



Director of Benefits and Wellness  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, New York

## THE SEARCH

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) seeks an innovative, creative, experienced professional to serve as the next Director of Benefits and Wellness to lead the employee benefits and wellness function for approximately 4,000 faculty and staff. The Director of Benefits and Wellness is responsible for RIT's employee benefits and wellness strategies, benefits administration, fiscal management of a \$100M+ benefits budget, and ensuring legal and regulatory benefits compliance, as well as strategy and management of the employee wellness program. The individual will develop and maintain benefits programs, as well as provide direction and oversight for the implementation of related policies and procedures.

Founded in 1829, Rochester Institute of Technology has a long-standing history of innovation that blends the arts, technology, and experiential learning. In addition to its main campus in Rochester, New York, RIT maintains a strong international presence with over 100 active global partnerships and international campuses in Croatia, Dubai, and Kosovo. As of Fall 2024, total student enrollment across all campuses exceeded 21,000. Nationally recognized for its co-op and internship programs, RIT is supported by more than 4,000 dedicated faculty and staff members committed to student success. Its 1,300-acre suburban campus features cutting-edge facilities that reflect RIT's strengths in applied research, design, and workforce development.

The successful candidate will report to the Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer and will be a proven leader with deep expertise in developing and administering progressive human resources and employee benefits policies and programs. Success in this role requires a collaborative mindset, strong stakeholder engagement skills, and the ability to influence through subject matter expertise and thoughtful guidance. The Director must demonstrate sound judgment, political acumen, and a commitment to fostering a culture of trust, innovation, and continuous improvement.

A bachelor's degree and a minimum of eight years of progressive HR experience, including at least four years in a supervisory or management role, are required. An advanced degree or professional certification (such as CEBS, SHRM, or HRCI) is strongly preferred, as is experience in a self-funded benefits environment.

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

## ABOUT ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

[Rochester Institute of Technology \(RIT\)](#) is a global, medium-sized, private R2 research university with its main campus in Rochester, New York. RIT maintains a strong international presence, with over 100 active global partnerships and international campuses located in Croatia, Dubai, and Kosovo. As of Fall 2024, total student enrollment across all campuses exceeded 21,000. RIT enrolled a record high of just over 3,600 students across its global campuses, more than doubling its global enrollment over the last decade. The main campus enrolled 17,166 students, comprising 14,305 undergraduates and 2,859 graduate students.

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) has a legacy of innovation, creativity, and ingenuity that dates back to 1829, when the Rochester Athenaeum was founded. This literary society offered public lectures and debates and attracted such luminaries as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes. In 1891, the Athenaeum merged with the Mechanics Institute, which was established by local business leaders to provide technical training for the region's growing industries. This merger created a unique educational model that combined the arts with applied technology, an approach that continues to define RIT today.

By 1912, RIT had introduced cooperative education, integrating classroom learning with real-world experience. The institution officially became Rochester Institute of Technology in 1944. It awarded its first bachelor's degrees in 1955 and master's degrees in 1960, marking its evolution into a comprehensive university.

A major milestone came in 1966 when RIT was selected as the home of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), which began operations in 1968. NTID now serves over 930 deaf and hard-of-hearing students, fostering a diverse and inclusive campus where students of all abilities learn and collaborate.

RIT launched its first PhD program in 1990 and now offers 13 doctoral degrees. The university is internationally recognized for excellence in fields such as business, computing, engineering, game design, imaging science, sustainability, and the arts. Its reputation continues to grow, with U.S. News & World Report ranking RIT #5 in the nation for co-op and internship programs, #41 among "Most Innovative Schools," and #42 for best value.

RIT faculty are deeply committed to the university's mission, fostering a close educational relationship between faculty and students and recognizing the critical impact mentorship can have on students' future professional and personal lives. The faculty is composed of 1,120 full-time and over 400 part-time members.

Faculty include Pulitzer Prize recipients, leaders of national organizations, and trailblazers in gaming, access technology, sustainability, science and mathematics, engineering, and the humanities.

Essential to all University activities and initiatives are the employees who tirelessly support and advance the student experience at RIT. The University employs more than 2,700 full-time and part-time talented and passionate staff, who form the backbone of RIT's operations and are integral members of the tight-knit RIT community.

Staff support student life, health and wellness, the educational mission, and the critical academic, research, co-curricular, and business operations of the institution. Many are alumni, underscoring RIT's role as a major local employer and the dedication of its staff.

Situated in Henrietta, a suburb just south of Rochester, New York, the expansive 1,300-acre campus blends modern architecture with green spaces, creating a dynamic environment for innovation, learning, and creativity. The campus features cutting-edge facilities, including specialized labs and studios, reflecting RIT's strengths in technology, design, and experiential education.

Just a short drive away, the city of Rochester offers a rich cultural and historical backdrop. Located on the southern shore of Lake Ontario and intersected by the Genesee River, Rochester is known for its legacy of innovation, once home to major companies like Kodak and Xerox. Today, the city of Rochester is a dynamic hub for business and technology and is home to leading companies, high-tech industries, and start-up enterprises in optics, imaging, manufacturing, engineering, software, and health care.

Rochester is also a thriving culinary destination, a playground for music enthusiasts, a nature lovers' paradise, an area known for charming festivals, and an imaginative arts and theater scene. Home to nearly 1.1 million people, Greater Rochester is the third-largest metro area in New York. Rochester is a multifaceted, vibrant city, and one of the best to visit, live in, and enjoy.

## UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

### President | Dr. William Sanders

Dr. William "Bill" Sanders became RIT's 11<sup>th</sup> president on Tuesday, July 1, 2025. He came to Rochester from Carnegie Mellon University, where he served as the William D. and Nancy W. Strecker Dean of the College of Engineering since 2020.

Before joining Carnegie Mellon, Dr. William H. Sanders spent 25 years at the University of Illinois, where he held the Herman M. Dieckamp Endowed Chair in Engineering and served in several key leadership roles. He was the founding director of both the Information Trust Institute and the Discovery Partners Institute, the latter of which he led in advancing technology-driven economic development across Illinois and revitalizing Chicago's tech ecosystem through collaborative education, research, and innovation.

At Carnegie Mellon, he has led transformative initiatives, including the launch of pioneering degree programs in AI Engineering and Engineering Design, the expansion of graduate offerings, and the establishment of a landmark partnership with the Mastercard Foundation to significantly grow CMU-

Africa. Dr. Sanders began his academic career in 1988 as an assistant professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Arizona.

A recognized expert in secure and resilient computing systems, Dr. Sanders has authored more than 300 technical publications and co-founded Network Perception, a cybersecurity startup acquired by Dragos Inc. in 2024. His contributions to the field have earned him election to the National Academy of Engineering in 2023, as well as fellowships in IEEE, ACM, and AAAS.

President Sanders earned his bachelor's degree in computer engineering, master's degree in computer, information, and control engineering, and doctoral degree in computer science and engineering from the University of Michigan.

### **AVP and Chief Human Resources Officer | Jo Ellen Pinkham**

Jo Ellen Pinkham became the Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at RIT in August 2020.

Before joining RIT, Jo Ellen served as the Associate Vice President for Human Resources and the Associate to the President at Nazareth College of Rochester (now Nazareth University). During her time there, she successfully led an organizational restructure; redesigned the employee benefits program—offerings, funding model, and cost sharing; conducted a comprehensive staff benchmarking initiative; coordinated Nazareth's presidential search, COVID-19 response, and fall planning task force; and provided organizational and operational leadership for the human resources function.

Jo Ellen holds an MBA with a concentration in human resource management from the University of Buffalo and a BA, summa cum laude, from Hamilton College.

## **ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF BENEFITS AND WELLNESS**

Rochester Institute of Technology is committed to improving the health of the RIT community through continuous review of existing benefit programs and implementation of new programs to ensure equitable access and quality standards of benefits coverage. The Director of Benefits and Wellness is responsible for directing, developing, negotiating, and conducting strategic planning for employee and retiree benefits, including medical, prescription, dental, vision, life, flexible spending accounts, health savings accounts, disability, retirement, tuition, workers' compensation, and FMLA/leaves. This is accomplished by partnering with key campus stakeholders and coalitions.

The Director plans, leads, directs, develops, and coordinates the benefits team policies, activities, and staff, ensuring legal compliance and implementing the benefits programs and overall strategy. RIT is seeking a candidate who will lead efforts to sustain and enhance benefit offerings that are both fiscally responsible and reflect the priorities of faculty and staff while also enhancing access and wellness opportunities. The Director oversees RIT's Better Me Wellness Program, which takes a multi-pronged approach to wellness for all employees. Long a leader in the wellness space, the Director will lead the

review of existing wellness initiatives and work with HR leaders, other university stakeholders, and the Wellness team to expand offerings that enhance employee wellbeing and engagement. The Director leads eight individuals across the Benefits and Wellness teams.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Serve as a strategic member of the Human Resources leadership team, contributing to short- and long-term planning and budgeting aligned with RIT's goals.
- Lead the design, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive benefits programs for employees and retirees, including medical, dental, life, disability, leave, tuition, and retirement plans.
- Proactively monitor and analyze evolving benefits market trends, legislative developments, and regulatory changes to guide strategic program enhancements.
- Ensure ongoing compliance with federal, state, and local laws by translating complex legal requirements into actionable policies and procedures that support organizational goals and employee well-being
- Ensure accurate and compliant benefits administration through regular audits of vendor billing, benefit deductions, and expenditures; maintain strong vendor relationships and evaluate plan design and cost options.
- Oversee voluntary benefit offerings (e.g., legal and vision) and issue timely annual benefit statements to faculty and staff.
- Manage the institution's 403(b) retirement plan, including supporting the annual audit and serving on the Retirement Savings Plan Investment Committee.
- Direct annual benefits renewals and strategic planning with brokers and providers, exploring new programs, vendors, and plan design enhancements.
- Oversee vendor management and contract negotiations for FSA, HSA, COBRA, retirement planning, and other outsourced services.
- Develop and implement a multi-channel communication strategy to keep faculty and staff informed about benefits and wellness programs.
- Lead and develop a team of benefits, leave, and wellness professionals to ensure high-quality service delivery.

- Collaborate on new hire orientation and onboarding to introduce employees to the university's mission, culture, and rewards programs.
- Build and maintain professional networks through active participation in community, business, and industry organizations.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring a demonstrated track record of operational success in leading various HR functions. While no single candidate will have all of the qualifications, the search committee seeks candidates with a well-rounded combination of the following abilities:

### *Minimum Qualifications*

- Bachelor's degree and at least eight years of progressively responsible experience, including four years of experience in a supervisory or management role.
- Current knowledge of labor and employment law, particularly employee benefits laws and regulations.
- Deep understanding of and experience with contemporary benefits and wellness strategies and programs.
- Must possess the ability to interpret complex information, distill key insights, and communicate them clearly to stakeholders across functions to support sound decision-making.

### *Preferred Qualifications*

- Master's degree and/or CEBS, SHRM, or HRCI certifications preferred.
- Previous experience in higher education.
- Proficient in ERP systems, preferably Workday, with a deep understanding of benefits modules and data integration.
- Proven experience designing and implementing systems and processes.
- Demonstrated success in developing and executing large-scale HR programs.
- Experience in a self-funded benefits environment.
- Creative problem-solving and strategic thinking abilities.

- Commitment to shared governance principles.
- Excellent presentation and communication skills, with the ability to resolve complex issues with clarity, integrity, and respect.
- Strong customer service orientation, with excellent organizational and prioritization skills.

## COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The Director of Benefits and Wellness is a full-time, permanent position based on-site in Rochester, NY, with the possibility of a hybrid work schedule. The University offers a competitive and comprehensive benefits package. The expected salary range for this role begins at \$150,000. The starting base salary will be commensurate with qualifications, experience, market, and organizational considerations.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Rebecca Kennedy, Partner (she/her)

Lehman Robinson, Associate (he/him)

Cortnee Bollard, Senior Search Coordinator (they/them)

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/rochester-institute-technology/director-benefits-and-wellness>

In compliance with NYS's Pay Transparency Act, the anticipated starting salary for this position is listed above. Rochester Institute of Technology considers factors such as (but not limited to) scope and responsibilities of the position, candidate's work experience, education/training, key skills, internal peer equity, as well as, market and organizational considerations when extending an offer. The hiring process for this position may require a criminal background check and/or motor vehicle records check. Any verbal or written offer made is contingent on satisfactory results, as determined by Human Resources.

RIT does not discriminate. RIT provides equal opportunity to all qualified individuals and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, age, marital status, sex, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, veteran status or disability in its hiring, admissions, educational programs and activities. RIT provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities under the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York Human Rights Law, or similar applicable law.