



Dean

Washington College of Law

American University

Washington, DC

SEARCH SUMMARY

American University (AU) seeks a visionary and dynamic leader to serve as dean of the Washington College of Law (WCL), commencing no later than July 2026. This is an exceptional opportunity to lead a large, student-focused, and forward-leaning law school in the nation's capital to global prominence. WCL's distinctive brand is anchored in the quality of its academic programs, the scholarly achievements of its faculty, the diversity of its student body, and its impact on the challenges facing the legal profession and society today. At WCL the elements of excellence await a leader with the vision and vitality to synthesize its strengths, raise its ranking, and intensify its impact.

WCL 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.

Founded in 1896 by two pioneering women at a time when women were generally excluded from practicing law, WCL is an institution with a distinctive and proud heritage of creating opportunities for those historically outside the mainstream of the legal profession. That commitment to inclusion and outreach continues. WCL has a well-earned and enviable

reputation for civic engagement by students, faculty, and alumni at the local, national, and global levels. WCL stakeholders are pioneers in advancing the rule of law in multiple fields.

Accredited by the ABA, WCL provides a superb education, while achieving national and international recognition for its programs with a faculty that is lauded as among the most productive in the country. Faculty members occupy important leadership positions in academia and domestic and international organizations, reflecting their engagement in a broad range of educational, legal, civic, and policy issues. Recent WCL program rankings from U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) include: #2 in Clinical Training; #5 in the Part-time JD Program; #6 in International Law; #6 in Intellectual Property Law, #20 in Health Law; #24 in Trial Advocacy; #29 in Criminal Law, and #27 for Law Schools with the Most Graduates in Public Interest Law.

As the chief executive of WCL, the dean reports to AU's provost and is responsible for all program and unit activities within the school. The dean provides strategic, intellectual, and inspirational leadership to faculty, students, and staff; leads administrative, personnel, 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. Bringing a deep respect for both the practice-based and scholarly aspects of legal education, the dean works cooperatively and closely with faculty, administrative staff, other deans, and AU leaders to advance the university and the law school. Additionally, the dean is a visible force on the world stage, working with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and local and global leaders to enhance and build external relations and revenue.

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.



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 (including LLM and MLS), and 14 doctoral (including JD and SJD) programs, across eight colleges and schools:

- College of Arts and Sciences
- Kogod School of Business
- School of Communication
- School of Education
- School of International Service
- Professional Studies and Executive Education
- School of Public Affairs

- Washington College of Law

AU enrolls approximately 6,500 undergraduate, 3,100 graduate, and 1,400 law students. Its 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% freshman retention rate. A global university based in the US capital, AU offers more than 100 study-abroad programs, regularly hosts world leaders on campus, and explores global issues through its curriculum and research activities.

AU is ably led by President Jonathan R. Alger, who became the university's 16th president on July 1, 2024, following 12 years (2012-2024) leading James Madison University. President Alger earned a bachelor of arts degree with high honors from Swarthmore College and a juris doctor degree with honors from Harvard Law School. 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 and has published numerous articles for scholarly journals and publications such as The Journal of College and University Law and The Law of Higher Education. 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). During her tenure as dean, Dr. Wilkins demonstrated exceptional leadership, fostering growth and engagement within SPA and the wider community. Dr. Wilkins' 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. Dr. Wilkins earned a bachelor of science degree in political science and history at Northern Michigan University. Additionally, she earned a master of science degree in human resource management from Chapman University, and a PhD degree in political science from the University of Missouri.

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



THE WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

Founded over a century ago, WCL was established by women “to provide such a legal education for women as will enable them to practice the legal profession.” Within 15 years of its establishment, WCL enrolled a co-educational student body of 128, and in 1949 WCL merged with AU. Today, WCL is one of the largest law schools in the United States with 1,199 JD students, 138 LLM and SJD students, and 74 MLS students. Over 175 JD students pursue their degrees in a highly respected, top ranked part-time program.

In addition to being a large and stable law school with a favorable student-to-faculty ratio of 7.4:1, WCL is outstanding in several respects. First, in terms of diversity, WCL enjoys an enviable position with 37% of the current first-year class self-identifying as underrepresented students and with women comprising 69% of the class.

For over 50 years, WCL has been a leader in clinical and other experiential programs that provide a broad array of opportunities for students to learn through supervised practice. Ranked #2 by USNWR for its clinical training, WCL offers 11 in-house, live-client clinics led by full-time faculty members. WCL’s Clinical Program has established numerous pioneering clinics that complement

doctrinal offerings. A related experiential program, WCL's Trial Advocacy Program, is ranked #24 by USNWR.

International Law is another strong programmatic pillar of the law school, regularly securing top rankings, e.g. #6 from USNWR. WCL's International and Comparative Legal Studies (ICLS) programs have tremendous impact on development and promotion of international law through the work of its faculty and programs.

WCL has been on the frontier of international legal education for over 45 years. Established in 1982, the LLM program alone has 5,000 alums worldwide. ICLS also houses the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship, a Fulbright program and International Visiting Scholars Program. WCL provides opportunities for students to obtain dual degrees and semester exchanges in Canada, Europe and Asia.

Intellectual Property (IP) is a well-recognized and significant curricular strength of WCL, reflected in its #6 rankings from USNWR. The Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property (PIJIP) and the IP Clinic, which was one of the first of its kind in the nation, both offer students an immense wealth of opportunities to explore this field and connect with an engaged alumni network. PIJIP's impact is also global through its partnerships with law schools around the world.

WCL students are dedicated, hard-working, civic-minded, and service-oriented. The student body nurtures a collaborative community committed to the success of all students. WCL graduates can be found in myriad practice settings both in the United States and abroad. A significant number pursue careers in the global business sector as well as in public interest, including positions in government, international organizations, nonprofit entities, and associations. WCL supports professional identity formation and career readiness inside and outside the classroom. In recent years, WCL has invested in mandatory 1L programming delivered by its COMPASS initiative increasing the amount and caliber of individual career and academic advising, modernizing the workshops and recruiting events organized by WCL's student support offices. As part of a comprehensive university, WCL and AU offer students several dual-degree programs, including five university wide dual-degree programs [JD/MBA, JD/MS, JD/MA, JD/MPA and JD/MPP], and five international dual-degree programs. WCL students have a vibrant campus life, organizing conferences and participating in dozens of student-led organizations. They also edit and publish in WCL's eight briefs and five journals, including the American University Law Review, the Administrative Law Review, the American University International Law Review, the American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law, and the American University Business Law Review. Students also compete in dozens of mock trial and moot court tournaments, earning numerous individual awards and national titles in both domestic and international competitions.

WCL's dedicated staff of nearly 170 are an essential component of the school, providing their wisdom, energy, and talent to ensure the effective operation of this complex enterprise. In addition, staff members take a personal interest in student success and in their future careers, and several assist in securing grants and gifts for the school and meeting the expectations of

WCL's alumni and benefactors. Staff input, guidance, and perspectives on every aspect of WCL's operations and programs are essential and valued.

WCL has a large alumni base with more than 22,000 members worldwide. The law school has expanded engagement with alumni, both through engagement of the Dean's Advisory Council, comprised of key stakeholders, as well as the more recent development of regional alumni chapters across the country.

The location and physical facilities of WCL in the heart of Washington, DC are among its outstanding assets. The law school is housed in a modern, interconnected building complex on an 8.5-acre campus in Tenleytown, Washington, DC. The historic site was redeveloped into a LEED Gold-certified complex, featuring state-of-the-art classrooms, libraries, administrative offices, student spaces, glass-walled courtrooms, and extensive green space.



LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DEAN

The provost's office and the search committee engaged in extensive outreach with a broad range of WCL stakeholders to identify the challenges and opportunities that the next dean will encounter at WCL. Many sources offered myriad suggestions, and themes emerged rapidly and repeatedly, converging on four interrelated opportunities that await the next dean of WCL; the

desired qualifications and experiences listed *infra* are connected to these four overarching opportunities as predictors of success. Some of the components of these opportunities can be addressed at the outset of the dean's engagement, but the realization of these opportunistic and strategic goals will require a substantial investment of time and human and financial resources. The WCL community is seeking a leader willing to invest the time over the course of several years to embrace and cultivate these exciting prospects.

Develop and Promote a Compelling and Distinctive Identity and Profile for WCL

There are close to 200 ABA-approved law schools in the United States and six of them are an easy commute from the US Capitol. For years now, WCL "insiders," as well as knowledgeable experts from the outside, have evaluated WCL as over-performing and underrated. There are incredibly strong centers and programs, largely built by entrepreneurial faculty and staff, that would benefit from developing a common purpose and thematic cohesion. Many areas of legal education at WCL like the Clinical Program, the IP Program, and International and Comparative Law rank in the top 5% in their fields. The challenge and opportunity for the next dean is to connect these areas of prominence, and collaborate with the faculty, staff, and university leadership to develop a unified vision that is supported by the strengths that WCL can boast: its location in the nation's capital and the vortex of global political power; the most beautiful, accessible, state-of-the-art, physical facility anywhere in academia; a world-class research and clinical faculty that produce highly rated scholarship, educate students with rigor and empathy, and engage in service and civic life locally and internationally; a corps of adjunct faculty who are leaders in their practice areas; a diverse and diligent student body that values community; loyal alumni eager to assist; and a staff that devote their careers to the enterprise and make it better every day. WCL is looking for a dean of action who can stimulate the stakeholders and synthesize these strengths. A compelling vision and exciting strategies to achieve it will emerge under the leadership of a dynamic, thoughtful, and inspiring dean.

Generate and Invest the Resources Required to Realize the WCL Vision

Realizing a bold vision for WCL and raising the school's ranking will require enhanced revenues and will, in turn, attract the investments required to reach these goals. WCL is seeking a leader with experience and enthusiasm to raise substantial, transformative contributions from individual, corporate, and foundation donors who possess the capacity to give, a connection to WCL or its stakeholders, and a commitment to the mission of providing an excellent legal education that is relevant to the challenges confronting society. Fundraising and building supportive relationships will consume a lot of the dean's time, so it is essential that the dean develop and empower a competent management team that provides the dean with the capacity to prioritize and engage in donor-relations. Fundraising is critical, and so is the development of

new, relevant revenue streams and programs that are designed to attract potential students and supportive employers, especially in the Metro-Washington region. Successful fundraising cannot rest on the dean alone. Institutional advancement is a collective effort that engages staff, faculty, and alumni. The WCL alumni network is 22,000 strong and grows by more than 400 graduates each year, representing an underutilized resource ready to be mobilized to support the WCL mission.

Focus and Invest Strategically in Student Success Early and Often

WCL is well known for its efforts to center the enterprise on students and accommodate their needs and aspirations, ensuring that the law school experience is both rewarding and pleasant. Recent changes to the USNWR methodology for ranking law schools allocate greater relative weight to student outcomes. WCL's next dean should invest in these areas in a thoughtful and intentional manner after consultation with different stakeholders, so that WCL can achieve the goal of over 90% first time bar passage and close to 100% graduate job placement. In addition to hiring and developing outstanding student success and career services professionals, the dean will engage directly in establishing strong relationships with law firms and other employers in the government, nonprofit, legal services, business, and international sectors.

Collaborate with the University to Advance Shared Objectives

Another interrelated challenge and opportunity for WCL's next dean is to find ways and means to collaborate with the new, dynamic AU leadership team to build partnerships that enhance multi-disciplinary scholarship opportunities, improve pedagogical methods, and connect undergraduates and other graduate-level students to the law school. Most importantly, the next dean must develop strategies together with AU leadership to engage the whole university – including the law school – in effective civic engagement programs locally, nationally, and globally. WCL can contribute a significant amount to this collective effort. The Kogod School of Business, the School of International Service, and the School of Public Affairs are the most obvious partners in terms of synergies for students and faculty alike. WCL's next dean must balance the important need for collaboration and cooperation with university with independence that WCL needs to continue to operate as an ABA-accredited law school that uses a responsibility-centered management (RCM) structure.

DESIRED EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

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

- An earned JD degree from an ABA-accredited program or its equivalent.
- Teaching, scholarship, and service achievements in higher education that merit appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure, or, alternatively, experience in the practice of law or other professions that demonstrate equivalent, professional achievement.
- Demonstrated fundraising success or the skill set to develop relationships that result in transformative fundraising success, including actual experiences with philanthropy that support the ability to solicit and steward private donations from alumni, members of the Board of Trustees, friends, foundations, law firms, government institutions, and corporations.
- A deep understanding of the current and evolving landscape and trends in legal education, in the practice of law, and in higher education generally.
- Experience in promoting successful, strategic institutional changes in response to evolving environmental factors and challenges that would support the development of a common vision for WCL, resulting in a distinctive profile or brand that reflects the future of legal education and the established strengths of the law school.
- Experience in successfully managing a multi-million-dollar budget and the capacity to navigate within a responsibility-centered management (RCM) structure.
- The ability and desire to provide a global vision for WCL by maintaining the law school's global presence and its engagement with collaborators and stakeholders worldwide.
- Commitment to student success in general and specifically in developing programs to enhance bar passage results and career services leading to employment upon graduation.
- The motivation and capacity to cooperate creatively with university leaders to develop programs leading to stronger collaboration between WCL with its AU partners.
- An ongoing commitment to develop excellent long-term relationships with WCL alumni.
- Experience successfully managing human resources and hiring, developing, and promoting staff on a scale comparable to WCL.
- A commitment to public service, inclusive excellence, and civic engagement.
- Experience in creating a strong sense of community and collaboration among faculty, staff, students, alumni, the university's other schools, the local bar, and the judiciary.
- Superior communication skills.
- A leadership style characterized by moral courage, empathy, flexibility, inclusiveness, integrity, and openness.

- Strong listening skills and the ability to learn from others along with the patience and wisdom to understand the history and culture of the law school.
- Decisiveness, the ability to multi-task, and a willingness to delegate appropriately.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The anticipated salary range for this position is \$450,000 to \$500,000 annually. When extending an offer of employment, American University considers factors such as (but not limited to) the scope and responsibilities of the position; the candidate's work experience, education/training, and key skills; internal peer equity; federal, state, and local laws; contractual stipulations; grant funding; and external market and organizational considerations. Applications, which should include a resume or *curriculum vitae* and cover letter, should be sent to the following electronic mailbox: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/american-university-washington-college-law/dean>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly preferred. Inquiries and nominations may also be sent to the web address cited above or directed to:

Ernest Brooks, Partner
Tim McFeeley, Partner
Miguel Santiago, Senior Associate

All inquiries and expressions of interest will be held in strict confidence. The search will continue until an appointment is made. For full and timely consideration, applications should be received by **November 25, 2025**.

American University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The university does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases under federal or local laws (collectively "Protected Bases") in its programs and activities.

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