



Search for the Associate Vice President for Health, Wellness, and Safety & Dean of Students  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida

## THE SEARCH

Florida State University (FSU) seeks an experienced and dedicated student-centered leader to serve as its Associate Vice President for Health, Wellness, & Safety and Dean of Students (AVP & Dean). The role of the AVP & Dean is unique, given the breadth and scale of responsibilities and the opportunity to lead a successful wellness and safety team that facilitates consistently exemplary and holistic care for students. This is an exciting time to join Florida State and the Division of Student Affairs as the institution continues its ascent towards academic and research preeminence and student success. This is an extraordinary opportunity for an accomplished innovator in student affairs who can carry on the momentum currently underway at Florida State.

FSU is a public research university founded in 1851 in Tallahassee, the state's capital. The University attracts students, faculty, and staff from all over the globe for its range of academic offerings and unique ability to create an intimate campus experience modeled in the liberal arts tradition. This is interdisciplinary, interconnected, and highly supportive. With over 44,000 students, generations of students and alumni recount the many avenues for engagement and community. Another unique point of pride for FSU, which continues to flourish, is the excellent graduation and retention rates, ranking among the top 10 nationally among all public universities in both categories. At Florida State, a nationally recognized collegiate best value, students and their families will find robust yet individualized support mechanisms to help students persist, do well, and be well.

Reporting to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA), the AVP & Dean manages a strong multigenerational team of more than 300 full-time employees across six departments, which are the Title IX Office, Counseling & Psychological Services, University Health Services, Campus Recreation, the Department of Student Support & Transitions, and the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards. Through programming, support and wellness services, campus spaces, the adjudication of policies, and crisis response, the AVP & Dean of Students and their team embody an unwavering support and commitment to students and their well-being and safety. The AVP & Dean is responsible for managing a \$34.7 million budget.

An active presence in the Florida State community, the next AVP & Dean will enthusiastically engage with and support students and is grounded in a holistic wellness approach. A consummate collaborator, the

AVP & Dean will be expected to be creative and strategic while swiftly and effectively responding to crises and other issues. To be successful, the AVP & Dean should be energetic, motivated to help students and staff and lead with excellent communication and interpersonal skills. This person will have a track record of creativity and sophisticated problem-solving at a large and complex institution, strong supervisory skills, decisive leadership, including during times of crisis, and the ability to coordinate resources and people to serve students effectively and efficiently.

Florida State University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Associate Vice President for Health, Wellness, and Safety & Dean of Students. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence, as noted at the end of the document.

## **FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Florida State University, established in 1851 in Tallahassee, has evolved from a small seminary into one of the nation's elite public research universities. Part of the 12-institution State University System (SUS) of Florida, FSU preserves, expands, and disseminates knowledge in the sciences, technology, arts, humanities, and professions while embracing a philosophy of learning strongly rooted in the traditions of the liberal arts and critical thinking. FSU's welcoming campus is located on the oldest continuous site of higher education in Florida, in a community that fosters free inquiry and embraces diversity, along with championship athletics, in a prime location in the heart of the state capital.

Florida State continues its remarkable trajectory of becoming among the nation's most entrepreneurial and innovative universities determined to transform the lives of students and shape the future of the state and society through exceptional teaching, research, creative activity, and service. One of the most unique aspects of FSU is its distinctive learning climate—one that places a premium on interdisciplinary inquiry and draws from the rich intellectual diversity of students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

While Florida State's beautiful main campus is in the state's capital, and a campus is also located in Panama City, Florida, the University is well represented around the state and the world with nearly 400,00 alumni. Academically, FSU is recognized for its breadth of programs, particularly in the arts, sciences, and engineering. It boasts notable research initiatives, particularly in fields like oceanography, business, and social sciences, and has garnered significant funding for projects addressing contemporary challenges. FSU's commitment to research is underscored by its designation as a Carnegie R1 institution, highlighting its status among the nation's top research universities. The University has over 50 years of experience in international education and is a nationally recognized leader in the field of study-abroad programs, with permanent study centers in London, Florence, Valencia, and Panama.

The University is also known for its student success as well as accomplishments in athletics and immense school pride from students and alumni. FSU's 17 residence halls are home to over 6,300 undergraduate residents. Approximately 85% of first-year students reside on campus. FSU is also a hub for the arts,

hosting the renowned FSU College of Motion Picture Arts, which has produced award-winning filmmakers and actors. The university also offers a wealth of performances, exhibitions, and events, enriching the cultural landscape of Tallahassee and beyond. Its commitment to the arts and humanities reflects a holistic approach to education, nurturing creativity alongside traditional academic pursuits.

Florida State is proudly recognized as a Preeminent University by the State of Florida. The state's Preeminence designation set the University on a path to becoming one of the top public universities in the nation. In this trailblazing path, FSU successfully completed its first-ever \$1 billion capital campaign, welcomed its most competitive academic class, launched innovative transfer pathways, grew graduate education offerings and research activity and became one of the most veteran-friendly public universities in the country.

Looking ahead, FSU is poised for continued success, all while upholding the traditions and history that create a small-college culture within a large university. The University is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of its 5-year [strategic plan](#). One of the five key strategic goals is ensuring student success on campus and beyond. FSU was recently recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the best values among public universities. Moreover, the University is nationally recognized for its outstanding graduation rates. More Florida State University students than ever are graduating in four years. As a result of careful and strategic investments over the past two decades and the campuswide work of dedicated staff and faculty, Florida State's four-year graduation rate, at 76%, is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the state of Florida and among the top 10 in the nation. Key to the success of this strategic initiative has been the investment in academic advising, support programs, and fostering the small college and liberal arts feel that so many students and alumni fondly laud as one of FSU's best aspects. What's even more impressive is that Florida State has significantly mitigated disparities in graduation and retention rates among its diverse undergraduate population, which includes nearly a third who are Pell Grant recipients and first-generation college students.

FSU's vibrant campus life is a key part of its appeal. With nearly 700 student organizations, including academic, cultural, and recreational groups, there's something for everyone. The University's student body is comprised of 44,597 students (73.5% undergraduate; 24.4% graduate; 2% unclassified) from every Florida county and over 130 countries, all while boasting a 96% first-year student retention rate and a 17:1 student-to-faculty ratio. With over 270 degree programs across 17 colleges and schools, FSU has a breadth of academic offerings, a culture of success, and a hunger for innovation that draws talented students, staff, and faculty and fuels its exciting trajectory.

## LEADERSHIP

[Richard McCullough](#) is the 16th president of Florida State University. Leading FSU since 2021, he brings more than 30 years of academic research and leadership experience to the role, as well as a commitment to innovation, entrepreneurship, diversity, and inclusion. Prior to joining FSU, McCullough had served as vice provost for research and professor of materials science and engineering at Harvard University since 2012. In this role, he oversaw the development, review, and implementation of strategies, planning, and

policies related to academic research. In addition, he led the Office of Foundation and Corporate Engagement and assisted in the oversight of more than 25 interdisciplinary institutes, centers, and initiatives across the university. As president, McCullough's major goals include expanding FSU's faculty and its research portfolio, as well as building new strategic initiatives to continue the university's incredible success with first-generation students.

[Amy Hecht](#) serves Florida State as the Vice President for Student Affairs. Prior to rejoining her alma mater in 2017 as the Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Hecht served in several leadership roles, including Vice President for Student Affairs at The College of New Jersey, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at Auburn University, the Associate Dean of Students at Temple University, and Assistant Director of Student Activities at Cabrini College. Dr. Hecht was recognized in 2023 with the Pillar of the Profession Award for her outstanding work by the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), the leading association for the advancement, health and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Dr. Hecht has also been recognized with the 2024 Scott Goodnight Award for Outstanding Performance as a Dean by NASPA. Dr. Hecht and the Division of Student Affairs report to President McCullough.

## **DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Florida State University's [Division of Student Affairs](#) empowers all students to achieve their full potential. The Division and its employees believe in the power of the student experience to develop graduates who positively impact the world. The work of the Division is guided by the values of community, student development, inclusivity, and well-being.

The Division is in its first year of a five-year [strategic plan](#). The plan's two strategic priorities are guiding the work of Student Affairs through this cycle. The first goal is to promote student success through student development for all students in the FSU community, including graduate and international students, as well as students at all campuses and international study centers. Key to this priority is promoting holistic health and wellness in all areas of student life. The second strategic priority is to ensure organizational success across all units of the Division through staff excellence, efficiency, and longevity and advancing the student affairs profession.

The Division of Student Affairs is comprised of [15 departments](#) and employs approximately 500 full-time employees. A defining characteristic of the Division, as well as the University's, is the strong and enduring culture of collaboration among employees and the unwavering support for students throughout their collegiate journey. The Division's employees, programs, and services are frequently [recognized nationally](#) for their achievements and contributions to the field of student affairs. A detailed overview of the Division and its departments is available [here](#).

## THE ROLE

[Reporting to the Vice President of Student Affairs](#) and a member of the VPSA's leadership team, the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs & Dean of Students leads a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to student health, wellness, and safety on behalf of the Division of Student Affairs, including both prevention and response strategies and expands high-impact engagement initiatives through collaborative efforts. The AVP & Dean serves a vital role in student advocacy, staff development, resource planning, crisis management, and student accountability. The AVP & Dean of Students also represents the VPSA and the Division in various settings and contexts and works closely with fellow colleagues reporting to the VPSA.

A critical campus leader and expert in student welfare, the AVP & Dean is responsible for interpreting and upholding federal, state, and [university policies](#). The AVP & Dean not only understand policies but also how they impact students and translate into student affairs practice. Vital to the AVP & Dean's success is establishing and sustaining a presence on campus and being an active member of the community. The AVP & Dean of Students is also an engaged leader in the University's crisis management efforts.

The AVP & Dean of Students provides visionary and strategic leadership for wrap-around and holistic care for students. The role oversees the following administrative units across six departments: Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Conduct & Community Standards, the Office of Title IX, the Department of Student Support & Transitions, University Health Services, the Center for Health Advocacy & Wellness (CHAW), Campus Recreation, the Office of Accessibility Services, Case Management, Victim Advocates, Withdrawal Services, and Investigations & Assessment. In total, the Associate Vice President & Dean of Students supervises 305 full-time employees (including six direct reports), 34 graduate assistants, and approximately 700 student employees. The AVP & Dean of Students is responsible for managing a \$34.7 million budget.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT & DEAN OF STUDENTS

A successful Associate Vice President for Health, Wellness, and Safety & Dean of Students will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

### **Provide collaborative and student-centered leadership focused on a culture of well-being**

Collaboration within the Division and across the institution are expected and vital characteristics of the next AVP & Dean of Students. A resource and asset to students and colleagues across the institution, the AVP & Dean should possess and utilize expert-level knowledge of higher education, student affairs, and the interconnectedness of their work with the rest of the University. They will be called upon to build strong relationships across diverse teams and stakeholders and effectively navigate complex organizational dynamics at a large public institution. The work and vision of the AVP & Dean must be inclusive of their portfolio's breadth of departments, offerings, and talents. Each department is led by

experts in their respective disciplines. Whether through health and counseling services, the adjudication of policy, supporting students through their first year and beyond, participating in exciting recreational activities, or providing case management, together with their team, the AVP & Dean are focused on strategies, resources, and interventions that support and develop students and their well-being.

The AVP & Dean will also join the University at a unique and momentous time in student affairs and higher education, both nationally and within the state of Florida. The AVP & Dean must be forward-thinking, thrive at times of uncertainty, and successfully manage change. This leader will be called upon to have a keen sense of the best practices, trends, and anticipated opportunities and challenges related to their portfolio, including but not limited to [freedom of speech and expression](#) and [Title IX](#). Not only must they be in tune with these matters and their sociopolitical contexts locally and nationally, but also work closely with institutional leadership and colleagues to adjust, translate, and operationalize policies and practices accordingly. The AVP & Dean also plays a vital role in training and supporting staff in these areas.

**Foster and maintain a vibrant and safe community for all students.**

The AVP & Dean will model skilled crisis leadership through responsiveness and guidance of others engaged in crisis response. Among other responsibilities, the Associate Vice President & Dean will need to be an active presence during crises, advise executive leadership, lead and prepare crisis responders, and serve on the university's behavioral intervention team. The AVP & Dean possesses expertise in matters of student affairs policy, procedures, and law, as well as experience in the strategic implementation of process and service improvements. This leader upholds institutional policies and due process and possesses the interpersonal skillset to effectively communicate and educate. They will apply their expertise in ways that are student-friendly and aligned with a holistic view of student wellness.

The AVP & Dean is also a proficient trainer and dedicated supporter of students and staff, especially in matters related to policy, safety, and crisis response. This leader must be skilled not just in responding directly to crisis but also in orchestrating response strategies, which often involve staff and campus colleagues. Relatedly, the AVP & Dean will deepen existing partnerships with key crisis response stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the FSU Police Department, the Office of the General Counsel, University Communications, the Office of Academic Affairs, Athletics, and fellow Student Affairs departments involved in student wellness and safety work.

**Serve as an advocate for students.**

The next AVP & Dean of Students will intuitively understand students and engage with them as part of their leadership approach. A visible and relatable presence will be requisite in keeping abreast of the campus culture and evolving student needs. The AVP & Dean must possess a desire, energy, and resilience to know and relate to all FSU students and advocate on their behalf. Students and their families frequently turn to the Dean for guidance, trust, and support. By being an engaged campus leader, the AVP & Dean can leverage their role as a division leader and consummate collaborator to inform, resolve, and otherwise

champion the voice of students. The Dean frequently engages students to articulate outcomes in matters related to accountability and policy, as well as mediates and advises students seeking guidance on matters related to wellness and safety. The AVP & Dean must serve as an advocate in ways that align with FSU's culture, mission, and policies, especially in providing students with the appropriate attention and support and ensuring the thorough resolution of inquiries and issues. Doing so is reflective of one of the ways FSU has been successful in making a large campus feel small and achieving nationally recognized success in on-time graduation.

**Implement a strategic vision that enhances the student experience.**

The AVP & Dean must preserve what makes FSU's Student Affairs successful and unique while creating a forward-looking vision consistent with current and future leading practices that best suit the University's needs. They will be an essential partner in executing the Division's ongoing strategic plan focused on student and organizational success. Frequently tasked with managing multiple priorities, they will work closely with their team and divisional colleagues towards implementing the vision for the future of student life at FSU. FSU's Division of Student Affairs is an environment where one can be innovative, and investments in innovations are possible. The AVP & Dean may also be called upon to facilitate broader institutional goals as well, specifically as they relate to student wellness, persistence, and success. The AVP & Dean must possess the ability to simultaneously manage multiple priorities and pivot accordingly. While much of the work of the Dean may gravitate towards responding to student issues and/or supporting the staff involved, the AVP & Dean must also be a strategic thinker who can often think ahead. Disciplined and focused, the AVP & Dean trusts and utilizes their team and can remain attentive to broader strategic work that enhances student and staff experiences. To be successful, they must facilitate authentic, intentional, and ongoing opportunities for dialogue with students, staff, and faculty. The outcome of their strategic work should be the co-creation with key stakeholders.

**Support and champion the development and success of a dedicated team of professionals**

The next Associate Vice President & Dean of Students will transition into an organizational culture of unwavering support for students and fellow colleagues, innovation across the disciplines represented in the portfolio, and swift and individualized responsiveness to crises and other student issues. This culture is made possible through the work of a remarkably talented team who often work in concert together. As an experienced supervisor accustomed to leading a large and multi-faceted team, the AVP & Dean will uphold and advance this culture and the staff that contribute to its success. The AVP & Dean cares about their team, advocates on their behalf, and works fervently to improve and sustain morale. Removing barriers and creating spaces for their team to do good work is strongly desired. Effective supervision in this role will require accessible and supportive leadership, transparency, and leaning on the expertise of their team. Not only will the AVP & Dean be expected to be strong communicator with those they work with, but also serve as a bridge and connector among their portfolio and the rest of the institution.



The AVP & Dean will also be called upon to facilitate the operational planning of their departments, paying particular attention to advocating for appropriately funded personnel and resources and advancing strategic goals that meet the dynamic and growing wellness and safety-related needs of students. The AVP & Dean will engage in the appropriate collaborative exercises, resource adjustments, and dialogue that ensures values-driven and innovative resource management. A developer, this leader will also empower a talented staff by encouraging them to set personal and professional growth targets, apply their expertise in ways that generate the most positive influence locally and nationally, and support their overall professional development.

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

FSU seeks in its Associate Vice President & Dean of Students an exceptional student-centered leader. The University seeks candidates who bring the following skills and experiences:

- A master's degree in higher education, student affairs, counseling, or relevant field is required. A doctorate or JD is preferred.
- A minimum of seven years of relevant full-time experience, with five years at a Director level or above;
- Experience leading one or more administrative units dedicated to student wellness, care, and safety;
- Proven student affairs leadership experience, preferably at a large public university;
- Demonstrated skills as a senior manager and supervisor with the ability to motivate and uphold staff performance, as well as mentor and support staff from a breadth of student affairs functional areas;
- A commitment and passion for students and their well-being, as well as involvement and expertise in the student affairs profession on matters related to student safety and wellness;
- Knowledge of the college student wellness landscape and best practices for intervention and education, as well as the ability to interpret and apply appropriate university policies, procedures, principles, and practices;
- Sincere engagement with students and the campus community; a strong, visible presence and active participation in a range of campus activities;
- Demonstrated success in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment;
- Ability to think critically, be intellectually curious, and identify opportunities for creative collaboration;
- Possess administrative acumen and able to provide direction in programmatic, budgetary, and operational functions;
- Proven ability to address crises and conflict with equanimity, discretion, empathy, and respect;
- The capacity to represent the University in various circumstances and settings and possess strong written and oral communication skills;
- Ability to strategically plan and serve as a catalyst for organizational change, cultivate a shared vision with others, and motivate others to transfer a vision into action;



- Facility in analyzing data to develop and assess programs;
- Highest degree of personal and professional integrity, resilient, and results-oriented;
- Adaptable, persistent, and resilient and able to function effectively in a complex environment and successfully work with all stakeholders within and outside of the institution;
- A consultative, collegial style and the ability to inspire trust in others;
- Knowledge of and ability to interpret and apply related federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations.

### **Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations**

Florida State University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students search committee in its identification and review of candidates. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications in strict confidence to:

Sean Farrell, Partner  
Ivan Ceballos, Senior Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/florida-state-university/associate-vice-president-health-wellness-and-safetydean>

*FSU is an Equal Opportunity/Access/Affirmative Action/Pro Disabled & Veteran Employer. FSU's Equal Opportunity Statement can be accessed [here](#).*