



# Clarkson™

Vice President for Human Resources  
Clarkson University  
Potsdam, New York

*"As I came to know the Clarkson community, I was impressed by each person's palpable commitment to this university. Everywhere I looked, I saw a spark in people's eyes and the talent to ignite it. Clarkson is a bold, yet, humble community learning together and tackling the world's challenges."*

*– President Michelle B. Larson*

## THE SEARCH

Clarkson University seeks a collaborative and results-oriented change leader to serve as its next Vice President for Human Resources (VPHR). This is a tremendous opportunity for a seasoned, strategic human resource leader to galvanize the campus community and maximize the potential of all its members. The new VPHR will be a transformational leader of both people and culture, dedicated to creating optimal working environments and nurturing interconnected systems and policies for all Clarkson employees. This is a time of transition for both the university and the Human Resources (HR) division, and the successful candidate will have the opportunity to work alongside a new, inspirational president to enact positive change and lasting impact at Clarkson.

Clarkson is a private, national, STEM-focused research university that is a leader in technological education. At a time when higher education is focused on student success, Clarkson's value proposition is to provide students with the most relevant STEM education and coveted skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a personalized and supportive environment. The "Clarkson Experience" is a unique, hands-on approach to "learning and doing" that drives the success of Clarkson's graduates. The university is home to 3,700 students and over 700 faculty and staff.

The VPHR is expected to be a true thought partner to the president and senior leadership, an inclusive institutional leader, a collaborative business partner, and an excellent manager. They manage a large and complex HR division of approximately 26 employees with oversight of human resources operations, employee relations, talent acquisition, training, benefits, payroll, environmental health and safety, and campus safety and security. The successful candidate will be energized by Clarkson's mission and the opportunity to help the university reach its full potential as an efficient, innovative, and supportive employer of choice. This is an outstanding opportunity for a results-driven leader to foster an

environment, both within the HR division and across the university, where employees feel valued and aligned around a culture of operational excellence. The VPHR will bring a proven record of positive change management and a forward-looking approach to HR, responsive to the evolving landscape of higher education. They will help the university transform for the future in a way that is healthy, trustworthy, and anchored in Clarkson's values.

Clarkson has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of its next VPHR. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT CLARKSON

Founded in 1896 to honor Thomas S. Clarkson, a pioneering entrepreneur and humanitarian, Clarkson today is a private, national STEM-focused research university that is a leader in technological education and sustainable development through teaching, research, scholarship, outreach, and innovation. The university is home to over 3,700 students from 62 countries enrolled in seven schools and institutes, including the David D. Reh School of Business, the Wallace H. Coulter School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the Earl R. and Barbara D. Lewis School of Health and Life Sciences, the Institute for a Sustainable Environment, the Institute for STEM Education, the Graduate School, and the Honors Program. Clarkson's rigorous academic programs emphasize hands-on learning, industry engagement, and entrepreneurship. Through its *Signature Student Experience* initiative, students engage in real-world problem-solving, research projects, internships, co-ops, service-learning, and study abroad opportunities. Clarkson is a top-tier research institution, classified as a *Carnegie R2: Doctoral University, High Research Activity*. Signature portfolios of research and scholarship are internationally known in healthy global solutions, computational and data-enabled discovery, advanced materials development, STEM and entrepreneurial education, sustainability, and next-generation medicine and healthcare. In addition to academics, Clarkson's outstanding athletic facilities, a championship Division 1 hockey program, and competitive Division 3 athletics attract top student-athletes and many local, loyal fans to campus.

Clarkson is deeply committed to promoting an inclusive community that values and builds upon students' experiences to promote their personal growth and upward mobility and contribute to economic development across New York State and beyond. An excellent return on investment, these experiences give Clarkson graduates an edge in the job market with 99% of graduates placed in careers, graduate schools, or entrepreneurial ventures within six months of graduation. Additionally, Clarkson graduates earn salaries that are among the top 2% in the nation, and one in five alumni leads as a CEO, senior executive, or owner of a company.

The university employs over 700 faculty and staff who are integral members of the Clarkson community and support the critical academic, research, co-curricular, and business operations of the institution. Many are alumni or second-generation Clarkson employees, underscoring the university's role as a major local employer and the dedication and passion of its staff. They are all important partners in the educational mission and tight-knit community.

---

For more information about Clarkson University, please visit: <https://clarkson.edu/>.

## Leadership

On April 1, 2025, [Dr. Michelle B. Larson](#) became the 19<sup>th</sup> president of Clarkson University, marking a historic moment in the institution's 128-year history. A physicist by training, Dr. Larson brings a remarkable blend of academic and nonprofit business leadership expertise, all rooted in her deep commitment to the intersection of STEM and higher education. Prior to Clarkson, Dr. Larson was President and CEO of the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, managed a geographically distributed cosmic ray experiment at Caltech, was Deputy Director of a National Science Foundation Physics Frontier Center on Gravitational Waves at Penn State, and developed her executive leadership skills as Vice Provost at Utah State University. A native of Alaska, she holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD in physics, all from Montana State University. Dr. Larson is eager to champion and support Clarkson's leaders and innovators who are changing the world, reflecting her vision to maintain Clarkson's humble core while forging a bold path forward for the university.

## ROLE OF THE VPHR

The Vice President for Human Resources is the chief human resources officer at Clarkson and oversees the implementation, administration, and ongoing assessment of a comprehensive human resources program. They lead a core team of five direct reports and oversee a division with 26 total staff across operations, employee relations, talent acquisition, training, benefits, payroll, environmental health and safety, and campus safety and security functions. With a small number of employees represented by a union, experience in negotiating and managing labor relationships is a plus.

Reporting directly to President Larson, the VPHR will serve as an internal consultant, thought partner, and collaborative leader across the university. As both a strategic and tactical partner to senior leadership, the successful candidate will be a critical resource for the university community and will build and develop a proactive, innovative, and collaborative human resources unit that recruits, compensates, retains, and develops a highly talented and engaged workforce. Consistent with Clarkson's values, the VPHR will advance equity-centered human resources processes, policies, and initiatives and communicate the interconnectedness of employee and student experiences with organizational excellence. They will ensure compliance with local, state, and federal employment-related policies through their responsibility and strategic collaboration with the university's Office of General Counsel.

To be successful, the VPHR will bring the contemporary expertise in all matters related to human resources to be attuned and responsive to the evolving landscape of higher education today. The VPHR will make sound assessments and incisive decisions and create short- and long-term solutions to complex organizational challenges.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VPHR

More than an expert HR function head, Clarkson seeks a new VPHR in the mold of an HR executive partner, able to lead both successful teams and systems oriented toward operational excellence, efficiency, and people-centric leadership. To best serve Clarkson into the future, the successful next Vice President for Human Resources must be prepared to address the following opportunities and challenges:

### **Articulate and advance a comprehensive, sophisticated, and forward-looking vision and strategy for Human Resources at Clarkson**

Upon joining Clarkson, the VPHR will provide a vision and actionable strategy that ensures HR services and programming are proactive and strategic, as well as focused on problem-solving to best support Clarkson's employee workforce. The VPHR is expected to plan and implement clear, multi-year goals and objectives for their division to advance this vision, the university mission, and contribute to larger, institutional transformation initiatives. By leveraging change management expertise, and in tandem with senior leadership, the VPHR will devise and create best practice systems and teams that result in strength across a number of metrics, including diversity, retention, and employee satisfaction.

### **Serve as an institutionally-minded leader and thought partner to the president and senior leadership**

As one of the first cabinet-level hires of a new administration, the VPHR will serve as a key thought leader and partner to President Larson as she assesses Clarkson's current needs and plans for its future. This is an extraordinary opportunity to have an outsized impact as part of a period of transformation at Clarkson. The VPHR will be a highly visible member of the Clarkson community, engaged across campus, and seen as a valuable resource and trusted collaborator on organizational development, talent development, risk mitigation, and strategic initiatives. They must build strong, synergistic relationships at all levels of the university community to best support all of Clarkson and successfully manage and advance change.

### **With a keen customer-service and solutions-oriented ethic, foster strong partnerships and collaboration with diverse campus stakeholders**

Clarkson is eager for a new VPHR to provide visionary and stable leadership to reestablish HR as a strategic and proactive partner to the university's workforce. The VPHR will be expected to build and cultivate a team that inspires trust through a strong customer-service orientation. With success, the HR team will act as subject-matter expert advisors to all constituents, delivering value through consulting, coaching, creative problem-solving, and proactive interventions to ensure staff and faculty feel valued and receive the best services possible.

### **Develop and support an efficient and effective Human Resources team**

In addition to the highly-matrixed and outward-facing role of the VPHR, they must also build and support a cohesive HR team. Through inspirational leadership and excellent managerial skills, the VPHR will cultivate an internal team culture and positive mindset predicated on mutual respect, generosity, collaboration, and continuous improvement. In service of breaking down operational siloes, the VPHR will

advance a vision for the division that unifies the team around common goals. The VPHR will invest in the professional development, training, and mentoring needed for the HR staff to be challenged and supported to fulfill new expectations around best practices and adapt to new strategies regularly.

**Lead HR in crafting, streamlining, updating, and implementing processes, policies, and systems that promote efficiency, consistency, compliance, and creativity where possible**

The VPHR will encourage the continuous evaluation of HR policies, processes, and systems to ensure consistent and appropriate standards while also allowing flexibility to meet the unique needs and goals of different areas of the organization. This will include developing and overseeing total compensation strategy, policies, structure, and philosophy, as well as the appropriate evaluation and promotional processes and equity structures to align with best practices. The VPHR will ensure vigilant compliance is achieved, as well as adherence to all state and federal laws. The VPHR will also ensure the team can fully leverage technology, investing where needed, for the efficient design and delivery of services, especially for the generation and management of high-integrity data and data reporting. Through this work, they will champion data-driven decision-making and human resources processes that allow for less transactional processes, which will result in a more consultative human resources approach.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- Significant prior, progressively responsible experience as a human resources generalist, manager, and leader;
- A successful track record of leading, implementing, and communicating large-scale change management and HR transformation initiatives in a complex organization;
- Confident decision-making skills with a transparent, collaborative, and decisive leadership style and experience making difficult decisions;
- A sophisticated understanding of contemporary HR best practices, including expertise in employment law, policies and practices, equitable and inclusive recruitment and retention, workforce development, succession planning, compensation and benefits, labor relations, risk management, etc.;
- Demonstrated success as an inclusive people leader with the capacity to build, coalesce, develop, and mentor a diverse team;
- Excellent communication and diplomacy skills, a strong customer service orientation, and a record of partnership and collaboration across a range of groups;
- Superb problem-solving and critical thinking skills;
- Personal integrity and ethics of the highest degree with superior professionalism;
- A bachelor's degree is required, preferably in a related field; an advanced degree is strongly preferred;

- SPHR or SHRM-SCP certification preferred; additional applicable professional certifications may be considered a plus; and
- Experience with higher education clients and/or experience working in an institution of higher education is preferred.

## COMPENSATION

The anticipated salary range for this position is \$175,000 to \$225,000 annually. Clarkson University provides this salary as a good faith estimate of the starting pay range considering factors such as, but not limited to, the scope and responsibilities of the position and a candidate's work experience and education. In addition to the salary offered, Clarkson offers a competitive total rewards package, including potential support for continued, selective internal and external professional development opportunities to maintain national certifications.

## LOCATION

As the chief people officer of the university, the VPHR position is expected to be full-time, in-person and based on Clarkson's main campus in Potsdam in New York's North Country. The main campus and additional graduate programs and research satellites form a corridor that follows the Hudson River from Saranac Lake to Schenectady in the Capital Region to Beacon just north of New York City. The main Potsdam campus is situated on the historic 640-acre wooded homestead of the Clarkson family in the foothills of Adirondack Park. With roughly 15,000+ year-round residents, the Village of Potsdam is nestled along the Raquette River in the heart of St. Lawrence County. With three other universities in the immediate region (St. Lawrence University, SUNY Potsdam, and SUNY Canton), Potsdam is truly "a college town." It is home to an active downtown corridor, musical and other cultural events, as well as truly outstanding outdoor recreational outlets.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with letters of interest should be sent in confidence via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/clarkson-university/vice-president-human-resources>.

Andy Lee, Managing Partner  
Elizabeth Weithman, Managing Associate  
Madeline Fitzpatrick, Managing Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

*An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, Clarkson actively seeks and encourages applications from minorities, women, and people with disabilities. All offers of employment are subject to the applicant successfully passing a background check (including, but not limited to, employment verification, educational and other credential verification, and criminal records).*