



Search for the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Coastal Carolina University  
Conway, South Carolina

## THE SEARCH

Coastal Carolina University (Coastal Carolina; CCU) seeks an experienced and student-centered leader to serve as its vice president for student affairs (VPSA). This is an extraordinary opportunity to lead a committed student affairs team at a dynamic University experiencing exciting growth, with students and their success fueling the University's trajectory and strategic priorities. The vice president will be collaborative, innovative, and visionary, tasked with fostering student success, engagement, and belonging. The VPSA will be a visible presence in the campus community and thoughtfully lead the Division of Student Affairs with a shared mission, purpose, and focus on student-centered support.

Coastal Carolina University is a public institution recognized for its student-centered mission and bold advancements in enrollment, retention, and student success. Coastal Carolina embraces innovative thinking, combining bold creativity with a strong commitment to student success and connection. Rooted in a tradition of excellence, the University empowers its students to reach beyond themselves and make a lasting impact on the world.

Founded in 1954, CCU is a vibrant community that now serves more than 12,000 students across 115 undergraduate and 30 graduate programs, achieving record enrollment for three consecutive years and welcoming its largest freshman class in 2025. CCU is committed to developing knowledgeable, responsible, and globally minded graduates through a teacher-scholar model that emphasizes high-quality teaching and engaged learning. The Division of Student Affairs is comprised of 9 departments, providing learning opportunities, programs, and services that support personal growth, academic excellence, and holistic well-being for all members of the Coastal Carolina student community.

Reporting to the president and serving on the President's Cabinet, the VPSA will co-create a bold vision for the future of student affairs at Coastal Carolina and partner with colleagues across the University to make the shared vision and [CCU Reach](#) strategic plan a reality. The VPSA must be a visible advocate for the division, their team, and all students, adept at navigating change, and capable of capitalizing

opportunities into innovative practices. They will lead a dedicated team with empathy and clarity, promote professional growth, and ensure effective resource management to support a growing student population. Equally important, the VPSA must cultivate a steady environment that fosters trust, transparency, and excellence in student affairs practices.

Coastal Carolina University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and applications to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Coastal Carolina University is a dynamic public institution on the rise, recognized for its student-centered mission and bold advancements in enrollment, retention, and student success. The University provides a dynamic educational experience emphasizing academic excellence, student engagement, and comprehensive support services. The University's dedicated faculty and staff are committed to mentoring and guiding students, fostering a personalized and enriching learning environment.

Established in 1954, CCU has grown into a vibrant comprehensive University serving more than 12,000 students (just over 90% are undergraduate students) enrolled in over 115 undergraduate and 30 graduate programs, setting record enrollments for three consecutive years. Applications continue to surge, with a 16% increase of over 24,000 first-year applications received in 2025 and the largest freshman class in school history enrolling over 2,900 new students in 2025. This sustained growth reflects CCU's increasing visibility, value, and reputation for providing an engaging and supportive educational environment.

CCU seeks to develop students who are both knowledgeable in their chosen fields and prepared to be productive, responsible, and healthy citizens with a global perspective. To deliver on this commitment, the University recruits highly qualified and motivated students, faculty, and staff from the region, state, nation and world to create a student-centered learning environment. Coastal Carolina embraces a teacher-scholar model, placing primary emphasis on quality teaching and engaged learning. To nurture an active learning environment, CCU maintains a broad range of programming, technologies, and support services aligned with the University's mission, values, and dedication to student success. These programs are designed to reach across disciplines, offering students valuable opportunities to grow, lead, and innovate.

The University is home to a student body representing South Carolina, the broader Southeast, and regions across the nation and globe. Approximately half of the student body is from South Carolina. Nearly one-third of CCU students identify as racial or ethnic minorities, and the institution continues to strengthen its support for students regardless of identity or background. Women make up about 55% of the undergraduate population, and nearly 90% of students attend full time. The University maintains a student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1 and the average freshman class size is 25 students, ensuring accessible faculty interactions and meaningful mentoring relationships. In addition, roughly 76% of undergraduates

receive financial aid, with an average award of over \$11,600 — underscoring CCU's commitment to affordability and access.

CCU is also building momentum in graduate education and research, expanding offerings that meet regional and national needs while deepening opportunities for student engagement. In February 2025, CCU earned a Research Colleges and Universities designation from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Signature strengths in coastal ecology, sustainability, and marine science anchor CCU's research identity, while new interdisciplinary initiatives and partnerships extend their impact in areas such as public health, data analytics, and educational leadership. These programs reflect CCU's bold vision for solving real-world challenges and shaping the future of its region and beyond.

Student success is central to CCU's mission, reflected in rising retention and graduation outcomes and a robust support system. The first-to-second year retention rate has climbed to 79%, with more than 91% of first-year students continuing from fall to spring. Comprehensive services — including centralized advising, the Coastal Student Success Center, academic coaching, tutoring, and faculty engagement programs — have led to measurable gains. Beyond academics, CCU fosters a vibrant campus life. Nearly half of students live on or near campus, more than 180 student organizations contribute to a strong sense of community, and Chanticleer student-athletes excel in Division I competition while setting GPA records. Coastal Carolina University offers both momentum and opportunity: a thriving and ambitious student body, measurable progress in student success, and a supportive institutional culture eager to build upon ongoing achievements.

## Leadership

[James J. Winebrake, Ph.D.](#), assumed office as the fourth president of Coastal Carolina University in July 2025. He previously served as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, where, under his leadership, the institution saw record enrollment and retention gains, launched new academic programs (including doctoral degrees), and strengthened its research and scholarship ecosystem. Before that, Winebrake held leadership and faculty roles at the Rochester Institute of Technology and James Madison University and worked as a policy scientist with the U.S. Department of Energy. A distinguished scholar in environmental and transportation policy, he has earned international recognition, contributed over 100 scholarly publications, and served on numerous professional boards and committees, including several National Academies of Science committees and the New York State Energy Planning Board. He holds a Ph.D. in Energy Management and Policy from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.S. in Technology and Policy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a B.S. in Physics from Lafayette College.

## ABOUT THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

[The Division of Student Affairs](#) is charged with creating a transformative student experience that supports wellness, fosters belonging, promotes leadership and civic responsibility, and ensures equitable access to resources in alignment with the University's strategic plan, CCU Reach. Through robust programming,

collaborative partnerships, and responsive services, the division contributes directly to student retention, persistence, and graduation outcomes.

The division's culture and values are rooted in collaboration, community, student-centeredness, integrity, and a shared commitment to excellence. Staff consistently demonstrate adaptability, creativity, and resilience in response to a myriad of changes and challenges affecting students and the field of student affairs. Student Affairs has served as both a stabilizing and evolving force — meeting student needs in real-time while preserving a culture that values creativity and innovation.

Student Affairs is comprised of nine departments and functions across four core subdivisions: Dean of Students Office, Health and Well-Being, Community Building, Outreach, & Student Media and Student Engagement. Each subdivision is led by an assistant vice president. Student Affairs departments include Student Involvement and Leadership; Military and Veteran Services; Career Services; Orientation, Transition, and Family Programs; Lib Jackson Student Union Operations; Center for Health and Well-Being; Dean of Students Office; Accessibility and Disability Services; and Strategic Initiatives.

## ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Reporting to the president, the VPSA is a visionary and student-centered leader who embraces the University's mission and values and advances a bold and constant vision for student life at Coastal Carolina University. The VPSA will lead and provide strategic direction and administrative oversight to the Division of Student Affairs. They are responsible for leading, advocating, and supporting people, programs, spaces, policies, and resources that advance student development, belonging, wellness, safety, and community at CCU. An accomplished collaborator and champion for their team members and for students, the VPSA works closely with senior leaders, faculty, students, and staff throughout the University and broadcasts the story of student affairs at Coastal Carolina. The vice president and their team are vital and strategic partners in shaping the student experience across the institution.

A dedicated and effective leader and manager, the vice president for student affairs supervises six direct reports: assistant vice president for health and well-being; assistant vice president for community building, outreach, and student media; assistant vice president for student engagement; assistant vice president and dean of students; director of strategic initiatives and assessment; and an administrative coordinator.

The VPSA is also a member of the [President's Cabinet](#). This team of senior-level administrators represents all areas of Coastal Carolina. The cabinet has been intentional about building a culture of alignment and shared purpose. It is a collaborative approach to leadership and the success of the institution, including its students.

The VPSA indirectly oversees more than 53 full-time and 125 student and part-time employees. The next VPSA should be energized by the abundance of possibilities to impact students and the unique opportunity this role offers to lead at a thriving institution with a well-functioning and dedicated team. Moreover, the VPSA should be excited about being an active and engaged member of the Conway and Myrtle Beach communities.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

To be successful, the next vice president for student affairs will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

### **Develop and pursue a student-centered vision for the Division of Student Affairs**

As Coastal Carolina evolves, so must the division. The VPSA will be tasked with co-creating, communicating, and implementing a strategic direction for the division, aligned with the University's priorities. The VPSA must honor and build upon what already makes student affairs at Coastal Carolina University successful and distinctive, while developing a forward-looking vision that enables effective best practices.

The Division of Student Affairs has undergone reorganization, rebranding, and role evolution in recent years, and seeks a sustainable and high-performing model that fully harnesses the talent and commitment of its team. The VPSA's leadership should be steady and sustainable — anchored in clear values and guided by a long-term commitment to Coastal Carolina and student flourishing. The vice president's vision should be developed collaboratively with key stakeholders within the division and across the University community, including students. This vision must embrace the full scope of the division's departments, programs, and talents, serving as a unifying framework that emphasizes student engagement, community, wellness, and belonging.

### **Collaboratively champion student success and the Coastal Carolina student experience**

Improving retention and graduation rates, career readiness, sense of belonging, and student engagement are central to the University's mission and future trajectory. The VPSA models and inspires the kind of collaborative mindset that builds bridges across silos and overcomes obstacles to success across the University. The VPSA works passionately with other leaders, including trustees, on critical University priorities to help ensure that Coastal Carolina continues to provide access to transformative educational opportunities for all students. The programs and services facilitated by the division should be current, effective, and aligned with best practices and institutional outcomes.

To be effective, the VPSA must be committed to the personal and academic success of all students and possess a desire and energy to know students and advocate for them. Students and their families frequently turn to the VPSA and their team for guidance, trust, and support. By being visible on campus and engaged with students, the vice president can leverage their role as a division leader, executive cabinet member, and proficient collaborator to inform, resolve, and otherwise champion the voice of the student body.

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**Provide steadfast leadership and advocacy in a dynamic landscape**

The vice president will join the University at a unique and momentous time in student affairs and higher education, both nationally and within the state of South Carolina. This moment offers a rare opportunity to shape the future of student affairs at a growing public institution with a strong sense of community and purpose. The VPSA must be a forward-thinking and adaptive leader — one who thrives amid change and can create a solid foundation for their team to operate for years to come. They must anticipate challenges and turn emerging trends into opportunities for innovation and improvement.

The VPSA will be called upon to have a keen sense of the best practices, trends, and anticipated opportunities and challenges related to their portfolio and should bring experience facilitating innovation from ideation through implementation and assessment. Additionally, the VPSA must also understand the sociopolitical contexts of student affairs and higher education locally and nationally. The VPSA will work closely with institutional leadership and colleagues to adjust, translate, and operationalize policies and practices accordingly and as needed. The VPSA also plays a vital role in training and supporting staff in these areas.

**Develop and lead a team of dedicated professionals**

The vice president will join a student affairs team defined by deep care for students, collaboration, and respect among colleagues. Serving as a bridge between the division and the broader University, this leader will provide steadiness and clarity in times of challenge, guiding the community with confidence, compassion, and purpose. Creativity and innovation are encouraged among this dedicated team of professionals who work together to meet students' evolving needs. The vice president will cultivate an environment where staff feel supported, empowered, and inspired to do their best work — investing in professional growth, removing barriers, and fostering trust, transparency, and mutual respect. A coach and connector, this leader will strengthen team morale and promote a healthy, high-performing workplace culture. Accessible and authentic, the VPSA will model effective supervision through active listening, clear communication, and thoughtful accountability. The ideal candidate will practice a consultative and inclusive approach to leadership, rather than relying strictly on a top-down approach.

**Effectively assess and manage Student Affairs resources, structures, policies, and programs**

The VPSA will lead the ongoing appraisal of current programs and services, spaces, organizational structures, and processes within Student Affairs. Doing so successfully will require deep and meaningful engagement with Student Affairs employees and stakeholders to thoroughly understand the division's strengths and opportunities for enhancement and effectiveness. Implementing and utilizing assessment is expected. The VPSA will also manage resources and business operations for Student Affairs and will need to be a responsible steward of resources who is creative, yet judicious. The VPSA will engage in appropriate collaborative exercises, resource adjustments, and dialogue that ensures values-driven, efficiency-minded, and innovative resource management throughout the division. Of particular importance is sustaining, if not improving, the division's capabilities of serving and supporting students as the student body continues to grow.

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## CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

### Required Qualifications

- An earned doctorate or terminal degree in higher education or a related field is required.
- Demonstrated progressive leadership and administrative experience, ideally in a public university setting and directly related to student affairs.
- Proven experience implementing initiatives, programs, and structures that address retention and student success.
- Demonstrated ability to effectively mentor, supervise, and support staff with a strong personal orientation toward collaboration, teamwork, transparency, accessibility, development, and accountability.
- Proven skills in crisis management, conflict management, and dispute resolution.
- History of engagement with students and the campus community; a strong, visible presence and active participation in a range of campus activities.
- An engaged university leader with well-developed political and diplomatic skills, adept at effectively presenting information to university leadership and externally representing the institution's missions and goals.
- Strong business acumen and a proven track record of managing a sizeable team and budget; demonstrated successful stewardship of physical, financial, and human resources.

### Desired Characteristics

- **Strategic Leadership and Vision**—A forward-thinking leader who can articulate and implement a compelling vision for student affairs that aligns with institutional priorities and anticipates the evolving needs of students in a rapidly changing higher education landscape.
- **Student-Centered Philosophy**—A deep commitment to student development, equity, and success, with a demonstrated ability to foster a culture of care, belonging, and engagement across diverse student populations.
- **Collaborative and Inclusive Leadership**—A relationship builder who values shared governance and cross-divisional collaboration. The ideal candidate will be skilled in cultivating partnerships with areas including academic affairs, enrollment management, athletics, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.
- **Operational Excellences and Organizational Development**—Proven experience managing complex organizations, leading change, and aligning structures, resources, and personnel to support strategic goals. A strong understanding of assessment, planning, and continuous improvement.
- **Crisis Management and Student Advocacy**—A steady and compassionate leader in times of crisis with experience navigating student mental health, campus safety, and emergency response. A visible advocate for student needs and well-being.



- Innovative and Adaptive Mindset—A creative problem-solver who embraces innovation, leverages technology, and adapts to emerging trends in student affairs and higher education.
- Authentic Communication and Presence—A approachable and transparent communicator who listens deeply, engages authentically with students and staff, and builds trust through integrity and consistency.

## CONWAY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Located in the heart of South Carolina's coastal region, Coastal Carolina University offers the best of both worlds — Conway's welcoming small-town charm and Myrtle Beach's vibrant coastal lifestyle. One of America's fastest-growing regions and home to over 35,000 residents, Conway offers tree-lined streets and a close-knit community atmosphere with easy access to the amenities of a major nearby tourist destination. Myrtle Beach, just minutes away, welcomes more than 20 million visitors annually and features 60 miles of pristine beaches, over 90 golf courses, and countless restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues. The region's strong economy, affordable cost of living (about 10% below the national average), and mild subtropical climate create an exceptional environment to live and work. With abundant outdoor recreation, a thriving arts and culture scene, and easy access to the Atlantic Ocean, the Conway/Myrtle Beach area offers an unparalleled quality of life for those who want to combine professional purpose with coastal living.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the [Isaacson, Miller website](#).

Keight Tucker Kennedy, Managing Partner  
Ivan Ceballos, Managing Associate  
Alexis Scott, Managing Search Coordinator  
Isaacson, Miller

Coastal Carolina University is committed to ensuring that all persons are able to learn, work and enjoy a workplace, educational and living environment that is free from discriminatory harassment, treatment or services.

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