

Carnegie Mellon University

Senior Associate Vice President & Dean of Students
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA

THE SEARCH

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) seeks an exceptional and student-centered leader to serve as the Senior Associate Vice President & Dean of Students (Dean, SAVP & DoS). This is a rare opportunity to help shape the student experience at one of the world's most innovative, ambitious, and globally recognized research universities. Known for its culture of creativity, pragmatic problem-solving, and relentless pursuit of excellence, CMU attracts gifted learners from more than 130 countries and fosters an environment where ideas spark, communities form, and students are empowered to make extraordinary impact.

The university's Division of Student Affairs is deeply rooted in an ethic of care and distinguished by its relational, collaborative, and responsive approach to serving students. CMU's commitment to holistic student development creates a vibrant, inclusive environment where students are supported in pursuing both their boldest aspirations and their everyday well-being. The new SAVP & DoS will join a division defined by its trusted partnerships with students, and dedication to fostering belonging across a diverse, high-performing community.

This is an exciting moment at CMU. The SAVP & DoS role is newly envisioned and strategically aligned to lead key areas that sit at the heart of the student experience: culture, care, crisis, and conduct. The Dean provides leadership across: Health and Wellness (Counseling & Psychological Services, Health Services, and Wellness & Meaning-Making Programs); Community Responsibility & Culture (Civility Initiatives, Community Responsibility, Student Diversity & Inclusion); First Year Orientation & Family Engagement (including Fraternity & Sorority Life); Residential Education; and Student Support Services. With a talented team, a forward-looking Vice President for Student Affairs, and an institution committed to innovation, this leader will have the opportunity to shape systems, strengthen coordination, and elevate an already strong culture of student support. For an experienced, values-driven student affairs leader, this position offers both the opportunity and the platform to make a lasting institutional impact on students and student affairs colleagues.

The ideal Senior Associate Vice President & Dean of Students is an accessible, student-centered leader with at least a decade of progressive student affairs experience and a master's and/or terminal degree in a relevant field. They bring a demonstrated record of guiding complex organizational change, managing crises with clarity and compassion, and supporting both undergraduate and graduate learners. This leader is deeply committed to holistic student well-being, advocating for students, skilled in building trust across the institution, and adept at navigating sensitive issues with sound judgment. Equally important are strong communication and relationship-building skills, a collaborative spirit, data-informed decision-making, and the ability to inspire and develop a large, talented team. Above all, the successful candidate embodies CMU's ethic of care, pairing integrity, empathy, and responsiveness with strategic vision and the capacity to strengthen systems that help all students thrive.

Carnegie Mellon University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

Carnegie Mellon University was founded in 1900 by Andrew Carnegie under the premise that a school established to foster and develop the technical skills of its students would soon produce students and graduates whose work would astound Pittsburgh and the world. In 1967, the Carnegie Institute of Technology merged with the Mellon Institute, a science research center founded by the Mellon family of Pittsburgh, to become known as Carnegie Mellon University. Today, CMU is a dynamic institution that has an exceptional impact in the world. Although it is among the youngest of the nation's top universities, CMU's extraordinary success emanates from its deeply held core values and a unique heritage of innovation. It is a place of creativity, pragmatism, and ambition, with a tradition of strategically focusing its efforts and resources in areas where it can lead, then pursuing those areas with startling intensity.

CMU enrolls approximately 16,000 students representing more than 130 countries, with a nearly even distribution between undergraduate and graduate learners and more than 1,600 faculty from 60+ countries, fostering a vibrant scholarly community. The university consistently ranks among the top institutions nationally and internationally, with specialties such as computer science, engineering, drama, and business ranked in the top tiers of U.S. and global rankings, and an acceptance rate of around 11%, underscoring its competitive academic environment. CMU's student-to-faculty ratio is low, enabling personalized instruction and mentorship that supports both academic and professional growth across more than 350 degree programs and disciplines.

Student life at Carnegie Mellon is defined by both academic rigor and a strong commitment to student engagement and success. The university's diverse student body participates in over 350 student organizations, leadership opportunities, campus traditions, community engagement, and cultural initiatives that enhance the student experience and campus climate. CMU consistently has high outcomes in retention and graduation rates, with strong support systems in place for career development, student

success, academic advising, and student well-being. With a global alumni network exceeding 127,000 graduates across 150 countries and deep connections to industry, entrepreneurship, and research, students are positioned for meaningful impact in their fields. The institution also emphasizes inclusive excellence, fostering an environment where all members feel welcome, valued, and positioned to thrive.

ABOUT THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Mission, Vision, & Values

The Division of Student Affairs at Carnegie Mellon University was founded on a broad-based commitment to student success in and out of the classroom, with an emphasis on the holistic development of the student that facilitates life-long growth in the areas of:

- Intellectual & artistic curiosity
- Personal well-being
- Professional acumen
- Leadership
- Social responsibility
- Community engagement

Central to the Division's success is a commitment to cultivating deep and meaningful one-to-one relationships with students. Student Affairs builds and sustains collaborative relationships throughout the university to best serve the needs of the student body. Programs, services, and efforts are dedicated to the development of an engaged community among students, faculty, staff, and alumni where meaningful and authentic exchanges are valued. The Division of Student Affairs staff help students navigate and reflect upon challenges and transitions, and empower them to become architects of their own learning and development.

The following are the values of the Division of Student Affairs:

- Integrity – Aligning practice with core values and the ethical principles of the profession.
- Compassion – Investing in concern for the welfare of others and humanity.
- Inclusivity – Fostering an environment where all feel welcomed, accepted, and respected.
- Dedication – Demonstrating exceptional commitment to students and aspiring toward quality work and leadership.
- Responsiveness – Anticipating and responding to meet the ever-changing needs of those served.
- Collaboration – Active sharing of talent, resources, and time to positively impact the student experience.
- Innovation – Leading through creative and forward-looking solutions that advance the mission.

At Carnegie Mellon University, the Division of Student Affairs champions a deeply relational approach to student support, positioning student affairs professionals as transformative partners in each student's journey at Carnegie Mellon. By fostering authentic, respectful, and compassionate one-to-one connections, staff learn

who students are and use that insight to guide them toward meaningful growth, self-advocacy, and long-term success. This commitment to understanding and empowering the whole student not only elevates their university experience, but also strengthens lifelong ties to the institution, enriching both the alumni community and the professionals whose impactful work shapes it.

Overview

The Division of Student Affairs is comprised of over 20 departments and units, staffed by 240 full-time and 20 part-time positions, 50 seasonal coaches and instructional staff, and students. The Division is widely recognized for its culture of care and accessibility between students and staff. Community members consistently praise the responsiveness of administrators and their willingness to engage directly with student concerns. Collaborative relationships with faculty and academic units further enhance student support, creating an environment where students feel heard and valued. This relational culture is a defining strength of CMU.

Leadership

Gina Casalegno was appointed Carnegie Mellon University's first Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) in 2016, building upon her previous role as Dean of Students, which she assumed in 2010. Casalegno oversees Carnegie Mellon's Division of Student Affairs, which is committed to supporting student success and enhancing the CMU experience. Casalegno joined Carnegie Mellon University in 2002, serving in a variety of leadership roles before being named Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students. Before her tenure at Carnegie Mellon, Casalegno worked in residence life at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Casalegno holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of California at San Diego and earned her master's in counseling with an emphasis in higher education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

ROLE OF THE SENIOR ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT & DEAN OF STUDENTS

Reporting to the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Dean serves as the deputy to the VPSA and represents the division both internally and across CMU. The Dean is a senior leader within the Division of Student Affairs and serves on the executive team of the vice president. As a leader in the Division, the Dean will represent student affairs on committees and initiatives across the campus and provide direction and coordination for major university-wide initiatives and programs.

The Dean works in concert with other members of the student affairs leadership team to deliver a world-class experience for all CMU learners regardless of age, stage, and academic pursuit. Given the richness of Carnegie Mellon's academic programs, the Dean is responsible for integrating a holistic student services model throughout the university's campus via programming, training, support, services, interventions, and intentional collaborations and partnerships with academic and administrative leaders.

The SAVP & DoS portfolio is organized around four primary pillars known as the “4 Cs”. This intentional alignment brings together many functions that span the continuum of the student experience. The 4 Cs are:

- Culture: Proactive community-building and fostering a sense of belonging.
- Care: Holistic support and wellness resources for individual students.
- Crisis: Coordinated, expert responses to moments of acute concern.
- Conduct: Accountability and integrity within our campus community.

The Dean provides direct supervision and management of a talented team of five direct reports who supervise 7 department heads with an overall portfolio of approximately 125 full-time staff and 220 student workers. These areas include:

Associate Vice President for Community Health & Well-Being

Counseling & Psychological Services

University Health Services

Wellness & Meaning-Making Programming

Associate Vice President for Community Responsibility & Culture

Civility Initiatives

Community Responsibility

Student Diversity & Inclusion (co-led with Vice Provost for Community, Culture and Engagement)

Associate Dean & Director, First-Year Orientation & Family Engagement

Fraternity & Sorority Life

Associate Dean & Director, Residential Education

Associate Dean & Director, Student Support Resources

The Dean will oversee the administration of their portfolio's budget, totaling more than \$15 million. In addition to departmental oversight, the Dean is responsible for interacting frequently with students and identifying opportunities to improve the student experience, chairing the university's threat assessment committee, and providing care and crisis leadership. Because of the expectation to be engaged and responsive, housing adjacent to the campus is provided.

The ideal candidate will be a highly visible, student-centered leader who embodies CMU's ethic of care. The Dean must have a track record of being a visionary and experienced leader, capable of guiding organizational change, managing complex crises, fostering vibrant campus communities, and building inclusive, responsible, and innovative student support structures. Experience supporting international and graduate students is essential, given the university's enrollment profile. Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build trust across diverse stakeholders, including academic leadership, faculty, staff, and students, are critical. The SAVP & DoS should be collaborative and adaptable, capable of navigating CMU's highly relational culture while facilitating data-informed and continuous improvement in delivering the 4 Cs. Being successful in this role requires skill in navigating and leading change and integrating successfully as an effective partner and colleague. Finally, the SAVP & DoS must be an ambassador for the Division of

Student Affairs, telling the Division's story effectively and advocating for students and resources that support their success.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SENIOR ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT & DEAN OF STUDENTS

To be successful, the Senior Associate Vice President and Dean of Students will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

Lead strategic change with a clear student-centered direction

The creation of the Senior Associate Vice President & Dean of Students role is part of a broader redistribution of operational, tactical, and student-facing responsibilities, enabling the Division to engage more fully on strategic directions and goals. The portfolio under the Dean's purview is a recent reorganization that was the product of deliberate and thoughtful conversations and analysis. The units in the Dean's portfolio are focused on culture, care, crisis, and conduct. In this newly established role, the Dean will support a thoughtful change management process to align communication, collaboration and roles to ensure a successful transition for the new organizational structure.

As a leader, the Dean will play a key role in guiding this newly aligned team through thoughtful transitions that honor the division's history and strengths while helping staff embrace a new structure, shared expectations, and clearer coordination. Working towards a unifying vision, building trust, and creating space for staff to understand how their work connects to broader priorities is essential work for the Dean. The Dean is intended to be a visible, accessible leader, reflecting the division's commitment to shared leadership rather than hierarchy. By fostering transparency, creative problem-solving, encouraging cross-unit collaboration, and supporting teams as they adopt new patterns of working, the Dean can help cultivate a collective sense of purpose and momentum that strengthens the division as a whole.

Foster and maintain the highest standards of safety, community, and well-being for all students

The Dean must be focused on student and staff well-being and safety, inclusive practices, and mutual trust among students and the institution. It is essential to support CMU's students and their well-being by orchestrating a comprehensive, sustainable, respectful, and innovative system of services, programs, crisis and care management, and appropriate interventions grounded in best practices. Among other responsibilities, the Dean will need to be an active presence and effective communicator during crises, as well as troubleshooting and coordinating care and appropriate strategies related to case management, student wellness, and other related matters.

The Dean should possess expertise in the areas of student affairs policy, procedures, and law, and have a track record of successful strategic implementation of process and service improvements, including training and guiding staff and colleagues. CMU is at a pivotal moment to unify and therefore strengthen

its approach to student support. Student support at CMU is unwavering and strong professional practices, resources, and interventions are already in place. The opportunity ahead is grounded in intentional design aimed at gaining synergy and coordination.

Relatedly, as CMU navigates an increasingly complex sociopolitical climate, the Dean will play a critical role in guiding the community through moments of uncertainty and crisis with clarity and compassion. With expertise in conflict resolution and stakeholder engagement, the Dean will foster a culture of belonging, trust, and constructive dialogue.

Engage students and colleagues through presence and a collaborative spirit

The Dean will intuitively understand students and engage with them as part of their leadership approach. A visible presence will be requisite in keeping abreast of the campus climate, how students are changing, and what their needs might be. A Dean for all students in a high-touch environment, they must possess a desire and energy to know students and advocate on their behalf. Students and their families frequently turn to student affairs for guidance, trust, and support. By being engaged with students, the Dean can leverage their role as a university leader and collaborator to champion the voice and needs of the CMU student body.

The Dean will work with other institutional leaders on critical university priorities such as equity, safety, and well-being to help ensure that CMU continues to provide access to transformative educational opportunities for all students. The Dean will advocate for collaborative and holistic, long-term solutions to ensure the appropriate services and resources are available to students throughout the campus community. They will deepen existing partnerships and coordination with key stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the police department, general counsel, communications and marketing, student affairs colleagues, deans and vice provosts, and faculty and staff throughout CMU's academic and administrative areas.

Recruit, retain, and develop a talented team of professionals

The Dean's team is large and varied in terms of student affairs functions and specialties. They will lead and develop a dedicated and talented team of professionals to maintain high standards of performance and to support collaboration among the units in the portfolio and with colleagues across CMU's campus in the quest to reach and support all students. As an experienced manager, the Dean will bring exemplary organizational development skills and a track record of building and managing strong, vibrant teams. The Dean will build a culture of enthusiasm, continuous development, and collaboration within student affairs and across the university including global locations and campuses. Getting to know the team, continually reviewing and assessing current programs and services, and enabling staff to collaborate and discover opportunities for improvement are among the managerial priorities ahead. As a champion for the team, the Dean is committed to ethical and transparent leadership, care, and professional development, and promotes the expertise of the staff in the appropriate venues.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The minimum educational qualifications include a master's degree in higher education administration, student affairs, counseling, or a related field. A terminal degree in a related field is preferred. While no one person will embody all the following, the successful SAVP & DoS candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities:

- Professional Background
 - At least 10 years of progressively responsible leadership experience in student affairs in the areas directly related to the portfolio of the SAVP & DoS including: student conduct, clinical care and support, wellness, crisis management, residential education, orientation and family engagement, fraternity & sorority life, and belonging and inclusion
 - Experience with public health issues, crisis management, and emergency situations
 - Strong background in crisis response, student support services, and behavioral intervention
 - Expertise facilitating educational and intervention strategies grounded in restorative practices
 - Demonstrated experience leading innovative initiatives and programs working with student organizations and shared governance leaders
 - Success in directing, advising, and/or coordinating with Greek-letter organizations
 - Experience with student conduct systems and care teams
 - Familiarity with current and emerging issues in higher education, including mental health, Title IX, campus climate, and regulatory compliance
 - Background in using student affairs technology platforms (e.g., Maxient, Tableau, Notebook LM, and CampusGroups, etc.)

- Professional Qualities
 - An understanding of the differences and commonalities that will be necessary for student engagement that serves both undergraduate and graduate students
 - Demonstrated commitment to the fostering of a diverse and inclusive student community
 - Proficiency and competence in working in a globally-minded and international campus environment
 - Exceptional communication, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement skills
 - Facility in analyzing data to develop and assess programs to drive change and innovation
 - Highest personal and professional integrity
 - Adaptable and able to function effectively in a complex environment and work with all stakeholders within and outside of the institution
 - Intellectually curious and open-minded; motivated and energized by a talented and high-performing student body
 - Strategic leader able to engage with diverse stakeholders

- Track Record
 - Experience in leading organizational change and development within a complex institution
 - Commitment to being visible and highly engaged with the student experience throughout their tenure as students
 - High degree of accessibility and openness to students, and demonstrated record of earning and maintaining the trust of the student body
 - Demonstrated experience working in a high-touch, service-oriented environment that requires frequent engagement with students, families, and campus partners.
 - Proven ability to inspire, lead, support, and mentor a team of skilled and dedicated professionals, effectively manage talent, and develop processes for effective teamwork
 - Proven track record of effective fiscal and operational management

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh offers a high quality of life with the advantages of a major metropolitan area and the affordability of a mid-sized city. With a metro population of approximately 2.3 million, Pittsburgh is home to more than 90 distinct neighborhoods and consistently ranks among the most livable and affordable U.S. cities. The cost of living is slightly below the national average. Pittsburgh is a national center for higher education, healthcare, and innovation, anchored by more than 30 colleges and universities in the region and a robust employment base in research, technology, and the life sciences. Residents benefit from over 1,600 acres of city parks, 600+ miles of regional trails, a thriving arts and cultural scene, and major professional sports leagues within a compact, easily navigable city. With a strong sense of civic pride and community engagement, Pittsburgh offers an exceptional environment for professionals seeking both meaningful work and a balanced, family-friendly lifestyle.

NOMINATION & APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Carnegie Mellon University has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this important search.

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are welcome. Applications should include a cover letter and a CV/resume. Apply via the [Isaacson, Miller website](#). Nominations and inquiries can also be directed through the Isaacson, Miller website.

Keight Tucker Kennedy, Managing Partner
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