



SEARCH FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

SPELMAN COLLEGE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

## THE SEARCH

Spelman College, an internationally renowned, residential, private liberal arts college for women located in Atlanta, Georgia, seeks a leader with exceptional people and work culture development skills to become its inaugural Vice President for Human Resources (VPHR). This new role for the College has been created with the intention of developing a strategically focused human resources function that will support one of Spelman's most valuable assets: people. The VPHR will join an extraordinary community of learners and leaders, synergizing Spelman's unique qualities to build a community work culture of shared success and accountability while enhancing a people-centric and customer-focused human resources function.

Spelman College was founded in 1881 as a historically Black women's college that today prioritizes the education and empowerment of Black women. Among the nation's best liberal arts institutions of higher learning, the college is committed to developing well-rounded, critical thinkers by offering a rigorous liberal arts curriculum to its approximately 2,400 students. Spelman College's 196 full- and 140 part-time faculty and 425 staff thrive in a culture focused on community, education, and support of the whole person.

Reporting to the President, the VPHR is Spelman's chief human resources officer and will serve as a member of the President's Cabinet. They will be a strategic thought partner to the President and the senior leadership team, charged with elevating Spelman's human resources function to become a consultative, proactive, and service-oriented office. They will ensure that all HR systems and functions align with the mission and strategic direction of the College while developing a future-ready human resources function and campus culture. Leveraging strong change management acumen and thought leadership, they will implement a redeveloped HR organization that is supported by efficient business processes and best-practice human resources functions developed to support the College's mission while remaining compliant with appropriate laws, policies, and regulations.

The inaugural VPHR will possess exceptional human resources technical skills and highly developed strategic change management skills. They will work with stakeholders across Spelman in an engaged and collaborative process to build an HR office and work culture predicated on collective responsibility and

accountability and attuned to strategy and mission. Additionally, the VPHR will have a sophisticated understanding of the nuanced roles and relationships that inform and influence culture and human resources practices within higher education institutions.

Spelman has retained the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to conduct this critical search. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## **ABOUT SPELMAN COLLEGE**

Established in 1881 in Atlanta, Georgia, as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, the institution was named Spelman College in 1924. Now a global leader in the education of women of African descent, Spelman has built a strong legacy of empowering women through a rigorous education grounded in the liberal arts, with a focus on critical thinking, ethical leadership, and community engagement. Spelman is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and is a proud member of the Atlanta University Center Consortium.

Today, the student body comprises more than 2,100 students from 43 states and 10 foreign countries. Spelman empowers women to engage the many cultures of the world and inspires a commitment to positive social change through service. The college is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and the intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of its students.

The College's status is confirmed by *U.S. News & World Report*, which ranked Spelman #39 among national liberal arts colleges, #24 for undergraduate teaching, #2 for social mobility among liberal arts colleges, and #1 for the 17th year among historically Black colleges and universities. The *Wall Street Journal* ranked the College #3 nationally in terms of student satisfaction.

The College offers a wide range of undergraduate programs across various disciplines, including the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Spelman is known for its supportive and vibrant community, where students are encouraged to explore their passions and develop their full potential. The institution prides itself on fostering a nurturing environment that emphasizes both personal growth and professional preparation.

Spelman's beautiful 39-acre campus features historic architecture, modern facilities, and a rich cultural heritage. The college's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is reflected in its diverse student body and the vast array of programs designed to support students' academic and personal development. Notable alumnae include leaders in various fields, including politics, science, and the arts, highlighting Spelman's role in shaping influential women who make significant impacts in their communities and beyond.

Spelman is proud of its 76% graduation rate (average over six years), one of the best in the nation. Its global alumnae network is strong, providing connections and helping hands to graduates as they begin on their path of global engagement.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Helene D. Gayle, M.D., MPH, began serving as the 11th president of Spelman College on July 1, 2022. Dr. Gayle previously served as president and CEO of The Chicago Community Trust, one of the nation's oldest and largest community foundations, from October 2017 to June 2022. Under her leadership, the Trust adopted a new strategic focus on closing the racial and ethnic wealth gap in the Chicago region.

For almost a decade, Dr. Gayle was president and CEO of CARE, a leading international humanitarian organization. A pediatrician and public health physician with expertise in economic development, humanitarian, and health issues, she spent 20 years with the Centers for Disease Control, working primarily on HIV/AIDS prevention. She led the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's programs on HIV/AIDS prevention and other global health issues.

Dr. Gayle serves on public company and nonprofit boards, including The Coca-Cola Company, Organon, Palo Alto Networks, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Brookings Institution, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and New America. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, National Academy of Medicine, Council on Foreign Relations, American Public Health Association, National Medical Association, and American Academy of Pediatrics. She was appointed by President Biden to serve on the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States and also serves on the CDC Advisory Committee to the Director.

Dr. Gayle is from Buffalo, New York. She earned a B.A. in psychology at Barnard College, an M.D. at the University of Pennsylvania, and an MPH at Johns Hopkins University. She is a tenured Full Professor in the Department of Environmental and Health Sciences at Spelman College and has received 18 honorary degrees.

Dr. Gayle is married to Stephen Keith, the First Gentleman of Spelman College, who is also a physician and a proud Spelman dad.

## **ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES**

Reporting to the President and serving as the chief human resources officer of the College, the Vice President for Human Resources will oversee the implementation, administration, and assessment of a comprehensive human resources people and culture program to build on Spelman College's reputation as an excellent place to work. They will play a lead role in developing and implementing Spelman's people and culture strategy so that it aligns with the College's Strategic Plan. In partnership with members of the senior leadership team, the VPHR will lead and support the development of a work culture that celebrates

our unique individual human perspectives as vital to organization and mission success. They are instrumental to the development and leadership of a newly focused human resources people and culture department, with an emphasis on strategic talent management and robust training for a future-ready Spelman. The VPHR engages in a complete review of every HR function across the entirety of the employee lifecycle predicated on the creation of a consultative and nimble office. With an existing team of 11, they are responsible for leading, managing, and developing all human resources functions for the College, including talent acquisition, retention and development, benefits and leave administration, compensation, position classification and job ladder development, employee and labor relations, legal compliance, performance management, employee training, and HRIS. As a member of the President's Cabinet, the VPHR will be tapped to provide strategic direction and decision-making to align the College's human resources total rewards offerings in a manner that is consistent with the mission, strategic focus, and financial position of the College.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES**

Compelling candidates for this truly exciting opportunity will bring substantial experience aligning best-practice people and culture functions with their previous institutions' unique attributes, along with adeptness to work collaboratively and strategically with leadership and stakeholders. Likely holding increasingly senior-level leadership roles and experience in higher education or another very complex environment, they will possess the technical skills and professional experience to execute the opportunities and challenges below:

### **Develop a new vision and structure for the HR people and culture function**

- The Vice President for Human Resources will leverage their expertise as a human resources people and culture professional and, engaging in a profoundly collaborative approach, create a process that accounts for and considers the Spelman community's uniqueness. They will merge this uniqueness with HR best practices to create a contemporary HR vision and accompanying technical HR functions.
- They will work with the Provost, their designates, and other stakeholders to support HR service delivery across the faculty lifecycle, from recruitment to retirement.
- They will build upon the excellence of Spelman's current human resources office, expanding the impact of the following HR functions:
  - Learning and development
  - Performance management
  - Compensation and classification
  - Talent acquisition

### **Build and support a culture of accountability, communication, and shared expectations**

- The VPHR will engage with leadership, stakeholders, and others to build and support a culture that relies upon individual and group support, clearly defined expectations, and a layered accountability model.
- They will work with managers and employees to identify barriers that prevent employees from reaching their full work potential and provide the tools and communications that build an employee work culture of collective ownership and responsibility.

### **Integrate a strategically focused and customer-service-oriented HR people and culture function**

- The VPHR will prioritize a proactive, consultative, and service-oriented HR people and culture function.
  - There is a sense that human resources at Spelman is seen as transactional in nature. Much of the reason for this is seen through the lens of HR processes and limitations of the current HR tech stack.
  - Beyond the important efficiency and implementation work mentioned below, the VPHR will develop and elevate the office by identifying opportunities for future system implementations that could better support a more consultative approach to HR service delivery.

### **Engage in a complete review of all HR Systems**

- **Human Capital Management**
  - Spelman currently uses Ellucian as its HR and Payroll system of record. The VPHR will strategically review the HR modules and implement streamlined and more efficient business processes and procedures. Process efficiencies may exist across divisions. It will be important for the new VPHR to work collaboratively with the payroll office in the Division of Business and Financial Affairs.
  - As appropriate, they will engage leadership in a future-oriented discussion about system improvements that support current and future growth and success.  
Spelman is currently in the final phases of implementing the PeopleAdmin ATS module. This module will go live soon. The VPHR will have the opportunity to ensure that the new ATS is functioning smoothly and provides hiring managers and other stakeholders with the desired streamlined experience.

- **Performance Management**

- Spelman's performance management process is currently form-based. The VPHR will leverage expertise in performance management systems to develop a contemporary performance management function that is based on accountability, equity, and the unique needs of Spelman's employees and managers.
- A new performance management philosophy will necessarily recognize individual employee contributions and perspectives, clearly communicate policies and practices, and encourage deep participation in the campus community while supporting the College's mission, principles, and strategic foci.
- As previously mentioned, Spelman is finalizing the implementation of the PeopleAdmin ATS module. The VPHR will engage in a process to determine if the PeopleAdmin performance management module or another product might best support Spelman's performance management needs.

- **Conduct a complete review of HR policies**

- The VPHR will develop and engage in a process of continuous review of all HR policies to ensure optimal alignment with relevant laws and norms.

- **Bolster HR Training and Communications**

- The VPHR will lead the development of new and expanded HR training and learning modules that support staff and faculty professional development.
- The VPHR will expand the breadth of HR communications, utilizing different channels and tools to provide employees with a more nuanced understanding of Spelman's total rewards offerings.
- The VPHR will develop job families and career ladders to support employee growth and retention.

- **Records Room**

- The VPHR will take up the currently paused work to complete the digitization of employee records.
- They will collaborate with data stakeholders to establish a single, centralized repository for digitized records and other employee data.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

Spelman College seeks an extraordinary leader who will bring with them many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics.

- Demonstrated success working collaboratively, efficiently, and enthusiastically within a complex environment of similar size and scale; higher education experience preferred, ideally within a residential liberal arts college or other academic environment.
- A minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible human resources experience, with at least five years in a leadership role supervising staff.
- Unparalleled personal integrity, credibility, and ethics; strong hands-on work ethic, independence, and willingness to take initiative and follow up.
- Significant and demonstrated effectiveness in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.
- The technical or leadership ability to lead ERP optimization and business process redevelopment
- Strong listening, interpersonal, and communication skills; a presence that earns trust, confidence, and respect through transparency; and the ability to lead by influence and example.
- An innate ability to develop people and offices, systems, and processes based on equity and support a culture of shared accountability and success.
- Experience with leading efforts to drive organizational behavior and culture and management of varying work modalities (i.e. hybrid, remote, in-person, etc).
- Experience with and demonstrated success in developing a strategic HR vision.
- Strong technical knowledge of a broad array of human resource functions, including extensive experience in benefits, compensation, employee relations, organizational effectiveness, talent management and development, and human resource information systems.

#### **APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES**

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller executive search team via the link below.

Keight Tucker Kennedy, Partner  
Daniel Rodas, Partner  
Tim Lanigan, Senior Associate  
Nicole Sancilio, Senior Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/spelman-college/vice-president-human-resources>

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