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## *Juilliard Plans \$550 Million Drive to Go Tuition Free*

The goal is to make the school’s programs more accessible and to ease the burden on graduates pursuing careers in the arts.

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By **Javier C. Hernández**

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The Juilliard School, one of the world’s most prestigious conservatories, plans to go tuition free for all of its students, the school announced on Thursday, and has begun a \$550 million fund-raising drive to finance the effort.

The tuition-free policy is meant to make Juilliard accessible to a broader range of students and to ease the burden on graduates hoping to pursue careers in the arts, where salaries can be meager. The fund-raising campaign will be one of the largest in Juilliard’s 120-year history.

“If a student can get into Juilliard — and it’s hard to get into Juilliard — it can’t be about the money,” said Damian Woetzel, the school’s president. “Money can’t be the determining factor of having the opportunity to come to Juilliard, to be in New York City at Lincoln Center, and to fulfill that dream that empowers art itself.”

Juilliard officials did not provide a timeline for putting the new policy in place, saying only that it would be a multiyear effort. The school said it has received about \$180 million in early commitments, including a pledge of \$130 million from Juilliard’s board.

Woetzel, who has made affordability a priority since becoming Juilliard’s president in 2018, said the school would push “as fast as we possibly can” to make the tuition-free policy a reality. He said he was confident that Juilliard could meet its fund-raising target, though he acknowledged it would be challenging.

“I am optimistic, even as I am realistic that it’s going to take a tremendous amount of energy and work,” he said. “I think this is a worthy goal, and I think people will understand that.”

Juilliard’s tuition, for both undergraduates and graduate students, is \$55,500 per year. More than 95 percent of students receive some financial aid. This school year, 29 percent of all Juilliard students pay no tuition. That number is expected to rise to 40 percent for the new school year in the fall.

Juilliard already offers some tuition-free programs; since last fall, for example, it has not charged tuition for its graduate acting track.

School officials said they now want to extend that policy across Juilliard’s music, dance and drama divisions, which collectively serve some 900 students.

The cost of attending Juilliard has at times been a point of contention between administrators and students. In 2021, students led protests against a planned tuition increase, demanding that the school freeze its tuition.

Juilliard would not be the only conservatory to go tuition free: The renowned Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, which is much smaller than Juilliard, with about 160 students, has not charged tuition since 1928, four years after it opened its doors.

**Javier C. Hernández** reports on classical music, opera and dance in New York City and beyond.