in Applied Health Sciences at Augusta University. Amanda is also a certified clinical anaplastologist.

Assoc. Professor Michael A. Jensen, MSMI, CMI. Michael earned his MS in Medical Illustration at the Medical College of Georgia (now Augusta University).

We also have a good number of amazing Adjunct Faculty, whose expertise and experiences enrich our program.

Our esteemed Emeriti Faculty are Octavia Garlington, MSMI and Steven J. Harrison, MSMI, PhD, CMI, FAMI.

The department and program are supported by our outstanding administrative staff: Office Coordinator Mary Kimbrell, and Administrative Assistant LaDonna Butler.

What are the facilities like?

The MIGP has awesome student learning spaces. Each student is assigned a personal study carrel in the Student Studio (see photo above). Each carrel features an Apple iMac, dual monitors, and a state-of-the-art graphics tablet. Students have 24/7 access to the studio and to the department.

Our Computer & AV Lab has several workstations with specialty software, as well as computers dedicated to scanning and color printing. We also have a custom-designed sound booth in this lab.

We have an extensive department library with over 2,500 books on art, anatomy, business, graphics, medicine, and surgery. We also have numerous skeletons, anatomical models and other learning resources. In addition, the Robert B. Greenblatt, M.D. Library is just down the street.

The David J. Mascaro Teaching Gallery is home to a collection of over 500 medical paintings, drawings and sculptures. The artwork represents a wide range of genres, market uses, graphic media, and illustration techniques.

Our new Medical Sculpture Lab (see photo above, right) has a wet-lab room for work in a variety of materials. The dry-lab area includes specialty 3D workstations and numerous 3D printers (both resin and filament type).

We are located on the Health Science Campus. We are 5 minutes from downtown Augusta and the Savannah River, and just 8 minutes from the Summerville Campus.
What if I have questions?

“What curiosity is, in great and generous minds, the first passion and the last.”
—Samuel Johnson, Author & Lexicographer

We welcome your questions and would like to hear from you.
Please note that our website provides a wealth of detailed information. The Admissions, FAQ, Galleries, and Facilities pages may be particularly helpful. If you have additional questions, please contact Program Director Bill Andrews at bandrews@augusta.edu.

If you are within 12 months of applying for the MIGP, you may request an informal preliminary portfolio review to assess your preparedness. Appointments are typically 1-hour in length and are conducted via video conference. To request a portfolio review, please contact Assoc. Professor Michael Jensen at mjensen@augusta.edu.

If you would like to schedule a visit to the MIGP in person, please contact LaDonna Butler at lbutler@augusta.edu.

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