



Dean of the Graduate School
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida

THE SEARCH

The Graduate School at Florida State University stands at the center of a vibrant and expanding graduate enterprise, supporting approximately 11,000 full- and part-time students across more than 220 graduate degree programs. Graduate enrollments have trended upwards over the past several years and the university looks to continue that run of success. With 121 master's degrees, 24 specialist degrees, and 78 doctoral degrees, FSU offers an academic portfolio that reflects both the breadth of a major public research university and the depth of its disciplinary and interdisciplinary strengths. The Graduate School plays a crucial role in fostering academic excellence by guiding students through degree requirements, facilitating financial support through assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships, and overseeing the integrity of milestones such as theses and dissertations. Through this multifaceted work, it positions graduate students for success as scholars, innovators, and leaders in an increasingly interconnected and global environment.

Collaboration is at the core of the Graduate School's mission. As a partner to every academic college and program, as well as key student-facing units such as the Center for Global Engagement, Career Center, Health Center, and University Libraries, the Graduate School ensures that the needs of graduate students are met holistically, from academic progression to professional development to wellbeing. The School also maintains active engagement with national organizations advancing graduate education, demonstrating FSU's commitment to best practices and continuous improvement. Internally, its work with the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement and the Graduate Policy Committee strengthens the policy framework that shapes graduate education and sustains high academic standards.

This is a pivotal moment for the next dean, who will report to the Vice President for Student Academic Success and lead in defining the Graduate School's evolving strategic role at a university ascending in

research prominence and national reputation. The dean will advance a vision for graduate education that strengthens doctoral programs, elevates postdoctoral affairs, and aligns graduate training with institutional research priorities, emerging health initiatives, and FSU's aspirations for national distinction, including AAU competitiveness. In doing so, the dean will amplify the Graduate School's visibility and influence, reinforcing the critical role of graduate education within the broader academic mission.

FSU's recent Quality Enhancement Plan and its strategic positioning of the Graduate School within the student academic success division underscore the institution's strong commitment to graduate student success. The next dean will build on this momentum by serving as a university-wide convener, bringing together academic leaders, faculty, and administrative partners to support graduate students from recruitment through degree completion. This includes championing interdisciplinary and cross-cutting approaches to graduate training that integrate pedagogy with research experiences, preparing students and postdoctoral scholars to address complex challenges in academia, industry, government, and beyond.

Finally, the new dean will strengthen the organizational capacity and operational effectiveness of a well-resourced Graduate School. This includes assessing staffing structures, enhancing internal processes, stewarding resources to support graduate students and postdocs, and building a high-performing administrative team capable of supporting a large and complex R1 enterprise. As FSU continues its upward trajectory, the dean will be instrumental in ensuring that graduate education remains a cornerstone of the university's academic excellence, research competitiveness, and long-term strategic success.

FSU has retained Isaacson Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the search. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ROLE OF THE DEAN

Reporting to the Vice President for Student Academic Success, and in collaboration with their Associate Deans, the next dean will define and elevate the Graduate School's role as a strategic, campuswide leader. They will focus on advancing doctoral education, strengthening postdoctoral affairs, and aligning graduate training with FSU's research priorities and aspirations for national distinction. Additionally, the Dean serves on the University's management bargaining team with UF-GAU, along with Human Resources and General Counsel. The Dean will work to enhance organizational capacity and operational effectiveness while championing the visibility, impact, and standing of the School.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

The next dean of the Graduate School will lead through the opportunities and challenges below:

Position the Graduate School as a Central Convener and Advocate for Graduate Student Success

The next dean will prioritize defining the Graduate School's role as a proactive, institution-wide convener that supports graduate students and academic units from recruitment through degree completion. This is based on the [Quality Enhancement Plan](#) as FSU prioritizes enhancing doctoral education. This work will focus on advancing the Graduate School's evolution toward a more visible, collaborative, and impact-driven model that is deeply engaged in student success, faculty partnership, and cross-campus coordination, and aligned with FSU's broader student success agenda and recent institutional investments. The Graduate School's recent positioning within the division of student academic success allows the dean to leverage maximum attention and resources, while collaborating across both academic and non-academic units across the University.

Advance Research, Postdoctoral Affairs, and FSU's Aspirations for National Distinction

The next dean of the Graduate School at Florida State University will have a defining opportunity to strengthen doctoral education and postdoctoral affairs as strategic drivers of the university's research productivity and national aspirations. This leader will play a central role in aligning graduate education more intentionally with FSU's institutional priorities, including research growth, emerging health initiatives, and long-term ambitions for AAU eligibility, all while effectively articulating the essential value of graduate training in a state environment where performance metrics remain primarily focused on undergraduate outcomes.

Working in close partnership with academic leaders across the institution, the dean will champion the development of new graduate programs and the expansion or reimagining of existing ones, with particular emphasis on advancing doctoral education. This includes fostering interdisciplinary approaches that integrate pedagogy with meaningful, cross-cutting research experiences, preparing FSU's graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to tackle complex challenges and become the next generation of

academic and industry leaders. This is a compelling moment for an innovative, collaborative, and student-centered dean to shape the future of graduate education at a university on a rising national trajectory.

Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Operational Effectiveness of the Graduate School

A central priority for the next dean will be strengthening the organizational capacity and operational effectiveness of a well-resourced Graduate School. The dean will evaluate staffing models, clarify roles, and continue building a high-performing administrative team capable of supporting a large and complex R1 graduate enterprise, while modernizing processes and establishing clear, shared expectations for service, accountability, and impact. The dean will understand the graduate pipelines in place in order to optimize the work of the Graduate School in line with the larger institutional mission. Additionally, the dean will develop and steward funds to support graduate students and postdocs in their time at FSU.

Elevate the Role of Graduate Education Across FSU

The next dean will use their strong communication skills to play a central role in advancing the visibility and institutional standing of graduate education across FSU. This will include articulating the Graduate School's strategic positioning within Academic Affairs, demonstrating how its integration within a student success portfolio amplifies its reach, impact, and campus-wide influence. Success will depend on political acumen, strong faculty credibility, and the ability to position graduate and doctoral education as foundational to FSU's academic, research, and student success priorities—aligned with, yet distinct from, nationally recognized undergraduate outcomes.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be a seasoned and accomplished leader. Candidates should meet the following qualifications.

- An earned terminal degree and academic accomplishments commensurate with appointment as a tenured professor at FSU;
- Experience in administrative leadership within a Graduate school or college at the institutional level preferred;
- A sustained record of leadership in graduate education and experience managing complex academic and administrative operations;
- 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.

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/florida-state-university-graduate-school/dean>

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FSU is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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

APENDIX: ESSENTIAL CONTEXT

ABOUT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Florida State University, founded in 1851 in Tallahassee, has grown from a small seminary into one of the nation's elite public research universities. As part of the 12-institution State University System of Florida, FSU advances knowledge across the sciences, technology, arts, humanities, and professions, grounded in a strong liberal-arts and critical-thinking tradition. Its welcoming campus occupies the oldest continuous site of higher education in Florida.

FSU continues its impressive rise as one of the nation's most entrepreneurial and innovative public universities, committed to transforming lives through exceptional teaching, research, creative activity, and service. Its distinctive learning environment emphasizes interdisciplinary inquiry and draws strength from the intellectual variation of its students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

While rooted in the state capital, FSU also operates a campus in Panama City and maintains a global presence through nearly 420,000 alumni. The University is recognized for its breadth of programs—particularly in the arts, sciences, and engineering—and for notable research initiatives in areas such as oceanography, business, and the social sciences. Its Carnegie R1 designation underscores its status among the nation's top research universities. With more than 50 years of international education experience, FSU is a national leader in study abroad, with permanent centers in London, Florence, Valencia, and Panama.

FSU is also known for student success, athletic excellence, and deep school pride. Eighteen residence halls house more than 6700 students, and approximately 85% of first-year students live on campus. The University's cultural impact is enriched by the renowned College of Motion Picture Arts and a robust offering of performances, exhibitions, and events that enhance both campus and community life.

Recognized as a Preeminent University by the State of Florida, FSU has achieved major milestones including completing its first \$1 billion capital campaign, enrolling its most competitive academic class, expanding transfer pathways, strengthening graduate education and research activity, and becoming one of the nation's most veteran-friendly public universities.

Entering the fourth year of its five-year strategic plan, FSU remains focused on student success, with a particular emphasis on graduate education. The University is consistently recognized as one of the best values among public institutions and boasts outstanding graduation rates: 78% four-year graduation rate and 86% six-year graduation rate. Additionally, the University's 97% retention rate is number four among public universities. Driven by long-term investments in advising, student support, and a small-college feel within a large research university. Importantly, FSU has significantly reduced disparities in retention and graduation rates among its undergraduate population, including Pell-eligible and first-generation students.

FSU's vibrant campus life features nearly 700 student organizations and a student body of 46,184—72% undergraduate, 24% graduate, and 4% unclassified—representing every Florida county and more than 130 countries. With a 97% first-year retention rate, a 17:1 student-faculty ratio, and more than 270 degree programs across 17 colleges and schools, FSU continues to attract exceptional talent and fuel a culture of innovation, achievement, and momentum.

Looking ahead, FSU is poised for continued success, all while upholding the traditions and history that create a small-college culture within a large university. The University is in the 4th year of its 5-year strategic plan. One of the five key strategic goals is expanding research and academic excellence. Within that, an objective is to build upon and create graduate opportunities that transcend and transform traditional disciplines. FSU was recently recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the best values among public universities. Moreover, the University is nationally recognized for its outstanding graduation rates. More Florida State University students than ever are graduating in four years. Key to the success of this strategic initiative has been the investment in academic advising and support programs, and in fostering the small-college, liberal-arts feel that so many students and alumni fondly laud as one of FSU's best aspects. What's even more impressive is that Florida State has significantly mitigated disparities in graduation and retention rates among its undergraduate population, which includes nearly a third who are Pell Grant recipients and first-generation college students.

ABOUT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Graduate School supports around 11,000 full and part-time graduate students. It includes the areas of Postdoctoral Affairs, Enrollment and Finance, Student Academic Success, and Faculty Affairs. Graduate education at FSU includes over 121 master's degrees, 24 specialist degrees and 78 doctoral degrees. The Graduate School is dedicated to supporting the academic success, professional development, and global leadership potential of its graduate students. It provides comprehensive guidance on academic requirements, degree progress, and financial support opportunities, including assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships, while overseeing the approval process for theses, treatises, and dissertations. Through these efforts, the Graduate School ensures that students are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to thrive as scholars and leaders in an increasingly interconnected world. The Graduate School also administers benefits for graduate assistants, as agreed upon in the collective bargaining agreement.

Equally central to its mission is the Graduate School's role as a collaborative partner across the university. It works closely with academic departments, colleges, and campus units such as the Center for Global Engagement, the Career Center, the Health Center, and University Libraries to address graduate student needs holistically. The Graduate School also engages with national organizations that advance graduate education and collaborates with the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement and the Graduate Policy Committee to shape, implement, and uphold the policies that guide graduate education at FSU.