



# The Search for the 12<sup>th</sup> President



## THE SEARCH

Spelman College seeks an inspirational, innovative, and strategic leader to serve as the institution's 12th president, a president who will honor Spelman's historic legacy and build upon its historic legacy and achievements.

As the nation's top-ranked HBCU for 19 consecutive years, *Newsweek's* Best College for Women, and the premier undergraduate institution for women of African descent, Spelman College ("Spelman") serves as a leading center of intellectual inquiry on global issues, particularly those affecting the African Diaspora. Founded in 1881 as a historically Black women's college, Spelman remains deeply committed to the education and empowerment of women of African descent. Recognized as one of the nation's top liberal arts institutions, Spelman College is a top choice of students, admitting 25 percent of applicants each year through a highly selective admissions process. This commitment to academic excellence supports a rigorous and empowering educational experience for approximately 2,700 students. Spelman's 203 full-time and 89 part-time faculty, supported by more than 400 dedicated staff members, help cultivate a vibrant campus community grounded in intellectual rigor, personal development, and holistic support, ensuring that students are challenged, nurtured, and fully prepared to contribute meaningfully to a diverse and rapidly evolving global landscape.



At a time when many colleges and universities face significant fiscal and operational challenges, Spelman stands on a strong financial footing with decades of prudent financial management and balanced budgets. The College's endowment is \$577 million, and it operates with an annual operating budget of \$185 million. With total assets and related investments of approximately \$1 billion, Spelman is well-positioned to sustain its mission, advance its strategic priorities, and continue providing transformative educational experiences for future generations.

Spelman College seeks a leader who can shape a bold vision for its future, secure vital resources, strengthen both operations and academics, and uphold Spelman’s legacy of cultivating exceptional, ethical, and service-driven graduates prepared for an ever-changing world. In addition, the next president should fully immerse themselves in the Spelman community, take the time to understand what it means to be a Spelmanite, and build authentic, personal connections with students.

The 12th president should be an inspiring and forward-thinking individual who exemplifies a lifetime commitment to excellence, is ready to build on Spelman’s foundation, and ensures the College’s long-term success. This role requires robust executive experience, expertise in finance and operations, a track record in fundraising, and proven leadership in driving change, managing risk, and developing high-performing teams in higher education.



This extraordinary opportunity to harness Spelman’s momentum and continue to advance its historic legacy requires a leader ready to embrace the moment. The president will collaborate with a committed Board of Trustees, dedicated faculty, skilled administrators and staff, ambitious students, and engaged alumnae to guide the College toward continued excellence and impact.

Isaacson, Miller has been retained to assist the Board of Trustees in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## HISTORY & OVERVIEW

Founded in 1881 in Atlanta, Georgia, as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, the institution was renamed Spelman College in 1924 and has since evolved into a global leader in the education of women of African descent. Spelman’s student body includes more than 2,700 students representing 41 states and eight

countries, creating a vibrant and diverse community committed to scholarly achievement and social responsibility. The College fosters an environment where students are encouraged to engage with global cultures, pursue their passions, and develop as leaders dedicated to positive social change.

*U.S. News & World Report* consistently recognizes Spelman College as one of the nation's premier liberal arts institutions. Spelman is ranked #37 among national liberal arts colleges, #7 for Best Learning Community, #33 for Best Undergraduate Teaching, #34 among the Most Innovative Schools, and #2 for Social Mobility among liberal arts colleges. Most notably, Spelman has held the #1 ranking among historically Black colleges and universities for 19 consecutive years by *U.S. News & World Report* and has been ranked #1 among America's Best Colleges for Women by *Newsweek*, reflecting its enduring impact and commitment to academic excellence.



Spelman offers a wide range of undergraduate programs across the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences, supported by signature academic centers such as the Center of Excellence for Black Women in STEM, the Gordon-Zeto Center for Global Education, the Center for Black Entrepreneurship, Spelman Strategic and Security Studies Center, the Teaching Resource and Research Center, WISDOM (Women in Spiritual Discernment of Ministry) Center, and the Women's Research and Resource Center. Just minutes from downtown, Spelman is part of the Atlanta University Center, the largest consortium of historically Black colleges and universities in the world. Within this distinguished academic community, Spelman sits alongside Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, and the Morehouse School of Medicine, fostering a collaborative environment that expands academic, social, and professional opportunities. Through cross-registration with its AUC partners and shared use of the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Spelman students benefit from an interconnected educational ecosystem that broadens access to courses, resources, and intellectual engagement.

With a 94% first-to-second-year retention rate and a six-year graduation rate averaging 76%, Spelman not only demonstrates exceptional student success but also sustains a powerful global alumnae network that provides mentoring, career guidance, and lifelong support as graduates embark on careers of influence and impact.

The College is recognized by the National Science Foundation as the #1 producer of Black women who go on to earn Ph.Ds. in STEM fields and is a leading producer of Gilman Scholars and Fulbright Fellows. Spelman alumnae include Pulitzer Prize-winning authors, pioneering scientists, acclaimed artists, public servants, and business leaders whose contributions continue to shape communities around the world. Spelman continues to be a distinguished institution dedicated to producing outstanding women and ethical leaders. Learn more about Spelman College's history [here](#).



## ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

Students who come to Spelman College are making a choice to change the world. Spelman College is seeking a president who is such a change agent with that same sense of purpose, inspiring and empowering others to effectively execute in their roles. This individual must be a forward-looking, visionary, and transformative leader capable of anticipating the changing higher education landscape and strategically navigating challenges. Reporting to the Spelman College Board of Trustees, the president is the chief executive officer of the institution, and in addition to setting institutional vision and strategy, is responsible for the overall leadership and management of Spelman and its operations; developing and maintaining relationships with a diverse array of constituents within the institution, and in the greater

community; and representing the institution externally in support of the College. Furthermore, this leader should embody collaboration, respect, and openness, empowering Spelman women while maintaining a steadfast focus on preparing students with the skills and experiences they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world. They will listen attentively to students' concerns and ensure that every student feels not only seen but genuinely heard. By continuing to elevate the College's national profile and distinction, centering student success, and remaining committed to a holistic view of student well-being — encompassing academic, mental, and financial health — the president will position Spelman for lasting impact and continued excellence.



The next president must actively lead at the intersection of artificial intelligence and the liberal arts. Spelman is uniquely positioned to become a global hub for AI-literate, values-driven liberal arts talent, helping ensure that future AI technologies, companies, and policies reflect diverse populations and perspectives. This requires a leader who can engage faculty and students as well as industry, philanthropy, and policymakers who are shaping the future AI economy.

The president will also intentionally define the future Spelman student profile. As the College considers how it evolves its reach and impact, decisions about growth, modality, and scale must be guided first by Spelman's mission and commitment to social mobility. The financial and operating model should be designed to sustainably support that student profile, rather than allowing financial pressures to reshape it in unintended ways.

Given the scale and complexity of Spelman's ambitions, including modernization, AI integration, evolving

delivery models, and long-term resilience, the president must demonstrate exceptional financial and operational leadership. This includes ensuring sustainable financial performance, modernizing operations, and building an operating model that can adapt over time while remaining disciplined, transparent, and aligned with mission.

Finally, the presidency is a highly visible, always-on role. The next president must be a compelling public face for the institution, someone who represents Spelman across national and global forums, cultivating external partnerships, and shaping public discourse as competition for influence and resources intensifies. In embracing this charge, the next president must help ensure that Spelman remains a beacon of excellence, innovation, and purpose — a place where Black women are prepared to lead, innovate, and transform a rapidly changing world.



As a member of the Atlanta University Center Consortium (“AUC” or “the Consortium”), the Spelman president will actively participate on the council of presidents and serve as chair on a rotating basis.

The president is supported in this work by the senior leadership team. Direct reports to the president include: an interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Senior Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs, Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer; the Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management, the Senior Vice President for Institutional Advancement, the Vice President for Human Resources & Culture; the Vice President/Chief Information Officer, Spelman Technology Services; the Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness; the Vice President for Student Affairs; the Vice President for Communications and External Relations; the Executive Assistant to the President; and the Chief of Staff & Secretary of the College.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

Building on its sustaining mission and a strong foundation of excellence, the next president will work with the board and Spelman community to confront specific challenges and leverage them as opportunities to continue to enhance the strength and impact of the College. In doing so, this next leader will help maintain a united front and foster high morale among current students, alumnae, and future generations of Spelman women.



### **Develop a vision that advances Spelman's academic excellence while honoring the College's legacy.**

The next president of Spelman College must be a visionary leader who honors the College's historic legacy while boldly shaping its future. This individual will balance tradition with innovation, ensuring that Spelman remains responsive to the evolving needs of its students and society. This includes strengthening programs and majors that have been historically overlooked, ensuring the College is uplifted in every area. This moment represents an extraordinary opportunity to lead a college rich in history and distinction and to propel it to new heights of operational and academic excellence, societal impact, and institutional strength. The next president will be responsible for sustaining momentum, strengthening the College's financial position, and advancing its growing national and global reputation through measurable outcomes and strategic results.

At Spelman, the community is diverse, vibrant, and deeply committed to shared purpose. The next leader must foster a culture grounded in collaboration, respect, and meaningful engagement across all constituencies, including students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumnae. They must be attuned to the complexities of identity, diversity, and belonging in today's multifaceted world and demonstrate openness

to a wide range of perspectives and experiences. The next president must empower the Spelman community to pursue its collective aspirations, champion its mission, and ensure that Spelman continues to fulfill its commitment to educating, advancing, and preparing the next generation of Black women to lead with vision, courage, and transformational impact.

**Lead effectively in a shifting higher education landscape and during times of crisis.**

In a time of dynamic change and evolution, Spelman's next president must bring clarity, steadiness, and sound judgment. Higher education as a whole is confronting significant and complex pressures, and these challenges are even more acute for HBCUs and liberal arts institutions. These institutions are navigating rapidly evolving student needs, financial uncertainties, increased public scrutiny, and heightened concerns about campus safety during moments of national or global crisis. Navigating these complexities requires a leader who brings a deep institutional understanding of the unique experiences, aspirations, and responsibilities inherent in educating Black women, remains deeply grounded in Spelman's mission, safeguards academic excellence, and makes strategic decisions that ensure long-term sustainability. As geopolitics, global labor markets, and centers of economic power continue to shift, the president must prepare Spelman graduates to lead on a global stage. This includes strengthening students' understanding of international systems, cultivating global partnerships, and positioning Spelman women to learn and succeed beyond United States borders.



The next president must be adept at anticipating emerging risks and opportunities, with an understanding of how broader social and economic forces shape the college's future and respond with both agility and conviction. As a visible thought leader, they will be called upon to articulate the institution's priorities, champion its values, and guide stakeholders through periods of rapid change. Ultimately, this role demands the courage to make bold choices and the discipline to steward the institution's financial and programmatic health and position Spelman to thrive within an evolving higher-education ecosystem.

**Invest in the academic enterprise to continue to drive distinction.**

Spelman's faculty are distinguished teacher-scholars who serve a growing and intellectually ambitious student body. Retaining and attracting the caliber of faculty Spelman deserves will demand intentional investment and a leader who views the academic enterprise as the engine of the College's mission. Prospective students weighing many options in today's higher education landscape seek a culture of academic rigor and innovative approaches to knowledge acquisition, skills development, and expertise. Spelman's academic enterprise must keep pace with its liberal arts peers to ensure it remains a college of choice for the best and brightest women. Students want the president to champion academic innovation in ways that honor Spelman's liberal arts and Black feminist foundations while preparing students for life after college.

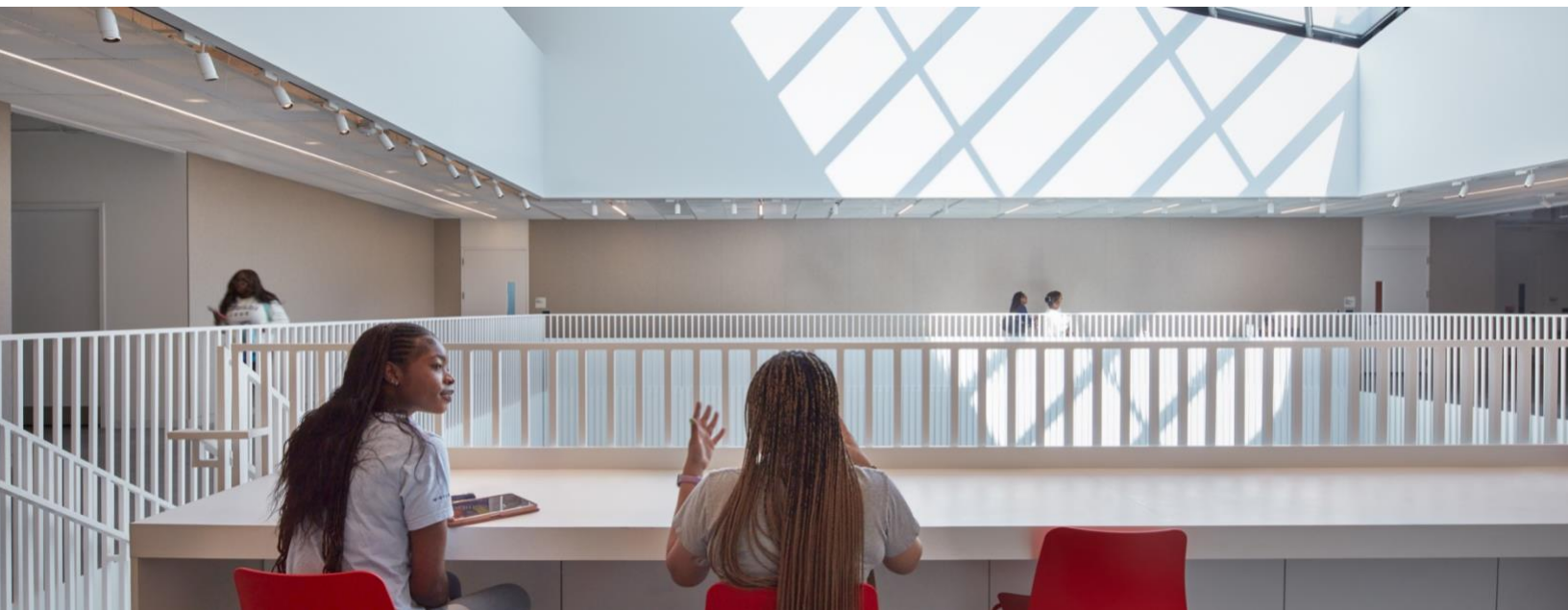


As academic fields, pedagogical models, and workforce expectations evolve, the president must partner with the Provost and faculty to be the architect of an educational experience that fortifies students against contemporary systemic challenges. This requires modernizing the curriculum and pedagogy, and academic offerings in a moment marked by the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and heightened awareness of its impact on teaching, learning, and future career pathways. By supporting the nurturing of each student's personal and academic mission, the President will lead the faculty in cultivating a student-centered environment that reinforces Spelman's liberal arts mission and ensures the College's academic enterprise remains rigorous, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of students, employers, and society.

**Strengthen and further advance Spelman's financial sustainability.**

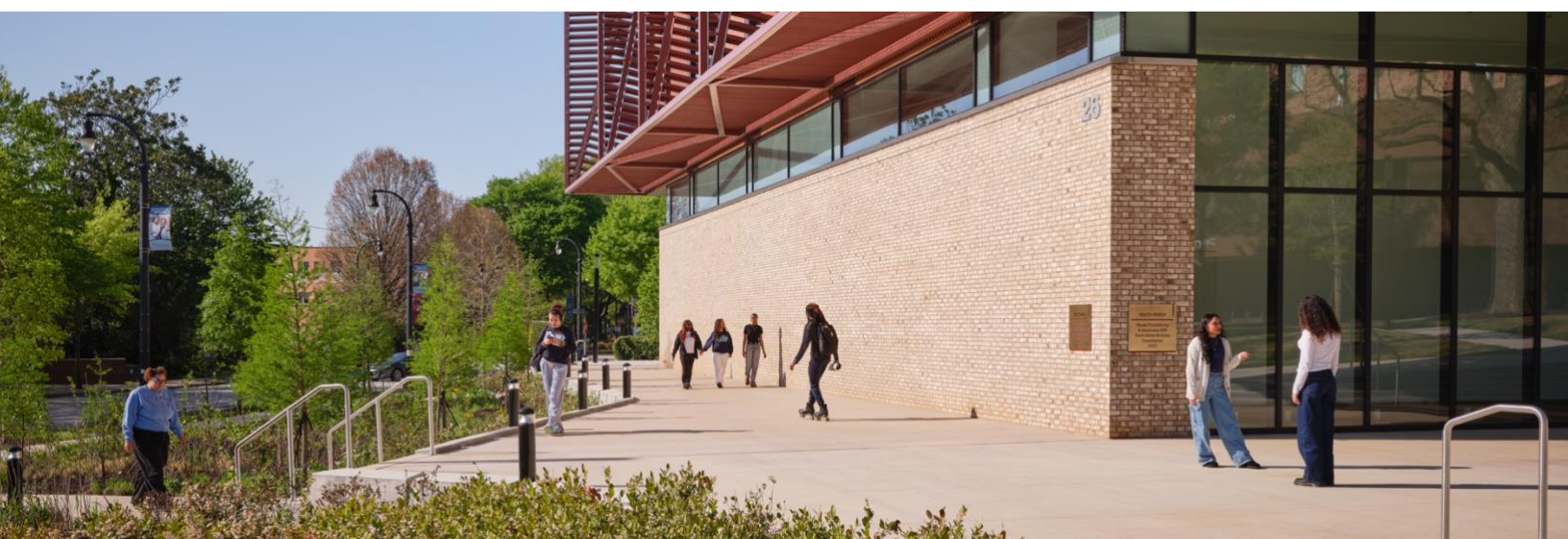
Spelman is in a strong financial position, building upon a record of prudent fiscal decision-making, disciplined budgeting, and thoughtful stewardship. The next president must build on this success by managing the College's operating finances with strategic clarity and fiscal discipline, ensuring that resources are aligned with institutional priorities and the academic mission. While Spelman has benefited from increased public support and record-breaking philanthropic investments, its continued prosperity depends on maintaining a culture of careful choice, transparency, and long-term planning.

To sustain momentum, the next president must be both an agile financial strategist and an enthusiastic champion for fundraising. They will need to continue to expand and diversify philanthropic support, pursue bold opportunities for investment, and cultivate innovative business models that reinforce long-term financial stability. This leader must consult broadly across the Board and community to help define the next set of institutional priorities, ensuring that the College not only preserves its fiscal health but also directs resources where they will have the greatest impact.

**Modernize operations and infrastructure to deliver on Spelman's promise of excellence.**

As Spelman serves an expanding community of students, parents, alumnae, and donors, it is essential to upgrade the systems and service functions that directly shape their experience. The next president must modernize and strengthen Spelman's operational and technological foundation to ensure the College can deliver on its commitment to excellence on a campus well-equipped for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning and digital engagement, through the strategic integration of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence. The College has embarked on a future-focused technology plan to support both strategic initiatives and daily operations, and this work will continue under the leadership of the next president. Working closely with

the senior leadership team, the president will lead efforts to enhance operational coordination, improve shared administrative systems, reduce deferred maintenance, and align human and financial resources with institutional priorities. This includes developing collaborative learning environments, modern classrooms, and innovative research facilities, as well as upgrading campus housing, recreational facilities, and gathering spaces to enrich student life. This also means ensuring that the college's infrastructure supports both the academic and social experiences promised to students, and that the college campus remains a site of living and learning. This work necessitates thoughtful, multi-year planning and substantial investment in modern, interoperable platforms that streamline communication, data flow, and decision-making. Similarly, the president will need to partner to ensure the successful implementation and adoption of these new systems.



**Model and reinforce a culture of trust, communication, and transparency across the College community.**

Spelman's identity is rooted in community, sisterhood, and shared purpose, and the next president must recognize that they cannot succeed on their own. The president must be visible, approachable, and responsive, and maintain consistent communication about Spelman's direction and vision, fostering an environment where all stakeholders can work together toward the institution's mission. A commitment to transparent communication and shared governance is essential. Alumnae, students, faculty, and staff are deeply invested in Spelman's success and want to engage the President to identify and address the most pressing challenges facing the College. To succeed, the president must strengthen connections, engender trust, and remain visibly engaged across campus.

The next president should maintain a visible and deeply engaged presence within the campus gates, ensuring that they are not only visible but actively participating in campus spaces, events, and conversations that shape the student experience. This individual should communicate frequently, walk

campus, attend events, and build meaningful relationships across the Spelman community. By modeling an open and collaborative leadership style, the president will help create a culture where faculty and staff are fully engaged in the student experience, morale is strengthened, and trust is built. In moments of crisis, the community expects the president to lead and communicate with compassion and represent the College internally and externally, while ensuring students receive the support they need to thrive.

### **Partner to enhance Spelman’s transformative educational experience for all students.**

Spelman’s continued growth demands a president who is deeply committed to the success of every Spelman student. As enrollment increases, the College must respond to evolving student needs while sustaining the academic excellence that attracts a diverse, global student population with varied academic and personal needs. In partnership with the Vice President for Student Life, the president will work to address core student needs, including housing, food security, and career and pipeline programs, areas critical to ensuring every student has the resources to thrive during their time at Spelman and beyond.

Additionally, students desire intentional efforts to strengthen belonging, rooted in a commitment to ensure the college remains an integrated site of living and learning that builds the sisterhood, community, and engagement that makes the Spelman experience distinct and transformative, especially as commuter populations grow and campus engagement shifts. They seek equitable support for student organizations, improved resources for transfer and commuter students, and dedicated spaces for study, collaboration, and community-building. They also seek a leader who enhances collaboration among departments involved in student life, ensuring each area works together to support students’ needs. Students want a president who listens, incorporates their perspectives into institutional planning, and leads with empathy and accountability. By championing engagement, community, and academic support and by balancing professional preparation with holistic development, the president will reinforce Spelman’s culture of belonging and empower students to flourish academically, personally, and socially.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

While no candidate will possess every ideal qualification, the Presidential Search and Nominating Committee seeks individuals who demonstrate exceptional judgment, proven leadership experience, and an authentic alignment with Spelman’s mission and the values and traditions that define the College.

### **Visionary and Inspirational Leadership:**

- Ability to articulate and implement a compelling vision that unites faculty, staff, students, alumnae, and trustees within polarizing environments without compromising Spelman’s mission and future direction.
- Cultural understanding and appreciation for Spelman’s unique culture and history, particularly its mission as the nation’s premier higher education institution exclusively focused on the education, development, and success of women of African Descent.
- The genuine desire to uplift Spelman.
- Capacity to motivate and enhance morale, especially in times of change.

- Commitment to student-centered leadership, with a focus on holistic student development, activism, and social justice.
- Ability to foster trust and strong relationships with students, faculty, and staff.
- Experience working effectively with a governing board, both collectively and individually, and a demonstrated ability to build a supportive, engaged board committed to the College's success.
- Ability to navigate and manage with confidence, empathy, poise, and grace.
- Capacity to speak to issues affecting Black women in education, democracy, equity, and justice.
- Culturally competent and skilled in engaging diverse communities both within and beyond the College.

**Academic and Leadership Experience:**

- Advanced or terminal degree.
- Demonstrated success in higher education leadership.
- Deep understanding of academic governance and a strong commitment to the liberal arts identity.
- Experience supporting scholarship, research funding, and faculty development.

**Fundraising and Financial Stewardship:**

- Demonstrated success in fundraising, donor engagement, and growing endowments.
- Strategic financial management skills, with the ability to invest in resources that directly benefit the campus community and support Spelman's long-term sustainability.

**Operational and Organizational Excellence and Business Acumen:**

- Proven operational expertise, including the ability to address inefficiencies, modernize infrastructure, and streamline administrative processes.
- Experience managing complex organizations, building strong leadership teams, and navigating board relationships.
- Skill in balancing financial conservatism with a growth mindset, making strategic investments in campus priorities.

**Communication and Change Management:**

- Excellent communication skills, with a record of transparent, consistent, and effective engagement across all levels of the institution.
- Ability to manage change, including leading technological and curricular innovation, and building consensus around new initiatives.
- Resilience and grit in the face of challenges, with the ability to heal divisions and foster cohesion.
- Ability to engage publicly under pressure with integrity while exercising sound judgment and restraint, especially when in crisis.

**Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, and Community:**

- Commitment to equity, inclusion, student success, and empowerment.

- Track record of fostering a culture of transparency, shared governance, and meaningful engagement with all campus constituencies.
- Approachability and visibility, being present and engaged in campus life, and being accessible to students, faculty, and staff.

**Balance of Tradition and Innovation:**

- Respect for Spelman’s legacy, traditions, and unique culture, while also advancing academic excellence, interdisciplinary research, and partnerships that prepare students for evolving career landscapes.
- Willingness to rethink higher education models in response to financial constraints and changing student needs.

## 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: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/spelman-college/president>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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Spelman College is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Spelman College. 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 Spelman College would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*



Spelman College

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