



Search for the Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life
Hamilton College
Clinton, New York

Hamilton College (“Hamilton” or “the College”), a pre-eminent residential liberal arts college with 2,000 students located in Clinton, NY, seeks an innovative and inclusive spiritual leader and higher education administrator to serve as its inaugural Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life (“Dean”). Reporting to the Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students, the Dean will be a thoughtful and engaged leader for the College and a collaborative curator of programming, space, and community to meet the pluralistic and ever-changing needs of the Hamilton community. The Dean will join the College at a pivotal moment of transformation in spiritual and religious life, working to make it a more relevant, central, and visible part of campus life. As a trusted partner, the Dean will play a key role in offering education, programming, and support, fostering exploration and strengthening community.

For more than 200 years, Hamilton has been preparing students for lives of meaning, purpose, and active citizenship. Hamilton blends tradition with progressive ideas and innovation, encouraging students to think critically, embrace difference, communicate persuasively, and approach issues with ethical creativity—all within a supportive and inclusive community. The College’s motto, “[Know Thyself](#)”, speaks to Hamilton’s commitment to supporting students’ personal, professional, and academic journeys and evolution. Through their [Open Curriculum](#) and [ALEX](#) advisory model, students are both encouraged and supported to build an academic experience that speaks to their personal pursuits as well as engage in a diverse community of thought, lived experience, and perspectives. Hamilton is also in the midst of a new chapter as [President Steven Tepper](#), a nationally recognized leader in creativity and education, was appointed as the 21st president of the College on July 1, 2024.

This is an exciting opportunity for a dynamic, strategic, and highly engaged spiritual life leader to partner with the Hamilton community to co-create and actualize a vision for spiritual and religious life in the context of a diverse, non-sectarian liberal arts college. The ideal candidate will have a deep understanding and respect for the diversity of religious beliefs and practices across traditions, including worldviews of non-belief. They will also be skilled in engaging and supporting individuals at various stages of their spiritual exploration, curiosity, or questioning. The Dean will offer generous pastoral empathy and a

mature sense of moral and ethical leadership to the Hamilton community that compliments the College's mission, motto, and values.

A search advisory committee has been formed, and Isaacson, Miller, a national executive recruiting firm, has been retained to support the committee. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications can be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT HAMILTON COLLEGE

Originally founded in 1793 as the Hamilton-Oneida Academy, Hamilton College received its charter from the regents of the State University of New York in 1812. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the College built a classic and beautiful campus that endures to this day. For its first 150 years, the College remained small and all-male, with a powerful teaching tradition and an emphasis on written and oral communication.

Starting in the late 1960s, Hamilton took a series of bold steps that forged its modern identity. In 1968, all-male Hamilton created Kirkland College, an independent women's college adjacent to Hamilton's existing campus. Kirkland complemented Hamilton: its curriculum was more experimental; its buildings were modern; its emphasis was on the fine and performing arts; and it stressed creativity, self-direction, and interdisciplinary learning. Kirkland struggled financially and, in the increasingly coeducational world at the time, the trustees of both colleges united the two in 1978. The merger took time and generated conflict, but the cultural fusion molded Hamilton's identity. Hamilton today retains its teaching commitment and a distinctive culture that blends the traditions of both institutions. Over the years, Hamilton has continued to evolve through an enhanced physical plant, updated curriculum, and renewed emphasis on integrating experiential learning to create a transformational educational experience for students.

Location

Hamilton sits on a hill overlooking the village of Clinton, New York. The campus consists of the original Hamilton campus and the Kirkland campus built in the mid and late 1960s. The former comprises architecturally consistent stone and brick buildings laid out in classical terms. The original Kirkland campus is composed of 1960s-era architecture, while the newer buildings have accessible, open spaces and glass and steel exteriors.

In the last 15 years, primarily funded by alumni and parent donors, the College has invested about \$340 million in new construction, renovations, and landscaping improvements. The campus has grown from 1.5 million to over 2 million square feet across 1,350 acres. Academic space has been dramatically expanded and upgraded with technology, art, and scientific equipment. Each new structure has been carefully sited and designed to conform to the existing architecture and avoid overwhelming the campus's historic charm.

The Community

The College has created an appealing identity. It is one of the most selective institutions in the country, with an acceptance rate steadily shifting from 30% in 2009 to 26% in 2016 to 11.8% for the Class of 2026. The yield has similarly improved from 35% to 41%.

Access is equally essential to Hamilton as the quality of the student body. In 2007, Hamilton made a principled decision and eliminated merit scholarships. Three years later, still in the wake of the Great Recession but with extraordinary trustee support, Hamilton went need-blind in its admission decisions. Since that turning point, the College has attracted classes of unprecedented academic ability and talent, seen record applications, increased diversity of all kinds, and improved its retention (95.1%) and six-year graduation rates (92.3%).

The high caliber of Hamilton's student body has also been recognized externally. Hamilton students have earned highly prestigious awards in recent years, including Marshall, Truman, Watson, and Fulbright fellowships. For 19 consecutive years, Hamilton has been named a top-producing institution in the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

Over the years, Hamilton has increasingly diversified its student body. Thirty-four percent of Hamilton students are U.S. students of color or international students, up from 22% in 2008-09. For the Class of 2026, 37% are U.S. students of color or international students. Fifty percent of Hamilton students receive financial aid, with the number of Pell-eligible and first-generation students increasing steadily. At the same time and for the same purpose, Hamilton has moved to diversify its faculty. Hamilton faculty members who identify as people of color represented 21% of the faculty in 2020, up from 17% a decade earlier. The percentage of women on Hamilton's faculty has grown steadily from 44% in 2010 to 51% in 2021. Since 2013, every department hiring a faculty member has appointed a trained "diversity advocate" to its search committee.

These Hamilton commitments have helped the College attract and retain excellent leaders, faculty, and staff who want to be at an institution that admits and supports the best students. With 198 dedicated faculty, Hamilton ranks among the top institutions for student-to-faculty ratio at 9-to-1, lowered from 10-to-1 20 years ago. Twenty-eight percent of classes have nine or fewer students, and 72% have 19 or fewer, reflecting Hamilton's efforts to respond to student initiative and intensive teaching. Students and alumni speak with deep and genuine affection for Hamilton, particularly their close, meaningful relationships and collaborations with academic advisors and faculty members.

Hamilton's exceptional faculty members are a community of accomplished and ambitious scholar-teachers foundational to its success. They are committed to all aspects of student life, share their research with students, and are available to students in and out of the classroom. The constant improvement in Hamilton's identity and appeal directly results from its faculty's commitment to and engagement with students.

Leadership

[Steven Tepper](#) assumed the Hamilton presidency on July 1, 2024, after serving ten years as dean and director of the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. A sociologist, Tepper is a leading writer and speaker on higher education and U.S. cultural policy. His work has fostered national discussions about cultural engagement, creative work and careers, art and democracy, and the transformative possibilities of a 21st-century creative campus.

Before joining Arizona State, Tepper was on the faculty at Vanderbilt University, where he was a key architect of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy, a national think tank for cultural policy and creativity. He also worked as deputy director and lecturer of sociology and public policy at the Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies at Princeton University.

Tepper holds a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and a doctorate in sociology from Princeton University.

Christopher D. Card has served as Hamilton's Vice President and Dean of Students since August 2022. He leads the staff of the Division of Student Life with a focus on student leadership and engagement, intellectual and personal growth, a safe living and learning environment, and community-building activities. Prior to joining Hamilton, Card served as vice president for Student Life at Lawrence University since 2017, where he was responsible for all aspects of student life, including residential life, dining, student wellness, spiritual and religious life, and the career center, among other duties. Card also worked in the Dean of Students office at Trinity College (CT) from 1998 to 2017, and as the Dean of Students for his last three years at the institution.

ROLE OF THE DEAN OF SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Dean will serve as an advisor, supporter, thought leader, and partner for the entire Hamilton community, inclusive of students, faculty, staff, administration, and stakeholders. Through providing meaningful and inclusive programming, guiding religious and spiritual exploration, and serving as a comforting presence in both crisis and celebration, the Dean will underscore Hamilton's commitment to engaging differences and critical thinking through religious and spiritual life. Additionally, the Dean will also possess the administrative ability to lead and develop staff, oversee budgetary responsibilities, and efficiently maintain resources while also developing methods to assess and enhance programming effectiveness. As spiritual and religious life is a much-engaged factor in the experience of many Hamilton students, the Dean will also proactively partner with colleagues in seeking opportunities to support further growth and expansion through fundraising and partnerships.

Currently, support for the Dean includes an administrative assistant, part-time chaplains and part-time chapel musicians. As the needs of spiritual and religious life at Hamilton as well as the resources available

continue to evolve, the Dean will be encouraged to increase efforts through additional staff support and efficiently increasing capacity.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN OF SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

Serve as a resource for spiritual and religious leadership, counsel, and strategic envisioning to the broader Hamilton community and beyond

The Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life will be an accessible and engaged presence leading the curation of resources, programming and support for the Hamilton community overall and in intentional relationship with the students and groups for whom religious and spiritual life are central. The Dean will serve as an anchoring presence during times of both campus celebration and crisis and will be a trusted advisor to and partner with campus leadership colleagues. The Dean will bring a thoughtful, inclusive approach to spiritual and religious leadership and provide empathic and wise spiritual counsel for students, staff, faculty, administration, and other campus partners. Additionally, the Dean will prioritize integrity and discretion during confidential, sensitive matters pertaining to members of the Hamilton community.

Prioritize an interfaith and multifaith approach that supports inclusivity and embraces diverse experiences, perspectives, and forms of expression

Hamilton College is committed to celebrating and supporting the breadth and depth of backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions reflected in its community. The Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life will embody this commitment by creating a welcoming space for all beliefs and identities, including those who are seeking ways to express and deepen their personal faith, those who are on a journey of exploration and discovery, and those who do not identify with a religious or spiritual tradition. The Dean will facilitate a robust programmatic calendar of holiday and holy day services and celebrations representing the diversity of the campus community. The Dean will also prioritize a sense of pastoral care and a willingness to serve as an accessible resource for all identities and practices. These efforts will require a multi-faith approach to spiritual life leadership as well as the ability to adapt to the diverse and ever-changing needs of the Hamilton community.

Provide robust support for student advising and leadership development

Hamilton College has a very active student body and encourages students to engage in leadership and community-building opportunities. The Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life will support students in these endeavors by providing meaningful leadership opportunities for students. The Dean will also serve as a trusted advisor for various student groups and provide guidance on best practices in an equitable manner, and will often collaborate with other offices, departments and organizations both within the Division of Student Life and across campus. The Dean will provide and or facilitate the provision of appropriate adult and professional oversight of student-led activities and programming and advisory support for student-

led groups. The successful candidate for this role will demonstrate a strong commitment to and understanding of best practices in student support, advising, mentoring, and leadership development.

Develop and maintain relationships, partnerships, and resources that will support Spiritual and Religious Life at Hamilton

The Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life will join Hamilton at a moment primed for growth and expansion. The spiritual and religious needs of the Hamilton community call for an increase in resources, staff support, and overall capacity. In concert with other campus leaders and administration, the Dean will actively seek and develop funding and partnerships to support current and future endeavors. This includes developing a known presence and relationship with Hamilton alumni and stakeholders as well as serving as an ambassador for Hamilton and its efforts. The Dean will also lead the development of a strategic plan as well as prioritize relationship building with on-campus partners that will guide the continued development of religious and spiritual life at Hamilton.

Develop current and future staff members through leadership, development, and support

The Dean will build support for Hamilton’s spiritual and religious needs by developing a team of spiritual and religious leaders that will serve the campus community both as a collective, as well as in their individual areas of expertise. As the needs of spiritual and religious life continue to evolve, these individuals will serve as trusted leaders and provide guidance and support to the campus community under the Dean’s leadership. The Dean will need to embody servant leadership by overseeing and delegating the work of the team while also serving alongside them. The Dean will prioritize creating a positive, inclusive, and supportive working environment through mentorship and ongoing professional development. The Dean will prioritize trust and intentional relationship-building while supporting the individual growth of each staff member and recruiting additional support as capacity increases.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life must have the spiritual depth, moral authority, intellectual curiosity, community building skills and strategic vision necessary to lead and evolve religious and spiritual life for Hamilton College. The Dean must possess a broad understanding of the world’s faith traditions, embracing a multifaith, interfaith and multicultural awareness and experience in supporting a diverse and multicultural community where a deep sense of belonging is a hallmark of success. The successful candidate will have expertise in an area relevant to religious, spiritual, and moral leadership; and administrative leadership experience in diverse, complex environments, ideally in a college or university setting.

While no single candidate will have every qualification, the search committee seeks candidates with a well-rounded combination of the following personal and professional abilities:

- An educational background in religious and/or spiritual leadership, preferably in the form of a terminal or advanced graduate degree;

- Excellent public speaking skills;
- A deep understanding of the educational value of a diverse community; a demonstrated track record of advancing equitable practices and enhancing inclusion; and an ability to bring groups and individuals to common ground across lines of difference, including religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and socio-economic status;
- Experience facilitating spiritual and religious life programming, dialogue, and services in an interfaith and/or multifaith context;
- A deep commitment to engage collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students—as well as the extended community of parents, alumni, community partners, and other stakeholders—and to respond effectively to their needs and concerns;
- Demonstrated capacity to communicate broadly across the Hamilton community, cultivate and sustain collegial relationships, and build unity around difficult and complex issues; be an active listener, facilitator, convener, and mediator;
- Proven administrative leadership competencies, with demonstrated ability to lead, mentor, and support staff and provide successful oversight of people, budget, and space;
- A strong track record of developing and implementing strategic plans and/or creative programming;
- The ability to work cooperatively and effectively as a member of the college’s Student Life leadership team;
- Proven ability to lead with equanimity, discretion, integrity, and a sense of responsibility.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated salary range for this role is \$120,000-140,000. The selected candidate will be expected to relocate to the Clinton, New York area.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. **For priority consideration, applications are encouraged by March 21, 2025.** Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/hamilton-college/dean-spiritual-and-religious-life>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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Hamilton College is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to creating an accessible, supportive environment and an educational experience that recognizes a wide array of experiences, backgrounds and viewpoints as integral components of academic excellence. Candidates who can contribute to those goals are encouraged to apply and identify their strengths in these areas.