



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Search for the Dean, Emerging School of Public Health
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

THE SEARCH

Wayne State University (Wayne State, WSU, or the university) seeks a visionary and collaborative leader to serve as the inaugural dean of its new School of Public Health (SPH or the school). Wayne State stands as Michigan's premier urban research institution, offering more than 375 academic programs across 13 schools and colleges—soon to include the new SPH—and serving over 24,000 students from across the U.S. and 70 countries. As a top 100 public university and a national leader in economic and social mobility, Wayne State is recognized for its commitment to academic excellence and innovation. WSU is one of only four universities in Michigan to receive the Carnegie Classification of Institution of Higher Education's classification of doctoral university: very high research activity. Wayne State's unique partnership with its home city of Detroit, a city known for its creative innovations and resilient spirit, represents a model for how a university and its community can advance the life and health of all together, and is evidenced by WSU's decade of recognition with the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement.

Wayne State is establishing a new School of Public Health to address the urgent and persistent public health challenges facing Detroit, Southeast Michigan, and the nation. The school will build on the university's longstanding commitment to urban health and community engagement. The SPH will unify existing public health programs and faculty across multiple colleges and departments at Wayne State. It will be designed as a school that drives pragmatic and impactful community-based change while advancing interdisciplinary research aligned with MPH and PhD programs. With one of the largest undergraduate public health programs in the country, and a robust portfolio of public health research already underway, Wayne State's SPH will serve as a hub for scholarship, education, and service.

The inaugural dean will have a unique opportunity to launch the new SPH from the ground up, guided by the foundational work of the Public Health Executive Committee and 10 working groups composed of nearly 100 individuals focused on topics including accreditation, research, community engagement, and

more. This leader will bring together existing public health programs, faculty, staff, and students to create an organizational structure and culture that leverages current strengths and supports the school's goals—including accreditation—and long-term success. The dean will lead efforts to embed the SPH in the Detroit community, the State of Michigan, and beyond; develop strong partnerships with health systems and community organizations; and establish the school as a national model for urban public health innovation. Joining a collaborative university and health sciences enterprise, the dean will contribute to advancing interprofessional education, translational research, and health equity. The ideal candidate will bring significant academic leadership experience, deep knowledge of public health education, research, and practice, along with the vision, adaptability, and relationship-building skills needed to launch and grow a mission-driven school.

Wayne State University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Confidential inquiries, nominations and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

EMERGING SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

Public health at Wayne State currently spans multiple colleges, departments, and centers. The Department of Public Health, currently in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), offers the State of Michigan's largest undergraduate public health program, serving a predominantly in-state student population. The Master of Public Health (MPH) program, accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), is currently housed in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health Sciences within the School of Medicine (SOM), and currently includes concentrations in Public Health Practice and Population Health Analytics. A Bridge Graduate Certificate in Public Health further supports foundational training in epidemiology, biostatistics, and the social determinants of health.

In addition to these core programs, Wayne State hosts a wide array of health-related academic offerings and research initiatives that include bachelor's, master's, and PhD programs in Nutrition and Food Science (CLAS), Community Health Education (College of Education), Environmental Engineering (College of Engineering), and the Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Faculty across these units lead nationally competitive, extramurally funded research and maintain interdisciplinary collaborations with institutions around the world, contributing to global public health teaching, scholarship, and service.

The SPH curriculum will emphasize experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and real-world impact. Students will engage in field-based practicum experiences, community health interventions, and applied research from the outset of their training. Signature components will include partnerships with local community-based organizations, nonprofits, health departments, and healthcare systems; field-based practicum experiences; and opportunities to contribute to prevention-forward policy initiatives. The school's interventional ethos will ensure that students are not only observers of public health challenges but active participants in addressing them.

Based on the work of the Public Health Executive Committee and its work groups, three proposed areas of concentration have been identified to harness and leverage current university faculty strengths and catalyze MPH and PhD programs: Community Health, Environmental Health, and Population Health Analytics. The SPH's current proposed organizational structure is intentionally nimble, scalable, and dynamic, and it will remain flexible, allowing the inaugural dean to shape its structure, leadership team, and strategic direction. Faculty will be drawn from across the university, with opportunities for primary, secondary, and adjunct appointments. A renovated Shaver Hall is proposed as the school's future home, and the SPH is expected to reach financial sustainability in approximately five years based on tuition revenue, programmatic enhancements, and strategic enrollment growth.

For more information, visit [Wayne State's Public Health Planning page](#).

ROLE OF THE DEAN

Reporting to the senior vice president for health affairs, the inaugural dean will serve as the chief academic and administrative leader of Wayne State University's emerging School of Public Health. As the founding dean, they will lead the integration of existing public health programs and faculty across multiple colleges and departments, creating a unified and collaborative academic home. They will provide strategic vision and operational leadership to establish the SPH's identity and structure, shape its academic programs, recruit and support its faculty and staff, secure resources to ensure sustainability and growth, and build a culture rooted in research excellence, community engagement, student success, and inclusive public health practice.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

Define and build a distinctive urban, intervention-focused school of public health

The inaugural dean will establish a new SPH that is intentionally designed as an innovative, intervention-focused institution, one that goes beyond traditional research to actively engage with the community through direct public health service partnership. The dean will lead efforts to embed this mission into every aspect of the school's identity, ensuring it serves as a true partner to its community. By fostering strong relationships with regional healthcare partners and community stakeholders from day one, the dean will position the SPH as a vital force for improving population health outcomes in Detroit, the State of Michigan, the nation, and beyond, while also advancing cutting-edge research and education tailored to an urban environment.

Foster deep community engagement and strong healthcare partnerships across Detroit and beyond

The inaugural dean will be instrumental in cultivating and expanding meaningful, sustained partnerships with the region's communities and healthcare systems. The dean must ensure that community engagement is not only a value but a core operational practice, integrating community voices into

program design, research priorities, and student training from the outset. This includes strengthening and deepening ties with key healthcare partners such as regional health systems, positioning the SPH as a trusted and collaborative partner in improving public health outcomes. Beyond Detroit, the dean will advocate effectively at the state, national, and global levels, leveraging relationships with various agencies, government officials, and policymakers to secure support and funding for the school's initiatives.

Drive research excellence aligned with MPH concentrations and emerging programs

An extensive amount of public health related research is already happening at Wayne State. The SPH has the potential to rank among the top public health schools nationally by aligning these efforts under a single umbrella in a collaborative manner. The inaugural dean will be expected to support, synergize, and expand these efforts by championing a strong research agenda and guiding the development of PhD programs within the new SPH. This includes recruiting, supporting, and retaining high-caliber faculty, fostering an environment conducive to securing competitive external funding, and promoting interdisciplinary and community-based research. The dean will also ensure that research activities align with the school's mission—translating evidence into practical solutions that address urgent public health challenges.

Foster collaborative partnerships across Wayne State to advance the school's mission

The inaugural dean will play a critical role in fostering partnerships across Wayne State's diverse academic units and administrative offices to advance the SPH's mission. The dean must skillfully navigate internal dynamics and build bridges that unite groups around a shared vision. This includes working closely with other deans, department chairs, and university leadership to align goals and promote a culture of transparency and mutual support. By cultivating strong relationships and encouraging interdisciplinary teamwork, the dean will help create a cohesive, integrated school that leverages the full strengths of Wayne State's faculty and programs to address urban public health challenges effectively.

Lead the design and implementation of an adaptive organizational structure

The inaugural dean will have significant freedom to design an organizational structure that best supports the SPH's mission and growth and aligns with the school's focus and community engagement priorities. The dean will determine the departmental configurations, administrative roles, and faculty hiring strategies, ensuring alignment with the undergraduate degree program, core MPH concentrations, and specialized PhD programs. Central to this work will be recruiting and developing a high-performing leadership team capable of managing rapid growth and guiding the SPH through accreditation processes. Equally critical will be the dean's ability to unite diverse faculty drawn from multiple units across the university. Both visionary and pragmatic, the ideal candidate will be capable of navigating internal dynamics while building a cohesive, research-intensive, and student-centered school.

Secure sustainable funding through enrollment growth, philanthropy, and strategic partnerships

The inaugural dean will strategically establish a strong financial foundation to support the SPH's long-term sustainability. This includes developing strategies to increase tuition revenue through targeted enrollment growth across undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs while maintaining accessibility for the community it serves. The dean will also play a critical role in cultivating philanthropic support by engaging donors, alumni, and community partners to build an endowment that can provide stable resources beyond tuition. Additionally, forging strategic partnerships with local health systems, government agencies, and private sector stakeholders will be essential to diversify funding streams, build a pipeline of students, and enhance the school's capacity for impactful research and community interventions.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate for dean will be a visionary, collaborative, and mission-driven leader with a deep commitment to academic excellence and community engagement. They will bring a strong record of scholarship and leadership in public health, along with the strategic, interpersonal, and operational skills needed to build a new school. To ensure the school's success, the inaugural dean will demonstrate many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- An earned doctorate or terminal degree in public health or a related discipline, and a scholarly record meriting appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure at Wayne State University
- Demonstrated experience in public health program development, accreditation, and faculty recruitment and retention
- A strong commitment to student access, success, and experiential learning, with evidence supporting enrollment growth, retention, and career readiness
- Experience unifying diverse faculty and staff around a shared vision
- Demonstrated experience leading in times of change
- A deep understanding of urban public health challenges and a demonstrated commitment to community-based practice, research, and service
- Proven ability to cultivate and sustain partnerships with community-based organizations, nonprofits, public health departments, and healthcare systems
- Experience securing external funding through grants, philanthropy, and strategic partnerships; familiarity with budget development and transparent fiscal management
- A collaborative leadership style with the ability to build trust, navigate complex institutional structures, and foster a culture of inclusion and mutual respect
- Experience working effectively within a unionized academic environment and in alignment with shared governance principles
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage diverse internal and external audiences

- Strategic thinking and problem-solving skills, with the ability to anticipate challenges, adapt to change, and implement innovative solutions
- A passion for public health education and a commitment to building a school that is “in, with, and for Detroit”

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Wayne 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:

Amy Segal, Partner

Kelly McLaughlin, Managing Associate

Olivia McVicker, Managing Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/wayne-state-university-school-public-health/dean>

Wayne State University is an equal opportunity employer. No person will be discriminated against or harassed in employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status, arrest record, height, weight, sexual orientation, qualified Vietnam era veterans, qualified special disabled veterans, recently separated veterans and other protects veterans, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal or state law.

Isaacson, Miller, and Wayne State University are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodation.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Wayne State University. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Wayne State University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

APPENDIX

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Located in Midtown Detroit, Wayne State University was established in 1868 and has grown into one of the nation's premier urban research universities. Wayne State was originally founded as the Detroit Medical College and has evolved to become a comprehensive university offering a broad spectrum of disciplines. Wayne State's mission emphasizes access to a high-quality education, advancement of knowledge through research, and community engagement. The University is strongly committed to educational access, urban revitalization, and serving first-generation and underrepresented student populations.

Wayne State is home to more than 24,000 students and is the third-largest among Michigan's 15 public universities and one of the 50 largest in the nation. The University offers a vibrant student life with over 400 student organizations, NCAA Division II athletics (competing as the Warriors), student media, Greek life, and cultural events. The students at Wayne State experience an academically rigorous and community-centered university. The students benefit from real-world learning and opportunities to connect with and throughout the city of Detroit.

Wayne State is Detroit's eleventh-largest employer, with more than 8,500 regular employees and more than 2,000 student employees. The University has 2,701 faculty members - of whom 1,729 are full-time - and nearly 5,000 staff members. Approximately two-thirds of faculty and staff are represented by one of the 13 unions on campus. Wayne State has over 300,000 alumni spread throughout the country and the world, of whom about 75% live in Michigan.

Academics and Research

WSU offers over 375 academic programs through 13 schools and colleges:

- [Mike Ilitch School of Business](#)
- [College of Education](#)
- [James and Patricia Anderson College of Engineering](#)
- [College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Irvin D. Reid Honors College](#)
- [School of Information Sciences](#)
- [College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)
- [Law School](#)
- [School of Medicine](#)
- [College of Nursing](#)
- [Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences](#)
- [School of Social Work](#)

The new School of Public Health is in the process of being developed, with the goal to gain full accreditation for the new school in spring 2028.

Wayne State is classified as an R1: Doctoral University by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, placing it among the nation's top research universities. The University is a leading research institution, especially in health sciences, urban studies, and automotive and manufacturing technologies. Wayne State had a total of \$294.3 million in research expenditures in the 2024 academic year, an increase of 17% over the previous year. Wayne State plays a key role in the [Research Universities for Michigan \(RU4M\)](#) which is a collaboration with the University of Michigan, Michigan Technological University, and Michigan State University to drive innovation and economic development in the state and generates 90% of statewide research. Underscoring its commitment to the community, Wayne State is also one of only 18 urban serving universities with both the Carnegie R1 classification and the Community Engagement classification.

Strategic Plan

Wayne State's [2022-27 strategic plan, "Our Moment in Time,"](#) has served as a strong foundation for the University's vision and goals since its adoption in 2022. It remains a vibrant framework guiding Wayne State's ongoing efforts, even as the University has already achieved some of the original goals, including reaching the national benchmark, 60% six-year undergraduate graduation rate. Wayne State continues to evaluate best practices and sequencing as it reviews and refreshes the strategic plan during 2025-26 and prepares for the launch of the public phase of a new comprehensive fundraising campaign in fall 2026.

Location

Wayne State's 200-acre urban campus is located in the heart of Midtown Detroit—one of the nation's fastest-growing neighborhoods and a vibrant cultural hub that draws over 2.5 million visitors annually. Just steps from world-renowned institutions like the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Public Library, and Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the campus blends historic architecture with cutting-edge facilities. Detroit's rich musical legacy—home to Motown, Aretha Franklin, and Eminem—continues to thrive through live music venues and festivals like the Detroit Jazz Festival. As a global city on an international border, Detroit is a center of innovation and industry, housing major health care systems, multinational corporations, and a dynamic startup and tech scene. With its celebrated arts, diverse communities, and nationally acclaimed riverfront, Detroit offers an energetic, welcoming environment for leaders ready to shape the future.