



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Dean of the Graduate School

Auburn University

Auburn, Alabama

As a land-grant institution, Auburn University is dedicated to improving the lives of the people of Alabama, the nation, and the world through forward-thinking education, life-enhancing research and scholarship, and selfless service.

THE SEARCH

Auburn University (“the University” or “Auburn”) seeks a collaborative and innovative academic leader to serve as its next Dean of the Graduate School. Auburn University's Graduate School serves as the academic home for advanced study and scholarly achievement across one of the nation's leading public research universities. As an R1 institution and a university nationally recognized for excellence in teaching, research, and outreach, Auburn provides an exceptional platform for graduate education. This environment presents a unique opportunity for the next Dean to build upon Auburn's momentum, develop innovative graduate programs, strengthen student success and professional development initiatives, and elevate the University's national profile in graduate education and research.

As a top-tier Carnegie R1 research university, Auburn is a leader in developing critical answers to real-world challenges. Auburn is among a distinctive body of institutions designated as land-, sea- and space-grant universities, and is one of the largest research institutions in the southern region. It has earned the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, recognized nationally for the scope, quality and impact of its outreach mission through its engagement in the community. U.S. News & World Report ranks Auburn #1 in the state of Alabama and has also ranked the university among the top 50 public universities in the nation. The university is committed to the delivery of exceptional education and student experiences, impactful research, scholarship, and creative works for the public good, and contributing to the welfare of the state, region and beyond.

The Graduate School supports more than 6,000 graduate and professional students and offers access to over 200 graduate degrees and more than 400 program options spanning 12 academic colleges. The next Dean will join Auburn at an exciting moment of institutional growth and ambition. Guided by [Strategic Plan 2035: Grounded & Groundbreaking](#), the University is investing in research expansion, graduate student achievement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and national visibility. The Dean will work closely with university leadership, academic deans, faculty, and research partners to advance graduate education as a key driver of Auburn's continued ascent among the nation's premier public universities. Through

leadership of graduate admissions, student support, professional development, postdoctoral initiatives, and academic policy, the Dean will help ensure that Auburn remains a destination for talented graduate students, distinguished faculty, and impactful research.

Reporting to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, this role offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of graduate education at Auburn and support the institution's research mission and academic priorities. With oversight of key operational areas in graduate education—including admissions, adult education, graduate student advising, international student support, and professional development—the dean will play a central role in defining and leading the Graduate School's evolving strategic role at a university ascending in research prominence and national reputation. The Dean will articulate and implement a compelling vision for graduate education, collaborating with academic deans, faculty, and institutional leaders to strengthen and expand graduate and executive education programs across disciplines, and seek opportunities for strategic program development and enrollment management.

Auburn University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated below.

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Chartered in 1856, Auburn University opened in 1859. The university started out as the East Alabama Male College, a Methodist institution, with 80 students with a faculty of six. In 1872, the school became a state-owned, land-grant institution and was renamed the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama, emphasizing scientific and agricultural programs. As expansion continued, the Alabama Legislature decided in 1899 that a new name was needed to reflect the institution's growth, and the college became the Alabama Polytechnic Institute. The legislature made the final change in 1960, and the Alabama Polytechnic Institute became Auburn University.

Auburn University is one of the nation's premier public land-grant institutions. As an R1 research university, Auburn maintains the highest levels of research activity and high standards for teaching excellence, offering bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees in the arts and sciences, agriculture, engineering, and the professions. With a total fall 2025 enrollment of 35,172, the university comprises 28,953 undergraduates and 6,219 graduate and professional students. Organized into 12 academic colleges, Auburn's 1,552 faculty members offer more than 200 educational programs. The university is nationally recognized for its commitment to academic excellence, positive work environment, student engagement, and beautiful campus. Affectionally known as "the Auburn Family," the university community has long been defined by its passion, spirit, and deep-rooted traditions anchored through the tenets of the [Auburn Creed](#).

For more information about Auburn University, visit: www.auburn.edu. For more facts, rankings, and accolades, please see: <https://auburn.edu/about/facts-figures.php>.

Leadership

Dr. Christopher B. Roberts became Auburn University's 21st president in 2022, beginning a new era of continued excellence for the university he has called home for nearly three decades. He began his career at Auburn in 1994 as an assistant professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering and became department chair in 2003. He was named dean of the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering in July 2012. Prior to his presidency, Roberts served as the dean of Auburn's Samuel Ginn College of Engineering from 2012 to 2022. President Roberts leads the university's four divisions, including Auburn's main campus with its more than 31,000 students and 5,500 faculty and staff, as well as Auburn University at Montgomery, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, a joint enterprise with Alabama A&M University. As the university's CEO, he marshals the institution's \$1.54 billion annual budget and vast resources, while spearheading the university's strategic vision and advancing Auburn's ever-growing research enterprise and economic development. He earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Missouri and master's and doctoral degrees in chemical engineering from the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Vini Nathan began serving as Auburn University's provost and senior vice president for academic affairs in 2023 after serving as interim provost. Prior to the Provost's Office, Dr. Nathan was dean and McWhorter Chair of the College of Architecture, Design and Construction (CADC) from 2011 to 2022. She is also a tenured professor of Architecture and Interior Architecture and is a Senior Fellow of the Design Futures Council (DFC). As provost, Dr. Nathan is the university's chief academic officer and oversees the university's academic and outreach missions. Dr. Nathan works with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders to ensure the university maintains the highest possible outreach and teaching and learning programs. In carrying out these responsibilities, Dr. Nathan works directly with the deans of the 12 colleges, the university's shared governance groups, university administrators, student leaders, and other Provost's Office team members. In addition, Dr. Nathan oversees various faculty matters, including academic issues and policies, accreditation, strategic planning, educational services and resources, faculty development, and outreach, and is responsible for the university's tenure and promotion process.

The Community

Auburn, Alabama, residents enjoy a thriving community. The city is recognized as one of the best-performing small cities in U.S. by the Milken Institute and in Livability's Top 100 Best Places to Live. It features a moderate southern climate and easy access to large cities, beaches, and recreational mountain venues. The city's historic downtown exudes a warm ambiance, offering a variety of boutique shops, cozy cafes, and local eateries that cater to all tastes. Auburn's commitment to preserving its heritage is evident through its heritage trails, museums, and annual festivals that celebrate the city's past, present and future.

Situated along the rapidly developing I-85 corridor between Atlanta, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama, the combined Auburn-Opelika, Alabama/Columbus, Georgia statistical areas have a population of over 500,000, with excellent public-school systems, outstanding recreation areas and an exceptional regional medical center.

More information is available through the [City of Auburn](#) and [Auburn-Opelika Tourism](#) websites.

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

[The Auburn University Graduate School](#) serves as the central hub for graduate education, working collaboratively with the university's colleges, schools, departments, and research enterprise to advance academic excellence, discovery, and innovation. Auburn's commitment to graduate education reflects its broader land-grant mission of generating knowledge, fostering economic development, and improving quality of life throughout Alabama, the nation, and the world.

The Graduate School oversees a robust and growing portfolio of graduate offerings, including more than 200 graduate degrees and over 400 graduate program options spanning the university's 12 academic colleges. Graduate students benefit from opportunities to engage in high-impact research, interdisciplinary scholarship, and professional development while working alongside distinguished faculty recognized nationally and internationally for their contributions to teaching, research, and creative activity. Auburn's graduate programs consistently earn national recognition, including top-ranked programs in Veterinary Medicine (#11), Rehabilitation Counseling (#18), Pharmacy (#31), Executive MBA (#32), and Supply Chain and Logistics (#39), while the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering is recognized among the nation's leading graduate engineering schools with particular strengths in agricultural, aerospace, industrial, and civil engineering. In addition, Auburn is home to established and highly-ranked online graduate programs in business, education, and engineering.

Auburn enrolls more than 6,000 graduate and professional students who contribute substantially to the university's research, teaching, and outreach missions. The Graduate School places a strong emphasis on student success, offering resources that support recruitment, retention, academic progression, professional development, and career readiness. Guided by a mission to promote excellence in graduate and professional education and to positively impact society through research, scholarship, and service, the Graduate School plays a vital role in advancing Auburn University's strategic priorities. As Auburn continues to expand its research enterprise, graduate enrollment, and nationally recognized academic programs—including highly ranked online offerings—the Graduate School is well positioned to partner with academic colleges and further elevate the university's reputation as a destination for exceptional graduate education, research, and innovation.

THE ROLE OF THE DEAN

Reporting directly to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and overseeing a team of 16 full-time staff, the Dean serves as the chief academic and administrative officer of the Graduate School and plays a central role in advancing Auburn's institutional goals. The Dean provides strategic leadership for graduate and professional education, working collaboratively with academic colleges, faculty leaders, and administrative partners to support student success, strengthen graduate programs, and advance Auburn's research enterprise.

With rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and other transformative technologies reshaping industries and graduate education, the Dean will take advantage of this opportunity to facilitate and support new programs and learning experiences that prepare students for future workforce opportunities while fostering innovation across disciplines. They will also have the opportunity to further diversify and strengthen Auburn's portfolio of graduate programs, including executive certificates, professional credentials, and other flexible educational pathways. The Dean will work collaboratively with academic leaders and faculty to identify emerging areas of demand and ensure that Auburn remains responsive to the needs of learners, employers, and industry partners.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Dean has a unique opportunity to build on a solid foundation of excellence in graduate education and further enhance the mission and representation of the Graduate School. Specifically, the Dean of the Graduate School will work to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Advance the strategic role of graduate education in Auburn's continued ascent as a leading public R1 university.

Auburn University is experiencing significant momentum in enrollment, research, national reputation, and institutional ambition. The University has articulated bold goals centered on student success, research excellence, innovation, and societal impact. The Dean will play a central role in ensuring that graduate education serves as a key driver of these institutional priorities. Working collaboratively with the provost, academic deans, faculty leaders, and research administrators, the Dean will develop and advance a compelling vision for graduate education that strengthens Auburn's ability to attract outstanding students, support world-class scholarship, and contribute to the University's growing national prominence. The Dean will elevate the Graduate School's visibility and influence across campus, positioning it as a strategic partner in advancing Auburn's teaching, research, and outreach missions.

Expand and strengthen graduate enrollment, recruitment, and student success.

Auburn has an opportunity to further strengthen its graduate enrollment strategy while enhancing student success outcomes. The next Dean will provide leadership for recruitment, admissions, retention, and degree completion efforts, working closely with colleges and departments to identify opportunities for sustainable growth and enrollment diversification. They will champion a data-informed approach to enrollment management, leveraging institutional strengths while identifying new pathways for attracting talented students from Alabama, across the nation, and around the world. Equally important, the Dean will ensure that graduate students have access to academic support, mentoring, professional development, and career preparation necessary to thrive throughout their Auburn experience and beyond.

Foster innovation and growth in graduate programs.

As workforce needs evolve and interdisciplinary scholarship becomes increasingly important, Auburn is well positioned to expand and diversify its graduate offerings. The Dean will serve as a catalyst and strategic partner for innovation, collaborating with deans and faculty to develop new programs and delivery models that enhance Auburn's competitiveness and respond to emerging opportunities. This work may include supporting interdisciplinary degrees, professional master's programs, graduate certificates, accelerated pathways, and high-quality online and hybrid offerings. The Dean will guide program development efforts through collaborative engagement with faculty governance and institutional leadership while ensuring that academic quality, student demand, and alignment with Auburn's strategic priorities remain at the forefront of decision making.

Enhance the graduate student experience and cultivate a vibrant scholarly community.

Graduate students make essential contributions to Auburn's research enterprise, instructional mission, and culture of discovery. The Dean will serve as a visible advocate for graduate students and will foster a graduate experience that promotes belonging, engagement, professional growth, and academic excellence. Working in partnership with academic and student support units across campus, the Dean will strengthen initiatives that support student well-being, career readiness, mentorship, and community building. While many graduate students identify most closely with their departments and disciplines, the Dean will create opportunities that strengthen connections across colleges and cultivate a shared sense of identity among Auburn's diverse graduate student population.

Expand support for research excellence and graduate scholarship.

As Auburn continues to grow its research enterprise, graduate education will remain critical to advancing the University's research ambitions. The Dean will collaborate closely with faculty, research leaders, and university administrators to ensure that graduate students and postdoctoral scholars are positioned for success as contributors to Auburn's discovery and innovation ecosystem. They will work to strengthen graduate funding opportunities, enhance fellowship and assistantship programs, support externally funded training initiatives, and identify new resources that increase Auburn's ability to recruit and retain exceptional students. Through these efforts, the Dean will help ensure that graduate education remains a cornerstone of Auburn's continued growth as a nationally recognized research university.

Strengthen organizational effectiveness and collaborative partnerships across the University.

The Graduate School operates at the intersection of academic affairs, research, enrollment management, student success, and faculty governance. The next Dean will lead a talented and dedicated staff while continuing to refine processes, improve services, and build organizational capacity in support of a complex and expanding graduate enterprise. Success in this role will require a highly collaborative leader who values partnership, transparency, and shared governance. The Dean will build strong relationships with academic deans, department leaders, faculty, students, and staff, serving as a trusted advisor and convener who brings people together around common goals. Through these efforts, the Dean will help

position the Graduate School as an indispensable partner in achieving Auburn University's aspirations for excellence and impact.

CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate will be a seasoned and accomplished leader in graduate education. The search committee understands that no single candidate will bring all the ideal qualifications, but it seeks candidates with the following experience and abilities:

- An earned terminal degree and academic accomplishments commensurate with appointment as a tenured full professor;
- Experience in administrative leadership for graduate programs at departmental, school, college, or university level;
- A sustained record of leadership in graduate education and experience managing complex academic and administrative operations;
- Experience collaborating with graduate student organizations and a demonstrated commitment to advancing graduate student well-being, engagement, and success;
- A demonstrated record of research, scholarship, and scholarly achievement.
- Familiarity with graduate funding mechanisms, including fellowships, assistantships, and externally funded training programs;
- Proven ability to build consensus, foster collaboration, and drive innovation to support institutional goals;
- Strong organizational and financial management skills, with the ability to steward resources effectively;
- A demonstrated commitment to academic integrity, mentorship, and graduate student success.
- Demonstrated adaptability and the ability to lead effectively in complex environments as well as comfort with ambiguity;

TO APPLY

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resumes and letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller team via the link below.

Pam Pezzoli, Partner
Miguel Santiago, Senior Associate
Melissa Barravecchio, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/auburn-university-graduate-school/dean>

It is Auburn University's policy to provide equal employment and education opportunities for all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity,

gender expression, pregnancy, age, disability, protected veteran status, genetic information, or any other classification protected by applicable law. Please visit the EOC [website](#) to learn more.

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