



Search for the Vice President for Student Affairs
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

THE SEARCH

Michigan State University (MSU) seeks a bold, strategic, and student-centered student affairs leader to serve as its next Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). This next VPSA will build a division that fully supports students by fostering a strong sense of belonging and aligning co-curricular experiences with academic and career aspirations. As one of the nation's largest institutions and a global research university, MSU is known for its commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. With a diverse student body and a wide array of opportunities to be engaged on campus, MSU offers students a dynamic learning environment and countless opportunities for growth and impact.

The VPSA will lead a newly reformed division dedicated to fostering student engagement and campus life. They will oversee key areas that ensure the Spartan experience is dynamic, supportive, and inclusive by collaborating across departments and divisions, including the Office of the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Student Success and Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, to integrate co-curricular activities with academic achievement. With a focus on student engagement and success, this new leader will work to strengthen a sense of belonging for all students while championing MSU's commitment to inclusive excellence.

The incoming VPSA will lead a talented and passionate team of student affairs professionals and build a best-in-class program for a transformative student experience. The VPSA is charged with creating a clear and executable vision for the division that is tied to MSU's overall strategic plan and will define short and long-term priorities. They will accomplish this through active collaboration with campus stakeholders and the leveraging of student spaces to promote engagement, belonging, and well-being. As a proven manager and leader with strong financial acumen, the VPSA will support their team and advocate for the resources needed to enhance the student experience.

MSU has engaged the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, in this recruitment effort. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed in confidence, as indicated at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY

Michigan State University is a top 100 global research university renowned in certain disciplines and well-positioned to lead in others. The University is a global leader in areas ranging from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) to the social sciences and humanities, with nuclear physics, plant and animal sciences, K-20 education, supply chain and logistics, and communication and media receiving sustained exemplary recognition. African history, organizational psychology, criminal justice, veterinary medicine, biomedical research, and a suite of environmental sciences are among the areas of national and international prominence. Other areas, such as mobility, entrepreneurship, digital humanities, and African American and African Studies are rapidly emerging as new threads of excellence. Additionally, the Student Affairs Administration program is consistently ranked the best in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.

Students

Michigan State is one of the nation's largest institutions, enrolling nearly 50,000 students, including 11,000 graduate and professional school students in 17 degree-granting colleges. There are over 510,000 living MSU alumni worldwide, with 286,000 living in the state of Michigan. Michigan State's students come from all 83 counties in Michigan, each of the 50 states, and more than 125 other countries. Students of color comprise 24.3 percent of the student body, and international students, 8.7 percent.

The MSU global commitment attracts students. Between eight and nine percent of the student body are international, and 27 percent of MSU students study abroad. The University is a particularly strong Peace Corps recruiter, ranking number six by the Peace Corps on its list of the top 25 volunteer-producing colleges and universities during the past 20 years. MSU has taken its land grant mission to the world.

The University boasts an [outstanding record](#) of students earning prestigious national and international scholarships. MSU also offers more than 275 education abroad programs in more than 60 countries on all continents. MSU's students come from 82 counties in Michigan, each of the 50 states, and more than 125 other countries. Students of color comprise 24.3 percent of the student body, and international students comprise 8.7 percent.

MSU has an energetic campus community with 1050 [registered student organizations](#), and one of the largest residential living communities in the nation. 97 percent of first-year students live on campus, and there is also a second-year on-campus living requirement. The residential living community is grouped into five neighborhoods that each offer social and wellness resources and support. In addition, MSU is a member of the Big Ten Athletic Conference. As a member of the Big Ten sports conference, it hosts 23 varsity squads: 11 intercollegiate sports for men and 12 intercollegiate sports for women. The Spartan

athletic tradition is strong, having won many championships and accolades. Among its finest accomplishments, MSU student-athletes enjoy a 92% graduation rate, nicely exceeding the average for the University.

Faculty and Staff

The University employs over 12,500 faculty and staff members and has an operating budget of \$3.2 billion and a \$3.58 billion endowment. The 5,632 MSU faculty and academic staff members are the driving force behind the institution's growing reputation as a national leader in scientific research and development. MSU scholars have received national and international recognition through membership in the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Education, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, as well as through prestigious awards from foundations including Dreyfus, Guggenheim, MacArthur, and Sloan. The MSU research enterprise has experienced significant growth over the past decade and now exceeds \$759 million in annual expenditures for research in food safety and security, human and animal health, energy, education, defense, international development, social and behavioral sciences, and digital humanities, among others.

Strategy

MSU's strategic plan, *Empowering Excellence, Advancing Equity and Expanding Impact*, was finalized and endorsed by the Board in September 2021. In addition to the strategic plan, the Office of the President charged the development of two additional, interconnected initiatives which serve to help chart a course for MSU's future: The [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Steering Committee Report and Plan](#), and the [Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct \(RVSM\) Plan](#). The University is in a period of refresh, and so the VPSA will have the opportunity to provide valuable insight and leadership on the forward momentum of these strategies.

Location

MSU sits on more than 5,200 acres of land and occupies more than 564 buildings, including 107 academic facilities that comprise 24.5 million square feet of space. The University owns approximately 21,000 additional acres throughout Michigan to support teaching and learning, research, outreach, and engagement.

East Lansing is an affordable and ideal place to live and work. It has the diversity and culture of a university town, combined with affordable housing, strong public schools, and accessible amenities. East Lansing has nearly 50,000 residents and is adjacent to Michigan's capital in neighboring Lansing. The campus is approximately ninety minutes from Detroit, and equidistant between Chicago and

Cleveland, OH. Michigan residents enjoy four distinct seasons, the country's longest freshwater coastline, and more than 11,000 inland lakes.

For more information about Michigan State University please visit www.msu.edu.

Leadership

Michigan State University's Board of Trustees are publicly elected and oversee the institution and its funds. Consisting of eight members, the board commits to upholding the mission of the university and each volunteer board member serves an eight-year term. For more information on the Board of Trustees, please visit: <https://trustees.msu.edu/>.

President Kevin M. Guskiewicz began as MSU's 22nd President in March of 2024. Guskiewicz is a nationally recognized expert on sport-related concussions and maintains an active research portfolio in neuroscience. Prior to joining Michigan State, he served as Chancellor at the University of North Carolina, where he also founded the Matthew Gfeller Sport-Related Traumatic Brain Injury Research Center and the Center for the Study of Retired Athletes. His notable achievements include receiving a MacArthur Fellowship in 2011 and influencing the NFL and NCAA to change kickoff rules, reducing concussions by 50%. Guskiewicz holds degrees in athletic training, exercise physiology, and sports medicine. He is originally from Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and lives with his wife Amy, and their four children.

THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

The newly reformed Division of Student Affairs has an expansive reach, working with over 1,000 registered student organizations, more than 5,500 fraternity and sorority members, and 17,000 on-campus students. Student Affairs will maintain its commitment to celebrating diversity in all its forms and promoting a culture of care and belonging by partnering across campus and integrating co-curricular initiatives with academic pursuits. The varied and vibrant units within the VPSA's portfolio are outlined below:

- Student-related Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
- Fraternity and Sorority Services
- MOSAIC Center for Education and Outreach
 - Women and Gender Equity
 - Religious, Spiritual, and Secular Identities
 - Global Justice
- Multicultural Center
- Office of Multicultural Enrichment and Advocacy
- Cultural and Academic Transitions
- Student Parent and Caregivers Resource Center
- Center for Veterans and Military Affiliated Student
- The Gender and Sexuality Campus Center
- Career Services Network

- Off Campus Life Resources
- Office of Spartan Experiences
 - Student Government Advising
 - Fall and Spring Welcome
 - Registered student organizations
- Office of Student Support and Accountability (OSSA)
 - Student Conduct
 - Care and Intervention Team
 - Medical Withdrawals
- MSU Union
- Alumni Memorial Chapel
- Impact 89 FM Radio
- University Health and Wellbeing (dual report)
- Recreational Sports and Fitness Services (dual report)
- Center for Community Engaged-Learning
- MSU College Advising Corps

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Reporting to the President, the Vice President for Student Affairs will work closely with their leadership team of three direct reports, two dual reports, and the 90 full-time employees in their unit to build a new Division of Student Affairs that leads student engagement and campus life activities and is closely aligned with student success initiatives. They will oversee a budget of \$20 million. The next VPSA will bring a track record of building and managing cohesive and vibrant teams and modeling a solutions-focused approach to navigating change. They will be a strong advocate for student engagement and well-being through the student lifecycle and provide targeted programming to support the entire study body, including undergraduate, graduate, transfer students, adult and continuing education students, and veterans. It is important that the VPSA be a visible and active presence on campus, opening lines of communication to faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders. This active presence will enhance a culture of responsiveness to student needs and ideas and serve as a model to staff within the Division. The VPSA will envision a future that redefines how student affairs holistically supports students by prioritizing a sense of belonging while connecting their co-curricular activities with their scholarship and career goals.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VPSA

Create a unified vision for the Division of Student Affairs that is strategic, bold, and student-focused

The VPSA is charged with leading the Division of Student Affairs as it works collaboratively to develop a campus culture that is strategic, bold, and student-focused. They should possess the leadership and management experience required to develop systems, structures, and policies conducive to the Division's success. The VPSA will advocate for students and provide new and creative ideas to better support the evolving student population at MSU. This Division will play a critical role in supporting student success by identifying programs and opportunities to reduce attrition, increase a sense of community, and help all

students thrive at MSU. The VPSA must ensure that the administrative functions within the Division are coordinated, efficient, and effectively serve a diverse student population. The VPSA must balance the strong campus traditions with a forward-looking vision informed by leading national student affairs practices.

Actively collaborate with campus stakeholders to enhance the experience of all MSU students

The VPSA will work passionately with other leaders on critical University priorities around enrollment and retention, diversity, safety, and well-being to help ensure that MSU continues to provide access to transformative educational opportunities for all students. There is an opportunity to reach beyond the boundaries of the Division and partner with the Office of the Provost, the Department of Athletics, and other senior administrators such as the Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer and the Vice President for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance. Partnerships will be an essential element of this VPSA's tenure as they look to elevate the student experience outside of the classroom. In all activities, the VPSA will empower Division staff, encourage teamwork and respect, and champion the well-being of all students. An approach that eliminates barriers to collaboration and communication and clear transparency is paramount. The VPSA will critically examine student leadership, engagement, and programmatic opportunities that provide real-world application of classroom learning and will spearhead new and innovative ideas for the integration of student and academic affairs, looking for synergies to enhance the student experience. The VPSA will be an advocate with a visible presence on and off campus, actively and authentically engaging the student community to build bridges and overcome obstacles to success across the University.

Astutely manage and advocate for financial resources across the division

The VPSA will be an astute financial steward, identifying potential revenue streams and efficient means to maximize effectiveness and impact in support of innovative ideas. They will work with the President, Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, and other senior leaders to develop a clear and transparent budget for the Division. The VPSA will be a leader with a multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of issues facing students and Division staff in the current higher education climate, and to that end will lead the ongoing assessment of current programs and services, facilities, and revenue sources. The VPSA will leverage the new multicultural center and student wellness facility to build a culture of belonging, inclusivity, and well-being. In addition, the VPSA will lead the assessment of current facilities needs, such as that of the MSU Student Union, and develop a strategy for addressing current and future needs of an evolving student community. The next VPSA must be an experienced financial manager as well as a strong advocate for resources – human, physical, and financial - demonstrating the University-wide value and impact of student affairs.

Empower and affirm a talented and dedicated team

The VPSA will inherit a deeply committed team of talented student affairs professionals with a passion for serving students. Through supportive leadership, clear purpose, and continual opportunities for education, development, and training, the VPSA will develop and lead a talented team of professionals. As an experienced student affairs professional, this individual will bring a strong commitment and knowledge of the national landscape of student development to the Division. The VPSA will also focus on the internal culture of Student Affairs, promoting connectedness and collaboration, a sense of appreciation, respect, and inclusion, strengthening morale and trust through listening, open communication, and empowering the team that is central to a transformative student experience.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

MSU seeks an experienced student affairs scholar-practitioner and innovative leader with the skills and experience to develop a bold, strategic, and student-focused vision for the Division of Student Affairs. An advanced degree is strongly preferred, along with demonstrated progressive administrative and leadership experience directly related to student affairs. While no one person will embody all of the following, the successful VPSA candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- A proactive approach to redefining what the future of student affairs could be and the willingness to take risks to effect change;
- A record of success as an administratively strong, innovative, and collaborative leader in a fast-growing and complex organization;
- A demonstrated commitment to and experience with inclusive excellence as applied to higher education and student affairs;
- Demonstrated effectiveness and competency in the development and execution of strategic and operational plans that require coordination and collaboration across internal departments and external functions;
- The ability to establish a welcoming and inclusive presence as a visible, active, and responsive leader;
- An interpersonal style that fosters collaboration, high levels of collegiality, and meaningful relationships with colleagues and staff;
- An understanding of the resources necessary to provide a campus experience that supports the intellectual growth, physical and mental health and well-being, and diverse identities and experiences of students;
- The ability to inspire, build, lead, motivate, and provide vision to staff while leading within a complex organizational structure;

- Deep knowledge of current best practices and trends in student affairs and higher education with a strategic lens and affinity for change and continuous improvement through the use of data, learning, and program outcomes;
- An understanding of the land grant mission of MSU and a commitment to the connected values including broad access to higher education;
- Proven ability to build and maintain effective partnerships and work collaboratively with campus leaders across a complex university; of particular importance is experience implementing initiatives, programs, and structures that address retention and student success;
- Strong business acumen and a proven track record of managing a sizeable team;
- Demonstrated successful stewardship of physical, financial, and human resources;
- A high degree of character and integrity; and
- A powerful commitment to the mission, vision, and values of public higher education.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Michigan State University has retained the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. All applications, nominations, referrals, and inquiries should be sent in confidence to:

Rebecca Kennedy, *Partner (she/her)*

Keight Tucker Kennedy, *Partner (she/her)*

Melissa DePretto Behan, *Senior Associate (she/her)*

Cortnee Bollard, *Senior Search Coordinator (they/them)*

Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/michigan-state-university/vice-president-student-affairs>

Michigan State University is committed to cultivating a safe and inclusive campus community characterized by caring and respect for others. Michigan State University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

As an institution of higher learning, Michigan State University is committed to providing a safe environment for its students, faculty, and staff in support of its educational mission. With this commitment, the University will conduct a professional misconduct review of all individuals seeking employment in executive management and academic management positions (e.g., President, Provost, Vice President, Vice Provost, Deans, etc.)

A professional misconduct review is a prerequisite for all individuals to be selected for this position. Interviewees will be asked to disclose whether they are subject to any pending investigation, findings or sanctions related to professional misconduct. Professional misconduct includes misconduct related to a person's employment, including, but not limited to, theft, embezzlement, research integrity, discrimination, or harassment under civil rights laws and policies, including protected identity

harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct (sexual assault, sexual exploitation, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, etc.), and retaliation. At the interview stage, candidates will also be asked to sign an authorization and release, which authorizes the University to contact the candidate's current and former employers, for a period of 7 years prior to the date of application, related to any pending investigations, findings of responsibility and/or sanctions related to professional misconduct. Although the declaration and authorization will be signed at the interview stage, the University will not reach out to the current and former employers until the semi-finalist candidates are identified for on campus interviews but before a formal offer of employment is made by the University.

The existence of professional misconduct history does not automatically exclude a candidate from employment. The University will assess the information, including any information provided by the candidate, in determining whether the professional misconduct history is compatible with the position. The University may decline to hire a candidate based on the professional misconduct review. All records obtained from external employers will be kept in a secure location, separate from personnel files. If an applicant fails to sign the authorization and release, the application will be deemed incomplete and will be considered withdrawn.

We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan's twelve federally recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.