



President
Wesley Theological Seminary
Washington, DC

THE SEARCH

Wesley Theological Seminary (“Wesley DC”) seeks a visionary, entrepreneurial, and transformative leader to serve as its next president. Located in Washington, DC, Wesley DC is a graduate theological institution affiliated with [The United Methodist Church](#) and a member of the [Washington Theological Consortium](#). Widely recognized for its mission to prepare individuals for Christian ministry and leadership, Wesley DC fosters theological scholarship that is academically rigorous, socially responsive, and relevant to the dynamic needs of Christian congregations and faith-related institutions. Wesley DC honors its rich Methodist heritage while actively embracing the ecumenical movement and engaging diverse faith traditions. The current search for president comes as The Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, has announced his decision to retire at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year after 24 years as president of Wesley DC and 40 years of dedicated service to the institution.

The next president of Wesley DC will assume leadership of a seminary that is financially stable with a positive outlook as a result of disciplined stewardship and strategic investments, including recent approval for a new revenue-generating real estate development on the Wesley DC campus. Additionally, Wesley DC’s non-degree programs and theological leadership initiatives present significant opportunities for growth and impact.

Wesley DC has transitioned from its historically residential model to a flexible hybrid approach that supports a dynamic mix of on-campus and virtual learning modalities with students pursuing degrees in-residence in Washington, DC as well as in-context around the world. This shift has significantly expanded Wesley DC’s reach, making theological education more accessible to a broader and more diverse student population. Wesley DC’s global presence extends to Africa, the Caribbean, Korea, and beyond, reflecting a commitment to ministry that transcends borders and speaks to the needs of a diverse, interconnected world.

The successful candidate will be a proven, strategic leader with a deep commitment to Wesley DC’s mission as a church-related, inclusive, and forward-looking center for theological education. The next president must be a nimble and compelling theological thinker as well as an adaptive and effective

executive; someone who understands the unique opportunities and challenges of a free-standing seminary and can guide Wesley DC into its next chapter with clarity, courage, and compassion. With theological depth and business acumen, this next leader will help Wesley DC strengthen its organizational structure, expand its reach, and deepen its impact locally, nationally, and globally.

Wesley Theological Seminary has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the search. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

ABOUT WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Mission Statement

The mission of Wesley Theological Seminary is to equip persons for Christian ministry and leadership in the church and the world, to advance theological scholarship, and to model a prophetic voice in the public square.

History

Wesley Theological Seminary's origins trace back to a bold vision for ministerial education that emerged since its founding, laying the foundation for a legacy of leadership and service. In 1881, the Maryland Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church convened with a bold aspiration: to establish a center for ministerial education that would shape the future of church leadership. That year's enabling legislation led to the founding of a seminary on the campus of Western Maryland College in Westminster, Maryland, a location that would serve as its home for over five decades. During this period, the Seminary became a training ground for clergy, deeply embedded in the life and mission of the Methodist Protestant Church.

The Seminary's trajectory shifted significantly in 1939, when the Methodist Protestant Church joined with two other major Methodist bodies to form the new Methodist Church. Westminster Seminary was designated as one of ten official theological schools of the new denomination, marking its transition into a broader ecclesial framework. This pivotal moment laid the groundwork for future expansion and redefinition. By 1955, denominational leaders and seminary officials discerned the need for a more strategically located institution, one that could engage more directly with the social, political, and theological currents shaping the nation. The decision to relocate to Washington, DC was both visionary and pragmatic, positioning the Seminary at the heart of national discourse and global engagement.

In 1958, the Seminary officially moved to its new urban campus and adopted the name Wesley Theological Seminary, honoring the legacy of John Wesley while embracing a renewed commitment to theological education in the public square. A decade later, in 1968, the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form The United Methodist Church, and Wesley DC was affirmed as one of thirteen seminaries serving the new denomination. This merger not only expanded Wesley DC's denominational reach but also deepened its ecumenical and global commitments.

Throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Wesley DC has continued to evolve in response to the changing needs of the church and society. The opening of Wesley Downtown in 2009 extended the Seminary's presence into the heart of the city, offering new opportunities for contextual learning and public witness. The revitalization of Oxnam Chapel in 2010 and the renovation of the library in 2011 reflected a commitment to integrating tradition with innovation, creating spaces that support both spiritual formation and academic excellence. The construction of a new residence hall, completed in 2013, further underscored Wesley DC's dedication to building a vibrant, inclusive learning community.

Today, Wesley DC stands as a leading institution in theological education, deeply rooted in its Methodist heritage yet boldly ecumenical and globally engaged. Its curriculum is designed to integrate rigorous theological inquiry with practical ministry experience, fostering leaders who are equipped to serve in diverse contexts from local congregations to international mission fields, from nonprofit organizations to public policy arenas. Through partnerships with churches, hospitals, and community agencies, Wesley DC ensures that learning is not confined to the classroom but is lived out in real-world ministry.

The Wesley Theological Seminary Community

In Fall 2024, Wesley DC enrolled 460 full-time and part-time students across its master's, doctoral, and certificate programs. The student body reflects a vibrant and diverse community that is 45% women and 55% men, including 31% Black or African American, 12% Asian, 4% Hispanic, and 34% White students, with 5% coming from abroad. Wesley DC continues to attract students from a broad range of backgrounds, with growing interest from historically Black Methodist denominations such as the AME and AME Zion churches. The Seminary's reach also extends internationally through active engagement in theological education partnerships in Korea and growing numbers of students from the Caribbean and Africa, further enriching its global perspective.

Wesley DC's faculty is comprised of 15 core members (including visiting and distinguished members) and 56 adjunct faculty members, with the support of approximately 60 staff and administrators. Wesley DC is an integral part of the Washington Theological Consortium, one of the world's great theological education and research centers. The Seminary is fully accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, with approval for the following degree programs: Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theological Studies, and Doctor of Ministry. Wesley DC also holds accreditation from the University Senate of The United Methodist Church's Board of Higher Education, as well as regional accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Finances

Wesley DC's financial framework is supported by a diverse range of revenue sources and strategic investments. For fiscal year 2026, the Seminary operates with an annual operating budget of \$15 million, enabling robust academic programming and institutional initiatives. As of March 31, 2025, Wesley DC's endowment stood at \$38.1 million, with total investments reaching \$55 million. Revenue is generated

through tuition and fees, auxiliary income, and contributions from key initiatives such as the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. The Seminary also benefits from generous philanthropic investments, including longstanding support from the Lilly Endowment. Together, these financial resources anchor Wesley DC's mission and ensure its continued impact in theological education and church leadership.

A key component of Wesley DC's long-term financial plan is the recently approved [Campus Strategic Plan](#), an ambitious initiative aimed at reimagining how the campus can best support Wesley DC's mission for generations to come. A key element of the campus strategic plan is the construction of a new residential life facility on the Wesley DC campus that will generate substantial revenue for the seminary while addressing campus housing needs for American University students.

Academic Programs

Wesley DC has long acknowledged the imperative of forming students for service-oriented leadership, both within church settings and the broader social sector, in response to the demands of an ever-changing society. Wesley DC offers a wide range of comprehensive degree and certificate programs designed to equip both ordained and lay leaders for faithful and effective service in the church and the world. From the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theological Studies, and Doctor of Ministry to specialized certificates in areas such as faith and public life, Wesley DC provides flexible and rigorous pathways for theological education at every level.

[Master of Divinity](#)

Wesley DC's newly redesigned Master of Divinity (MDiv) program offers a transformative, theologically grounded, and flexible pathway for preparing Christian leaders to serve in a wide range of ministry and mission contexts. Whether pursued in-person, virtually, or via Wesley DC's innovative hyflex model—which combines online coursework with immersive on-campus intensives—the program integrates academic rigor, spiritual formation, and practical experience. Students benefit from a supportive and diverse community, world-class faculty, and Wesley DC's strategic location in Washington, DC. The curriculum is enriched by specialized tracks in areas such as Urban Ministry, Missional Church, Arts, African American Church Studies, and Public Theology, allowing students to tailor their education to their vocational calling.

[Master of Arts](#)

Wesley DC's Master of Arts (MA) program is designed for individuals seeking a deeper theological foundation to support their personal, professional, or ministerial journey. It's an ideal fit for those preparing for specialized ministry roles, pursuing ordination as a deacon in The United Methodist Church, or engaging in theological study for personal enrichment. The program offers a flexible curriculum that allows students to tailor their studies around specific areas of interest, including Biblical Studies, Theological Studies, Church History and Methodist Traditions, Evangelism and Mission, and Practical Ministry.

[Master of Theological Studies](#)

Wesley DC's Master of Theological Studies (MTS) program is designed for individuals seeking a rigorous and thoughtful exploration of theology to inform their personal faith, professional practice, or ministry. The program is suited for those working in other fields who want to engage their work through a theological perspective, as well as for those preparing for lay ministry or advanced graduate study. Wesley also offers dual-degree options in collaboration with American University's School of International Service, integrating theological study with International Peace and Conflict Resolution or International Development, preparing graduates to engage complex social and global challenges with both theological insight and practical understanding.

[Doctor of Ministry Program](#)

Wesley Seminary's Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program is designed for experienced ministry professionals seeking to deepen their theological insight and enhance their leadership within the church and broader community. This advanced-level program integrates practical ministry experience with rigorous academic study, helping pastors and ministry leaders develop a holistic theology that reflects the full life and mission of the church. Students engage with current theological trends and issues, fostering a deeper connection between scholarly disciplines and real-world ministry. The program offers several focus areas to support specialized ministry contexts, including a Military Chaplaincy concentration that prepares chaplains to serve effectively in the unique and demanding environments of the armed forces. In addition to academic growth, the program emphasizes the value of community, providing opportunities to build lasting collegial relationships with fellow students committed to transformative ministry.

[Non-Degree Programs and Certificates](#)

Wesley DC offers a range of non-degree certificate programs designed for individuals seeking theological enrichment, professional development, or preparation for ministry without committing to a full graduate degree. These lifelong learning programs are ideal for lay leaders, clergy, and those discerning a call to ministry, providing flexible options to study at the master's level, audit courses, or earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

Wesley's Centers of Excellence

[The Lewis Center for Church Leadership](#)

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership serves as a cornerstone of the Wesley DC community, anchoring the institution's commitment to nurturing effective and visionary Christian leadership. Since its founding in 2003 and named in honor of former Wesley DC President G. Douglass Lewis, the Center has become a nationally recognized resource for leadership development, offering research, training, and strategic guidance to clergy, lay leaders, and students. Deeply aligned with Wesley DC's mission, the Center helps congregations grow, adapt, and thrive by addressing the evolving challenges of ministry with clarity and innovation. At the strategic core of the Seminary, the Lewis Center not only strengthens internal

leadership formation but also extends Wesley DC's impact across the broader church landscape. The Lewis Center has received generous multi-year support for a range of research, fellowships, and programmatic initiatives from the Lilly Endowment including the Religious Workforce Project, Lewis Fellows, and clergy coaching and mentoring programs.

[The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts & Religion](#)

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts & Religion at Wesley Theological Seminary serves as a dynamic intersection where faith and creativity converge, enriching the Seminary's academic and spiritual life. The Luce Center fosters a deeper understanding of theology through the lens of contemporary art. It offers students and the broader community opportunities to engage with art that challenges, inspires, and deepens spiritual reflection. Through its exhibitions, artist residencies, and educational programs, the Center encourages dialogue between artists and theologians, helping to bridge the gap between artistic expression and theological inquiry.

[Community Engagement Institute](#)

The Community Engagement Institute harnesses the Seminary's unique location in Washington, DC, to prepare leaders for transformative ministry in both church and community. Students explore the meaning and practice of community, designing initiatives in collaboration with churches, nonprofits, and other stakeholders. Community Engagement Institute programs include the Center for Public Theology, National Capital Experience for Seminarians, and Heal the Sick.

[Center for Public Theology](#)

Wesley DC's Center for Public Theology plays a key role in advancing the Seminary's mission by equipping churches, clergy, lay leaders, and students with the tools to thoughtfully engage the intersection of faith and public policy. The Center serves as a non-partisan yet deeply engaged voice in national discourse, striving to elevate the tone of political conversation through a commitment to civil dialogue. While rooted in a distinctly Christian perspective, the Center operates within a context that embraces both passionate Christian conviction and compassionate interfaith collaboration. Wesley DC's longstanding dedication to public theology and its nuanced understanding of America's pluralistic culture have earned the support of major philanthropic organizations, including The Henry Luce Foundation and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, whose generous grants have accelerated the development and programming of the Center. Through this work, the Center for Public Theology significantly contributes to Wesley DC's broader vision of shaping faithful, informed, and socially responsible leaders.

The Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is the governing body of Wesley Theological Seminary, functioning as a self-perpetuating board of trustees. As stewards of the Seminary's mission and future, the Board plays a role in advising the president, overseeing institutional strategy, and ensuring financial and operational integrity. Comprising up to 40 elected members, the Board is structured around several standing

committees, including Development, Finance, Enrollment and Academic Programs, and Building and Grounds, each aligned with key areas of Seminary life. The Board also includes an Executive Committee, which acts on behalf of the full Board between meetings and includes elected officers, the Seminary president, the presiding bishop of the Washington Area of The United Methodist Church, and committee chairs.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

This is a defining moment of transformation and opportunity at Wesley DC. The next president of Wesley DC will serve as a visionary and catalytic leader, guiding the institution into its next chapter with clarity, courage, and conviction. The president will work to shape Wesley DC's response to local, national and global cultural shifts—including the changing landscape of Christian institutional life and denominational dynamics—ensuring the Seminary remains relevant, resilient, and impactful in a rapidly changing world.

Reporting directly to the Board of Governors, the president serves as the chief executive officer of Wesley Theological Seminary, entrusted with the overall stewardship of the institution. This includes guiding its day-to-day operations, ensuring its financial health and long-term sustainability, leading with fidelity to mission and identity, and providing visionary and strategic leadership that shapes both the present and future direction of the Seminary. Direct reports currently include the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Co-Director Innovation Hub; Vice President of Development; Vice President of Accounting, CFO, and Treasurer; Vice President for International Relations; and Dean. The Vice President of Admissions and Financial Aid; Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership; and Director of the Luce Center for the Arts and Religion jointly report to both the Dean and President.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT

The incoming president will need to be more than a visionary; they must also be a builder, someone who can execute a plan and bring clarity to priorities. The Wesley DC community is ready for a leader who understands both the theological and business operations dimensions of a seminary. Compassionate, resilient, and inclusive, this person should be able to tap into the gifts of the faculty and staff, navigate complex institutional and communal relationships, and articulate a bold vision for the future of Wesley DC. To accomplish this, the president faces several key challenges and opportunities, outlined below:

Galvanize stakeholders, cast a bold vision, and advance actionable strategies that are responsive to the changing landscape of theological education, religious life, and society.

With the landscape of theological education undergoing significant shifts and facing ongoing declines in enrollment, mirroring trends in mainline North American Christian institutions more broadly, Wesley DC stands at a critical inflection point. To remain a relevant and influential institution, it must strategically reposition itself within the broader theological education ecosystem. The next president will lead a creative and generative process to shape Wesley DC's future—one that is bold, innovative, and grounded in measurable impact.

This visioning process will not only require the exploration of new academic and research endeavors that build upon Wesley DC's rich legacy and prime location but will also require evaluation of the current business model. It may require reimagining how the Seminary operates, delivers education, and engages with its communities. The president will be expected to articulate a forward-looking strategy with clear, actionable initiatives that enhance Wesley DC's long-term influence and sustainability. The president will build on Wesley DC's history of innovation by working with the board and faculty to retool existing programs, explore the feasibility of new degree and non-degree programs, and develop strategic partnerships to expand the scope of the Seminary's influence and impact.

Define and champion Wesley DC's distinctive identity and its value proposition, brand, and reach.

As a freestanding graduate theological institution and the only United Methodist seminary located in Washington, DC, Wesley DC occupies a uniquely strategic position in the theological education landscape. The next president must lead efforts to clearly define and elevate Wesley DC's brand, leveraging its proximity to national and global centers of influence, and showcasing the breadth and depth of its academic offerings. This includes exploring innovative approaches to sharpen Wesley DC's identity, particularly by emphasizing its flexible degree and non-degree programs and unique theologically informed professional development and personal enrichment offerings.

Ensure that the entire programmatic portfolio of the Seminary, including centers and initiatives, non-degree programs, and degree-granting academic programs are synergistic, strategically leveraging and sharing resources, and maximizing opportunities for collaboration and impact

Wesley DC's Centers of Excellence are anchors of the Seminary's mission, driving much of its research, innovation, and community engagement. These centers are largely grant-funded and serve as engines of intellectual and social engagement, yet their contributions are not fully leveraged across Wesley DC's curriculum or institutional strategy.

To address this, it is expected that the next president will evaluate the current relationships between the centers and other aspects of the Seminary with an eye toward opportunities for enhanced synergy and impact and prioritize a strategic alignment of the centers with the Seminary's core academic programs and long-term vision. This includes fostering deeper collaboration between faculty, students, and center leadership, and embedding the centers' work more intentionally into the educational experience. The president must champion the centers as integral components of Wesley DC's identity and future growth, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to academic excellence, institutional sustainability, and Wesley DC's brand positioning.

Develop, resource, and recruit faculty committed to high quality teaching and learning, impactful student formation for ministry and leadership, and first-rate academic and applied research.

To remain competitive and mission-driven in a rapidly changing theological education landscape, Wesley DC must invest strategically in its faculty. The next president will play a pivotal role in recruiting, nurturing, and resourcing a new generation of diverse, high-impact scholars and educators. As academic disciplines

and curricular demands continue to evolve, faculty must be supported not only through recruitment efforts but also through sustained professional development, research funding, and institutional alignment. The president will ensure that Wesley DC's faculty are supported to produce transformative scholarship, engage meaningfully with students and communities, and elevate the Seminary's national and global reputation.

Support Wesley DC's long-term sustainability by expanding and diversifying fundraising efforts to strengthen its financial foundation and grow the endowment.

Wesley DC faces a critical need to strengthen its financial foundation through strategic fundraising, particularly focused on growing its endowment. Unlike many peer institutions whose endowments were built through substantial gifts from a small number of families in the early 20th century, Wesley DC has not benefited from such legacy philanthropy. The Seminary has historically relied on annual gifts, grants, and programmatic revenue from sources such as the Lilly Endowment and its Doctor of Ministry programs rather than long-term planned giving or robust alumni contributions. This business development-oriented approach, while effective in the short term, has limited Wesley DC's ability to build enduring financial resilience. The next president must lead a transformative shift in development strategy, cultivating major gifts, expanding planned giving, and engaging new donor communities. This work is especially urgent given the decline in donor capacity within the United Methodist Church, which has already impacted both enrollment and fundraising. A renewed focus on endowment growth will be essential to securing Wesley DC's future and enabling it to invest in its mission, people, and programs.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The next president of Wesley Theological Seminary will be a visionary, mission-driven leader with a demonstrated record of transformational success and impact. This individual will bring a deep commitment to Wesley DC's core values and an eagerness to foster innovation, collaboration, and excellence across the Seminary's community. The ideal candidate will possess a strategic mindset, a passion for theological education, and the ability to inspire and empower others. They will embody most, if not all, of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes essential for guiding Wesley DC into its next chapter of relevance, sustainability, and leadership in theological education.

- A graduate degree in a relevant field from an accredited institution (A doctoral degree is strongly preferred; however, candidates with diverse academic and professional credentials are encouraged to apply)
- A highly respected and accomplished faith-rooted leader with a record of accomplishment in the academy, ministry, and/or the public square
- A well-honed understanding of the United Methodist Church and its customs, theology, systems, structure and polity, as well as the ability to credibly engage across the wider Wesleyan family and ecumenical Christian communions
- Demonstrated success in organizational leadership and ability to guide the development and execution of a compelling strategic vision for the Seminary

- Enthusiasm for and success in fundraising, especially the capacity to build and sustain long-term relationships with donors and stakeholders
- Proven success in developing partnerships and creative approaches to student recruitment, community engagement, academic programming, continuing education, and contextual education/career placement
- Strong written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills, with the ability to effectively articulate Wesley DC's needs, plans, and programs to internal and external constituencies
- A commitment to excellence in theological research, teaching, and formation for ministry
- Deep commitment to and demonstrated experience building community and cultivating a shared sense of belonging among diverse community members
- Expertise in complex institutional budgeting, fiscal planning, and financial management
- Experience in recruiting, motivating, and retaining talented faculty and staff

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Applications received by October 15, 2025, will receive priority consideration. Screening of 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: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/wesley-theological-seminary/president>.

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