



NATIONAL  
LOUIS  
UNIVERSITY

President  
National Louis University  
Chicago, Illinois

## THE SEARCH

National Louis University (NLU) seeks a strategic, innovative, and collaborative leader as its next President. Founded in 1886 with a mission of educational access, equity, and innovation, NLU provides its students with an excellent and cost-effective education, offering flexible programs responsive to workforce needs at a modest price. Over the past decade, NLU has expertly connected mission and strategy to witness an impressive rise in student enrollment, the growth of its programs in Chicagoland and beyond, and exemplary financial management and positioning.

Boasting a nearly 140-year history as one of the nation's most innovative institutions of higher education, NLU is positioned to continue its mission as an agent of social mobility and to cement its status as the model for a contemporary, accessible, and high-quality comprehensive university. The next president will take this mission seriously, building on the institution's culture of access, innovation, and agility to evolve institutional strategies that seize opportunities in service of its students and the university's continued success.

National Louis University's next leader assumes the presidency at a moment of urgency in higher education as universities across the country grapple with enrollment declines and families face rising educational costs, conditions which threaten to increase educational and socioeconomic gaps. NLU plays a critical role in the higher education marketplace with its accessible offerings, and this formula has proven highly successful for the institution. In service of this mission, the next president will lead the university in addressing priorities including: articulating an innovative vision for NLU's next chapter that builds on its strengths; astutely managing the institution's operations and expansion of its resource base for continued financial strength; broadcasting the University's accomplishments to increase its external recognition; strengthening student success initiatives; and supporting faculty and staff success. The president will work collaboratively with the Board, leadership team, faculty, staff, community partners, and other stakeholders to focus the University's efforts and resources to continue educating the next generation of leaders for education, business, health, and broader society.

The successful candidate will be a strategic, innovative, and results-oriented leader with a track record of setting clear goals, inspiring people, managing effectively, and generating revenue. Candidates should demonstrate evidence of a deep appreciation for teaching, learning, and the value of higher education.

National Louis University has selected the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist with the search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

National Louis University is a private not-for-profit university offering career-building, life-changing educational programs through the doctoral level. NLU serves a diverse student body and is recognized as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and Minority-Serving Institution (MSI). Noted for its achievements in educational access, the *Washington Monthly* ranked NLU fourth on its Social Mobility list and first on its Best Bang for Your Buck – Midwest category. *Money Magazine* featured NLU on its “Colleges Whose Graduates Say They Make the World a Better Place” top 10 list.

At NLU, undergraduate tuition averages about \$13,000, meaning that students who qualify for the maximum federal and state grants can attend the university for zero dollars out-of-pocket. As such, NLU is recognized as a national leader in closing the post-secondary completion gap, and students completing an undergraduate degree from NLU enter the workforce earning an estimated \$46,000 per year after graduation, ranking NLU among the top five of all Illinois post-secondary schools.

The University offers more than 80 undergraduate and graduate degree programs through seven academic units: the Undergraduate College, Kendall College of Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, the College of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, the National College of Education, the School of Business and Leadership, the School of Nursing, and Accelerate U, the University’s workforce development division. NLU is one of the most diverse universities in the Midwest, helping students of all ages and backgrounds achieve their personal and professional goals. Its network features three campuses in the Chicagoland area: Downtown Chicago, IL; Wheeling, IL; Lisle, IL, and one campus in Tampa, FL. The University offers programs through various modalities including face-to-face, blended, online, synchronous, and remote learning in which courses can be supplemented with well-planned and meaningful on-campus experiences.

After significant enrollment growth in recent years, including a 23% increase in new, degree-seeking student enrollment in AY23-24, NLU’s community is composed of nearly 13,000 students (6,300 of whom are undergraduates, and 6,700 graduate students) and 775 full-time personnel across the four campuses and online programs. Among degree-seeking undergraduates, 60 percent are eligible for federal Pell grants and 58 percent are first-generation college students. Its average undergraduate age is 28 and graduate age is 37. Its students are from 50 states and 48 countries.

The University has a total operating revenue of about \$141 million and an endowment of over \$95 million. NLU is classified as an Engaged Institution by the Carnegie Foundation and has aspirations to further build its research profile.

## ACADEMICS

Nearly 140 years ago, NLU began as a teacher preparation school coinciding with the start of the kindergarten movement in the late nineteenth century United States. This movement opened a career path for women, including many immigrants, who had no other access to advanced education. Beginning in the 1950s, the University's curriculum broadened to provide degree programs for teacher preparation across the full range of levels and functions in public education. In the 1980s, the University reorganized to create a College of Arts and Sciences as well as a College of Management and Business.

NLU's present-day curricular offerings have largely taken shape over the past decade, contributing to its growth in enrollment. NLU launched a new undergraduate experience in 2015, offering students support services to overcome real-life barriers to college success. In 2018, National Louis University acquired Kendall College and its culinary, hospitality, and general education programs as well as its other assets. Then, following the 2019 acquisition of the Illinois and Florida Schools of Professional Psychology, NLU formed two dynamic new colleges in the College of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences and the Graduate School of Business and Leadership. In recent years, it also founded its Accelerate U programs and launched a new School of Nursing. More information on these programs follows below.

### Schools and Programs

NLU's oldest and largest unit, the [National College of Education](#), has pioneered new teacher preparation, educator advancement and educator leadership programs. Its 24 academic programs serve over 4,000 students and equip educators to make a difference in the lives of students and in the field of education. Its graduates in teacher preparation have received more [Golden Apple awards](#) than any other institution in the state of Illinois.

The [Undergraduate College](#) is driven by the belief that higher education should be affordable, supportive and professionally focused. The college enrolls 4,500 first-time college students, degree completers, and transfer students of all ages seeking to obtain undergraduate degrees in a variety of fields including a new Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.

Serving 1,400 students, NLU's [College of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences](#) offers 12 graduate programs that prepare students for careers in the helping professions: psychology, behavioral sciences, counseling, and counselor education.

The [Graduate School of Business and Leadership](#) offers 15 programs that prepares its 1,000 students to effect change within both their organizations and their communities.

Ideally situated in one of the world's hospitality capitals, [Kendall College](#) is Chicago's premier destination for aspiring chefs, bakers, hotel managers and tourism professionals who want to hone their craft in a demanding, rewarding setting. The College places a strong emphasis on real-world experience and features state-of-the-art facilities such as commercial-grade kitchens for student learning. It is ranked the top culinary/hospitality school in Chicago and top 25 in the world by *CEOWorld* and serves 700 students.

In 2021, NLU launched [Accelerate U](#), a "job-first higher education" model offering learners an affordable and rapid pathway to a full-time job through academic and training pathways that lead to industry-recognized credentials in six to eight months. It focuses on both technical and professional ("durable") skill development; include coaching, wraparound supports, and career counseling and allows participants to earn up to 30 college credits that can build to a bachelor's degree. It has an enrollment of over 300 students and has served over 1,100 learners since its inception.

Lastly, launched in 2023, the [School of Nursing](#) is NLU's newest unit and features four academic pathways to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. It has served over 160 students since its founding and was created in response to a high demand for health professionals in the Chicagoland area. Over the next five years, NLU is developing and launching three new health programs: Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy.

NLU's academic programs are supported by more than 200 full-time faculty and hundreds of part time faculty as well as more than 550 full-time staff. Faculty are drawn to the institution for the transformative, life-changing impact of an affordable higher education on the student body it serves and many have worked at the University for numerous years.

## ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

The president is the chief executive of the organization, and in addition to setting institutional vision and strategy, is responsible for the overall supervision and management of NLU and for engaging and leading visibly both inside and outside the University. The president will support and encourage the processes of shared governance, exhibiting respect for the interests, views and passions of all in the community. Outside the institution, the president will participate in the business, political, and cultural communities that are so closely connected and vital to the University's health and long-term success in serving its mission.

The president's senior leadership team will serve as critical players in the execution of the institution's strategic priorities. Direct reports to the president (8) include the SVP and Provost, SVP of Finance, SVP of Marketing and Enrollment, SVP of Strategy and Innovation, VP of Human Resources, VP of Institutional Advancement, VP of Information Technology and the Director of Presidential Affairs and Board of Trustees. The president reports to and works closely with the University's 18-member Board of Trustees who come from a broad range of professional backgrounds and constituencies.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT

The President will be the chief spokesperson and advocate for the University, personally exhibiting the values that guide the institution. The successful president will address the following opportunities and challenges at National Louis University:

### **Articulate an innovative vision that builds on NLU's strengths and propels the University further down its promising path**

Agility and nimbleness have defined the past decade at NLU, and much of its recent success can be attributed to the University's responsiveness to evolving student and industry demands in Chicagoland and beyond. The President will seize on this momentum to articulate a vision for its next chapter that prioritizes program and student success innovations. An entrepreneurial leader, the president will embrace change and opportunity and will operate with prescience. Working in a tight-knit community, the president will engage the campus to bring consensus on this vision of how NLU can continue to serve its students, current and future.

### **Oversee the institution's operations and expand its resource base to ensure continued financial strength**

The president, as chief executive officer, will closely monitor the whole of NLU's finances, update and manage a forward-looking institutional financial strategy, and make deliberate fiscal decisions with effective measures of accountability. Working with the institution's chief financial officer and senior vice president for marketing and enrollment, the president will continue to ensure NLU's financial strength by prioritizing enrollment in all academic divisions and strategically adapting academic programs in response to market demands. The president is additionally responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of central University functions, controlling costs, maintaining a strong management team, and setting the highest expectations for the university's operations. Finally, the President and senior staff will explore and introduce initiatives to increase new revenue sources that are consistent with the mission and strategy of the institution.

### **Broadcast the great work of National Louis University to increase its external recognition**

National Louis University is colloquially referred to as "a best kept secret." As its accomplishments in the education access and attainment space have grown, the institution has remained relatively low-profile beyond the Chicagoland and Tampa areas. At times, there can be confusion between National Louis University and other similarly named institutions. The president will build on NLU's story and strengths to articulate a strong brand for the university and increase institutional visibility and recognition for its accomplishments. The president will also be a visible presence in the communities in which NLU operates to raise the profile and influence of the institution with leaders in business as well as political, cultural, and community organizations, and will serve as a key player in local higher education communities.

### **Serve as the chief fundraiser and philanthropic ambassador for the University**

The president will partner closely with the Board of Trustees and the institutional advancement team to cultivate and solicit transformative gifts, strengthen alumni and donor engagement, and expand the base of philanthropic investment that fuels NLU's strategic priorities. The president will model a culture of philanthropy across the institution – actively participating in donor visits, articulating a compelling case for support, and ensuring that philanthropy goals are integrated into all applicable areas of institutional planning and performance. The president will also prioritize stewardship excellence and accountability, ensuring that every donor experiences the impact of their investment.

### **Strengthen student success for National Louis University's diverse student body**

NLU places students at the core of its mission and seeks to help students of all ages and backgrounds achieve their personal and professional goals. Its educational opportunities aim to prepare students for meaningful lives and productive careers. The president will bring awareness of the challenges that today's students face, and, with the senior leadership team, work to identify priority areas for student success and persistence. The president will also work with local and national industries to strengthen opportunities for student internships and post-graduate employment to ensure successful outcomes for students after NLU.

### **Prioritize the success of faculty and staff**

As a teaching-focused institution, NLU relies on a talented and dedicated faculty and staff to support its mission. The president, alongside the provost, will pay attention to faculty recruitment as the institution grows while simultaneously facing retirements. Faculty development, including support for research, will be a priority. On the staff side, the president will recognize staff accomplishments, support a culture of collaboration and transparency, and maintain respect for staff work-life balance. Central to this work is the strategic importance of Service Excellence—cultivating a culture of caring and belonging that empowers students, faculty, and staff to thrive.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

The next president will demonstrate an understanding of academics and business models in private, nonprofit, tuition-driven academic institutions and will exhibit many or all of the following accomplishments and qualities:

- A track record of success in leadership roles at one or several similar institutions to NLU;
- A PhD or other terminal degree is desirable, as is college-level teaching experience;
- Understanding of the economic relationships, finances, technology, operations and infrastructure of an urban, private, tuition-dependent college; track record of making good management decisions and mobilizing resources in a similar context, management experience in a rapidly changing business setting is a plus;

- Experience attracting, developing and retaining students, especially in a setting that serves adult learners;
- A track record of recruiting and developing teams of professionals to expand and evolve organizations;
- Appetite and skill for fundraising, grounded in the ability to tell the story and make a compelling case for NLU; capacity to engage alumni and the larger community to secure gifts and grants;
- Experience working effectively with board members to engender their support, engage their talents and energy, and work in partnership with them on issues of mission, vision and strategy;
- Demonstrated commitment to a culture that is respectful of all members of the community and committed to the highest standards of integrity; ability to lead such a community through difficult times and hard choices in a way that strengthens the culture and draws people together;
- Excellent communication skills and a collaborative leadership style; the ability to engage with multiple stakeholders in open dialogue; effectively handle news media interviews and speak publicly;
- Energetic, entrepreneurial, bold, strategic and steady leadership, and demonstrated grace under pressure.

## COMPENSATION

The salary range for this position is \$400,000-\$600,000. NLU offers a comprehensive benefits package that includes health, dental, disability and vision insurance; retirement plan options; paid time off; and professional development opportunities. This position may also be eligible to participate in variable and incentive compensation programs. Additional benefits include employee wellness resources and flexible work arrangements where applicable. Compensation decisions are dependent upon the facts and circumstances of each position and candidate. Offers are based on multiple factors permitted by law, including but not limited to: budgetary considerations, job-related knowledge/skills, experience, market considerations, tenure and standing with the university (applicable to current employees), and internal equity.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

National Louis University has retained the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications should be sent electronically and in confidence to:

Greg Esposito, Partner  
Jeff Kessner, Partner  
Diana Carmona, Senior Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/national-louis-university/president>

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



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## APPENDIX

### About the Communities that NLU Serves

Chicago, IL, is a vibrant and iconic city known for its world-class architecture, diverse culinary scene, and deep-rooted cultural institutions like the Art Institute of Chicago and Millennium Park. With a strong economy anchored by industries such as finance, healthcare, education, and technology, Chicago offers a wealth of career opportunities. The city's distinct neighborhoods provide a range of living options, from quiet, family-friendly communities to lively downtown high-rises. Residents enjoy lakefront recreation, renowned museums, professional sports, and endless entertainment. Chicago combines big-city energy with Midwestern hospitality and offers a relatively affordable cost of living compared to other major metros. From live jazz and neighborhood festivals to international cuisine and public art, Chicago's cultural spirit is woven into every corner of the city.

Tampa, FL, is a vibrant city on Florida's west coast, known for its sunny weather, beautiful bay, and rich cultural heritage. It's a major metropolitan area with a diverse population and a growing economy, offering a blend of urban amenities and access to outdoor recreation. As the third most populous city in Florida, Tampa boasts a thriving job market driven by tourism, healthcare, finance, insurance, technology, construction, and the maritime industry. Tampa's cultural landscape features the Tampa Museum of Art, Straz Center for the Performing Arts, and the historic Ybor City district, which reflects the city's Cuban and Spanish heritage.

More info about NLU can be found at <https://nl.edu/>