



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

W A S H I N G T O N , D C

Dean
School of Education, American University
Washington, DC

THE SEARCH

American University (AU) seeks a strategic and innovative leader to serve as dean of the School of Education (SOE). Recently independent of the College of Arts and Sciences, SOE offers a wide range of programs aimed at empowering creative, passionate, and critical thinkers to be effective educators and leaders in a diverse and ever-changing world. The next dean will leverage SOE's many assets—including its unique blend of scholarship and practice as well as its location in the nation's capital—to further progress the unit into a leading education school. The dean will be aided by a dedicated faculty and passionate staff as well as a record-setting gift endowing the School with resources to bolster its areas of distinction.

SOE is one of eight colleges and schools at AU, a private, student-centered, research university chartered by Congress and established in 1893. Today, AU employs more than 900 full-time faculty members and enrolls approximately 11,300 students from every US state, the District of Columbia, and 126 countries. The R1-level university offers a rich array of undergraduate and graduate programs, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in education through SOE.

As the chief executive of SOE, the dean reports to AU's provost and is responsible for all program and unit activities within the School. The dean provides strategic, visionary, and programmatic leadership to faculty, students, and staff; leads administrative, fundraising, planning, and program-development efforts to build and sustain excellence in operations; and is the principal representative for the School at the AU leadership table and in the Washington DC community. Bringing a deep respect for both the practice-based and scholarly aspects of education, the dean works cooperatively and closely with faculty, administrative staff, other deans, and AU leaders to advance SOE and the university and build on the School's strong partnerships with formal and informal educational organizations.

AU has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in the search. All applications, inquiries, and nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

AU is a vibrant, student-centered research university that provides deep learning experiences through engagement by a distinguished research faculty. Drawing on the student-centered nature of the liberal arts college and the intensity of the research university, AU exemplifies the very best of both models of American higher education. Located in the nation's capital, AU students are provided with unparalleled opportunities for community participation, experiential learning, and internships at some of the world's most important institutions. AU focuses on academic excellence, civic engagement, interdisciplinary inquiry, multi-cultural and global understanding, student-engaged research, experiential learning, and social and ethical responsibility.

AU delivers more than 80 undergraduate, nearly 90 master's and 14 doctoral programs across [eight colleges and schools](#). The university enrolls about 6,500 undergraduate and 3,100 graduate students, approximately 600 of whom are education students. AU's highly diverse student body comes from 126 countries. A student-focused university, AU is dedicated to the teacher-scholar model, with a university-wide student-to-faculty ratio of 10:1. Healthy student satisfaction is reflected in its 87.3% first-year retention rate.

University Leadership

AU is led by President Jonathan R. Alger, who became the university's 16th president on July 1, 2024, following 12 years of leading James Madison University. He served as senior vice president and general counsel at Rutgers University, and as assistant general counsel at the University of Michigan, where he played a key leadership role in two important Supreme Court cases on diversity in admissions and coordinated one of the largest amicus brief coalitions in Supreme Court history. President Alger is a nationally recognized scholar and speaker on higher education policy and law. President Alger currently serves as chair of the national board of directors for the American Association of Colleges and Universities, as chair of the Association of Governing Boards' Council of Presidents, and on the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

Vicky M. Wilkins, PhD is the provost and chief academic officer at AU. Before assuming the role of provost, she served as the dean of the School of Public Affairs (SPA). Dr. Wilkins's research focuses on various aspects of public administration and policy, with particular emphasis on representative bureaucracy, bureaucratic discretion, gender and race issues, deservingness, political institutions, and human resource management. Her groundbreaking work in the field of women, minorities, and policy outcomes has significantly influenced the discipline of public administration and serves as a valuable resource for policymakers. Her research contributions have been featured in renowned scholarly journals, including

the *American Political Science Review*, *Public Administration Review*, and the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.

For additional, in-depth information about American University, visit its website at: <https://www.american.edu/>

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Ranked the top school of education in Washington, DC by College Factual, SOE boasts a rich tradition of innovative teaching, research and practice, and service, reflected in the school's longstanding commitments to educational equity and opportunity and grounded in the school's [mission, vision, and core values](#). Embedded in the College of Arts and Sciences ("the College" or "CAS") since its founding, in 2019 the School of Education became independent from the College. This evolution recognized SOE's strengths in teaching and service, its development of additional graduate programs— including the creation of AU's first practitioner doctorate, and its impact on the local community. The administrative independence of SOE granted it ownership over hiring, curriculum, and allocation of resources, while maintaining an academically collaborative relationship with CAS. To support effective use of resources, SOE has recently transitioned to a shared services model with CAS for marketing and communications, advancement, and graduate enrollment.

In early 2025, the School of Education received the largest gift by any individual donor in American University's history, providing permanent endowed resources for SOE and establishing an endowed leadership chair. In addition, the gift will bolster areas of distinction, including expanding the School's community partnerships and interdisciplinary research, and provide scholarship resources to recruit and retain graduate students. As a result of the gift, SOE will be renamed the Linda A. and H. Kent Baker School of Education at a later date in 2026.

Today, SOE enrolls approximately 600 students across six programs: early childhood education (BA), elementary education (BA), secondary education (BA), teacher education, including special education (MAT), and education policy and leadership (MEd and EdD), as well two credentialing programs. SOE has a long history in international training and education, although it is not currently enrolling students in its International Training and Education Program (ITEP). Its programs equip educators, school and system leaders, policy makers, and innovators to support learning from birth through post-secondary education, and are available in multiple modalities, including full-time, part-time, in-person, and online. Undergraduate admissions are centralized at AU, although students can transfer easily from one school or college to another following matriculation. For Fall 2025, the SOE enrolled 462 master's students, 99 doctoral students, and 108 undergraduate majors.

SOE is a collaborative community that values shared governance and transparency. The School is comprised of a total of 57 FT faculty, over 100 adjunct faculty, and approximately 32 staff and administrators. The SOE leadership team collaborates closely with a 25-member [Advisory Board](#), a group

of dedicated professional leaders across the education sector who lend their resources, brainpower, and diversity of thought to support the School in fulfilling its mission and goals. Additionally, the dean oversees SOE's budget of \$15.5 million, inclusive of online programs, grant-generated returns, and partnerships with revenues that can fluctuate. The dean, as an effective steward, will balance these variable sources with a significantly smaller, stable operating budget.

The school is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CAEP), the gold standard in quality educator preparation programs, through 2029. DC's Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) approves all programs in conjunction with CAEP accreditation.

Centers and Institutes

Beyond its diverse degree programs and rigorous coursework, SOE provides opportunities for innovative research and community partnerships. Its close connections in the Washington, DC area allow it to offer students exciting opportunities at various levels of professional engagement. In addition, SOE's mission is supported by the following centers, institutes, and projects:

Center for Postsecondary Readiness and Success

Founded in 2018, the [Center for Postsecondary Readiness and Success](#) (CPRS) concentrates its research, professional development opportunities, and knowledge dissemination on improving the postsecondary opportunities for students who are historically disenfranchised and underrepresented on college campuses. It takes a collaborative approach to research, working alongside community partners and school practitioners to increase the rate of college and career readiness.

Institute for Innovation in Education

The [Institute for Innovation in Education](#) (IIE), founded in 2009, takes an interdisciplinary approach in its pursuit of conducting educational and translational research and administering research-informed professional development initiatives with the goal of improving teaching and learning in Washington, DC, and beyond. Projects support and engage educators as they affirm, benefit, respect, and value traditionally underrepresented student groups (including students from historically resilient communities and students with disabilities). Researchers and practitioners partner to study educational policies and interventions using a wide-ranging set of methodological and analytical approaches. IIE supports multiple programs that aim to connect students with real-world issues and topics in education, including through the [Early Literacy Intervention Leaders Program](#), [Literacy Partnerships](#) with DC public schools, and the [Heritage Language Schools Conference](#).

The Summer Institute on Education, Equity, and Justice

The annual American University School of Education Summer Institute on Education, Equity, and Justice (SIEEJ) convenes local and national educators and education advocates to highlight new practices and strategies for addressing the educational needs of Black, Brown, and indigenous students. The Institute

aims to bring together educators, students, researchers, policymakers, art experts, and community leaders to explore innovative strategies, evidence-based solutions, and the importance of solidarity in creating safer schools.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

In carrying out the position, the next dean of the Baker School of Education will have several key opportunities to advance the School, including the specific responsibilities listed below.

Develop a cohesive vision for the School of Education

The School of Education boasts many strengths, including its location and commitment to the DC community, its scholar-teacher-researcher focus, and its talented faculty and staff. As the landscape for undergraduate and graduate education becomes more competitive, particularly in the context of education degree programs, the next dean must articulate and act on a compelling, future-oriented vision for SOE, one that advocates for the value proposition of education courses at American University, including degree and non-degree credentialing programs, as well as more broadly in the national conversation. The dean will identify and cultivate programs, partnerships, and research opportunities with distinct competitive advantages and lead the school through a continued pursuit of excellence and distinction.

As American University enters the final stages of its [strategic planning process](#) for 2026-2030, the SOE dean will have the opportunity to craft a new strategic plan for the School of Education aligned with the institution-wide plan that will orient the School on its next chapter.

Explore opportunities to increase enrollment

Increasing student enrollment is a key priority for the School of Education and American University at-large, following a slight yet impactful dip in enrollment across the university in recent years. A tuition-dependent school, SOE relies on student enrollment for the majority of its revenue. The next dean will assess SOE's academic offerings with an eye toward opportunity, as well as identify and address barriers to access, such as high tuition cost relative to local and peer schools.

Steward and generate resources and recognition for the School

As SOE's chief administrator and advocate, the successful dean will be a sophisticated, experienced and transparent budget manager, revenue planner, and fundraiser. The dean will join amid a transition to shared services with the College of Arts and Sciences, and will sustainably manage SOE's budget with a goal of ensuring the School's financial stability for years to come. A key partner with advancement, the dean will be a compelling advocate for SOE, developing and nurturing relationships with educational partners, donors, policymakers, and funding agencies to articulate opportunities for partnership and investment and distinguish SOE's impact and recognition in the education school landscape.

Support a talented community of faculty, staff, and students

A tight-knit community, members of the School of Education work collaboratively and transparently. The next dean will embrace these aspects of SOE's culture while bringing a decisive and action-oriented sensibility as the School's chief executive. The dean will empower faculty and staff through creative ways to support professional development. A student-centered leader, the dean will also maintain an eye toward student success and engagement. Finally, in pursuit of academic excellence, the dean will lead the faculty and staff in efforts related to successful re-accreditation, assessment, and academic program review.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no individual candidate will possess all the desired qualifications, prospective candidates should present a strong and compelling combination of the following relevant professional experiences and leadership achievements:

- A doctoral degree in an education discipline or equivalent;
- Demonstrated record of successful scholarship, teaching, and experiences to qualify as a professor within the School;
- Demonstrated ability to provide effective, innovative, and visionary leadership;
- Management experience and financial acumen
- Skill in fundraising, alumni relations, and building connections with K-12 partners, community organizations, and public/private entities;
- Proven record of promoting academic excellence and innovation to enhance student and faculty success;
- Ability to inspire and provide resources for community partnerships, student learning, research, and success initiatives;
- Engagement with national conversation around higher education; Knowledge of national and disciplinary trends in higher education, PreK-12 education
- Awareness of accreditation standards;
- Open communication and transparent decision-making to foster a professional, ethical, collegial, and inclusive environment;
- Strong interpersonal communication skills to build relationships with students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders, as well as effective presentation and public speaking skills for diverse audiences;
- Knowledge and skill in budget and enrollment management
- Ability to work collegially with university leadership, faculty, and staff within a shared governance structure;
- Experience with and sensitivity to the educational goals of a multicultural population;
- Capability to lead grant activities and attract external resources;
- Exemplary analytical and critical thinking skills.

COMPENSATION

The salary range for this position is \$250,000 to \$300,000. The President and Board of Trustees reserve the final determination of the selected candidate's actual pay, considering their experience and qualifications for the role.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

American University has engaged Isaacson, Miller for this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be sent in strict confidence to: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/american-university-school-education/dean>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Keight Kennedy, Partner
Jeff Kessner, Partner
Diana Carmona, Senior Associate
Jenny Rubin, Senior Search Coordinator

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This document has been prepared based on the information provided by American 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 American University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.