



ECKERD COLLEGE

President
Eckerd College
St. Petersburg, Florida

THE SEARCH

Eckerd College seeks a bold leader as its next President who will support the College in providing a transformational educational experience. Founded in 1958, with a current total enrollment of close to 1,770 students, Eckerd is a dynamic and innovative liberal arts and sciences college located on the scenic mile-long waterfront and white-sand beach of Florida's Gulf Coast. Eckerd's location is integral to many of its programs, initiatives, and strengths, including a nationally renowned marine science program.

One of 44 colleges featured in *Colleges that Change Lives*, Eckerd has a distinct identity rooted in intellectual curiosity and a deep commitment to the liberal arts, encouraging students to explore a wide range of fields. The College offers rigorous undergraduate research opportunities and has an impressive history of excellent placements for fellowships and graduate schools. While the students have a seriousness of purpose in their studies, Eckerd also fosters a delightful, free-spirited culture where students study in hammocks and enjoy traditions like the Ceremony of Lights at the beginning of the academic year, a graduation ceremony for pets, and a Kon-Tiki Raft Race in Boca Ciega Bay.

Eckerd's next President will inherit an institution with a strong sense of community and deep commitment to student success. The next President will position Eckerd for long-term success and financial sustainability at a complex and challenging moment for higher education, particularly for small liberal arts institutions. Eckerd has rich assets in its people, its commitment to mission, and its innovative culture.

This is an exciting opportunity for an enterprising President to join Eckerd, articulate the next phase for the institution that honors its history and attends to its current complexities, and collaboratively craft an inspiring vision and strategic plan to guide it forward. This person must be financially savvy, with an entrepreneurial mindset, capable of strategically pursuing growth opportunities and cost efficiencies while adapting creatively to new challenges as they emerge. A prominent ambassador for Eckerd beyond

campus, they will raise the College's profile regionally and nationally, strengthen fundraising and alumni engagement efforts, enhance enrollment, and develop innovative programs that diversify revenue streams. The President will create mutually beneficial partnerships with the flourishing St. Petersburg and Tampa Bay area communities. On campus, they will be visible and engaged, connected to the student experience, and dedicated to strengthening faculty and staff morale. They will recognize the importance of the full spectrum of academic disciplines represented at the College, and that all fields, from the humanities to the natural sciences, are critical to carrying out the mission of the College.

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, has been retained to assist in the recruitment of the next President. Applications, nominations, and inquiries should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ECKERD COLLEGE

The mission of Eckerd College is to provide excellent, innovative undergraduate liberal arts education and lifelong learning programs in the unique Florida environment. Eckerd College was founded in 1958 as Florida Presbyterian College, with 155 students and 22 faculty. Eckerd continues to maintain a covenant with the Presbyterian Church (USA). It has grown steadily over the years, becoming Eckerd College in 1972, and has been at the forefront of educational innovation, developing and incorporating high-impact practices such as first-year experiences, global learning, undergraduate research, service learning, and capstone projects into the curriculum. Over its history, Eckerd has evolved and expanded its offerings to meet changing student demands, from the increased interest in management studies in the late 1970s to the emergence of marine science in the 1980s to the growth of environmental studies in the 1990s. More recently, the animal studies program, launched in 2019, has grown into one of the College's most popular majors in just a few years.

Eckerd College offers a liberal arts curriculum with more than 40 majors and 62 minors, emphasizing interdisciplinary study, close faculty mentorship, and experiential learning. More than 55 percent of Eckerd students major in Marine Science, Environmental Studies, Animal Studies, Biology, and Psychology, all of which are supported by a liberal arts core curriculum. The distinctive 4-1-4 academic calendar includes an intensive January term that supports research, fieldwork, and global study opportunities.

The heart of the college's academic program is the [General Education] GE curriculum that begins with two courses in the first year: Human Experience and the First-Year Experience Seminar. The GE program continues with students in their sophomore and junior years wherein students select courses, one from each of the four liberal arts academic areas of the Natural Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts. Additionally, in recognition of the importance of global cross-cultural issues and environmental sustainability, students take one course designated as a Global Perspective course and one course designated as an Environmental Perspective course. Finally, in the senior year each student completes the Imagining Justice course, which focuses on constructive responses to some of the critical issues of our time.

Eckerd is ranked No.1 by the Institute of International Education for student participation in short-term abroad programs, with approximately 70 percent of students studying abroad during their time at Eckerd. Additional specialized opportunities include the [First-Year Research Associateships](#), the [Johnston-Ford Scholars Program](#), the [Honors Program](#), [Peace Corps Prep](#), the Gulf Scholars Program, and the Eastman Citizenship & Leadership Program.

Eckerd has historically had a high percentage of students who go on to get doctorates in the sciences and humanities. Alumni include Rhodes, Truman, Goldwater, Gilman, National Science Foundation Research Fellowship, EPA Star Graduate Research Fellowship, and Fulbright recipients. In the last three years alone, five Eckerd graduates have won Fulbright Scholarships. Eckerd graduates are accepted to medical, dental, veterinary, optometry, pharmacy, and physician assistant programs at highly selective institutions.

In addition to the core mission focusing on undergraduates, Eckerd also has excelled in executive education and lifelong learning, with a nationally renowned Leadership Development Institute, Mediation Training Institute, the [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#), the [Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College](#), and pre-college programming during summers, with continuing education generating over \$6.5M in revenue annually.

Campus and Location

The Eckerd 188-acre waterfront campus has more than 80 dedicated learning spaces, including classrooms, labs, and studios, and natural habitat areas, as well as an expansive library, three auditoriums, a theater, gallery spaces, and athletic facilities that serve both collegiate and club sports.

Eckerd College's [Waterfront](#) is one of its most distinctive features, providing students with direct access to Boca Ciega Bay and the surrounding Gulf Coast environment. The Waterfront supports a wide range of recreational and educational opportunities, including kayaking, sailing, paddleboarding, and marine research. This unique coastal setting enhances campus life by blending outdoor adventure, environmental learning, and stunning waterfront views into the everyday student experience.

Another distinct area of campus is [South Beach](#). This is the social and scenic heart of Eckerd College, featuring a white-sand waterfront beach on Boca Ciega Bay with sunny yellow bikes for campus transportation, volleyball courts, hammocks, a fire pit, and recreation spaces that host everything from student gatherings and sunset viewing to campus traditions such as orientation bonfires and commencement ceremonies. More than just a beach, South Beach is woven into daily campus life, offering students easy access to the water steps from residence halls and classrooms while helping create the distinctive coastal atmosphere that makes Eckerd College unique.

Eckerd is located in the thriving city of St. Petersburg ('St. Pete'). St. Pete offers a warm climate, a walkable downtown, a strong sense of community, and a compelling mix of economic opportunity, coastal lifestyle, and cultural amenities. St. Petersburg is one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the United

States, driven by strong population growth, a thriving business environment, and expanding industries including financial services, technology, healthcare, and marine science. Major investments in downtown redevelopment, innovation districts, and waterfront infrastructure have strengthened the local economy while enhancing the quality of life. St. Pete offers attractions such as The Dalí Museum, the vibrant St. Pete Pier, award-winning Gulf Coast beaches, and a thriving arts and dining scene. The city is also advancing sustainability and resiliency initiatives, including shoreline protection, green infrastructure projects, and efforts to support clean energy and environmental conservation.

Faculty and Staff

The faculty of Eckerd College comprises 151 full-time members, of whom 98 percent hold PhDs or terminal degrees in their fields, and 81 percent are tenured or tenure-track. The student-faculty ratio is 12:1. The faculty at Eckerd is known for its deep commitment to its students. Eckerd's faculty are committed to engaging students in firsthand inquiry and analysis, creating opportunities for students to work directly with ideas, communities, and places as they cultivate broad knowledge and transferable skill sets. Through this learning, students become skilled collaborators, communicators, and critical thinkers. The faculty have broad and diverse research and teaching interests, engaging across the six collegial groups: Behavioral Sciences, Comparative Cultures, Creative Arts, Foundations, Letters, and Natural Sciences.

Eckerd is also home to 250 talented and passionate staff members who are integral members of the tight-knit college community. Staff support the educational mission and the critical academic, research, co-curricular, and business operations of the institution. Many staff are alumni or long-time employees with a deep commitment to Eckerd's students.

Students and Student Life

Eckerd currently enrolls 1,767 undergraduate students. The student experience is focused across academic, co-curricular, and student life, such as the Eckerd College [Search and Rescue \(EC-SAR\)](#), the nation's only entirely student-run, all-volunteer collegiate search and rescue team, providing maritime emergency response services on land and water while offering students valuable leadership, rescue, and public service experience. In addition, the Eckerd College Emergency Response Team ([EC-ERT](#)) is a team of students who are professionally trained emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who respond to medical emergencies on campus. Another unique student opportunity is the Wildlife Rescue Club, where students are available 24/7 to answer calls to rescue sick, injured, or entangled wildlife, particularly birds and marine mammals, on campus and in the nearby community.

As one of the distinctive programs at Eckerd College, Eckerd Athletics includes nearly 300 NCAA Division II student-athletes, representing about 20 percent of the student body. These students compete across 10 women's sports, 7 men's sports, and 1 coed sport. Most teams compete in the Sunshine State Conference, which is often referred to as the "conference of national champions", while Coed Open Sailing and Women's Sailing compete in the South Atlantic Intercollegiate Sailing Association. Eckerd Athletics is

one of only seven institutions in the country to earn the NCAA Division II President's Award for Academic Excellence every year since the award's inception.

Eckerd is also a pet-friendly campus, welcoming pets on campus since 1973, making it one of the longest-running pet-friendly college programs. Seventeen residence halls permit animals, with small pets allowed in all housing complexes and designated residence halls available for larger pets such as dogs and cats, making Eckerd ranked one of the most pet-friendly colleges in the nation. Eckerd is also home to a [Community Farm](#) that provides hands-on opportunities for sustainable agriculture, environmental education, and local food production.

In the 2024-2025 enrollment cycle, Eckerd College received 5,071 applications and admitted 3,844 students, resulting in an acceptance rate of approximately 75.8 percent. Of those admitted, 474 students ultimately enrolled, representing a yield rate of about 12 percent. According to IPEDS data, Eckerd's application numbers are 36% higher than their peer average. The mean GPA of the recent incoming class was 3.6 on a 4.0 scale.

Eckerd College also enrolls a geographically diverse student body, representing more than 40 states and multiple countries, with students traveling an average of 1,000 miles to attend the College. Eighty percent of students come from outside the state of Florida. Approximately 22 percent of Eckerd students identify as first-generation college students. In 2025, Eckerd had a 77 percent retention rate for students returning for sophomore year, and a 66 percent 6-year graduation rate. Eckerd is also the youngest institution to be granted a [Phi Beta Kappa](#) chapter, an honor awarded to only ten percent of American colleges and universities.

Eckerd's [Autumn Term](#) program provides first-year students with the opportunity to adjust to college life through a three-week-long orientation. During the Autumn Term, students take one course with a professor who will serve as their mentor throughout their entire first year at Eckerd. Students also meet with other first-year students and connect with an upperclass Peer Mentor to help guide them. New students are also presented with a medallion emblazoned with the Triton shell during the Ceremony of Lights as a welcome into the company of scholars. The medallion serves as a reminder that they have earned their place in the community and provides a symbol of hope for all that is to come. Eckerd's culture promotes students having a strong voice and opportunities to share their vision for the College. Eckerd students anticipate exciting special events and [community traditions](#), including a Halloween Ball, the Kappa Karnival at the end of the spring semester, the Festival of Cultures, and a colorful, joyous, open-air commencement ceremony set against the stunning backdrop of Boca Ciega Bay.

Alumni

Eckerd has over 30,000 active alumni who stay connected to the College through volunteer, experiential, philanthropic, and communication efforts. The Advancement team hosts nearly 100 events annually, offering opportunities for alumni to engage on campus and around the world. Alumni also take on key

leadership roles as members of the Board of Trustees, the National Advisory Council, and Reunion Class Giving Committees. Many support current students as career contacts and mentors, and contribute to recruitment efforts for future Tritons.

Governance and Finances

Eckerd is governed by the [Board of Trustees](#), which currently consists of 22 active trustees, including the President. Currently, the majority of fiduciary trustees are alumni of Eckerd College. The trustees oversee the College's leadership, planning, and resources, ensuring its overall vitality and the fulfillment of its mission. The members of the Board have a tradition of working collegially with the College.

As a tuition-driven institution, Eckerd faces many of the challenges that the broader higher education market is grappling with today. Despite those obstacles, Eckerd has maintained stable finances with an annual operating budget of \$85M for FY2026, and an endowment of approximately \$115M.

Eckerd's tuition, room, and board cost approximately \$70,000 per year, and the College distributes financial aid broadly across its student body, with nearly all students receiving some form of support. Approximately 97 percent of undergraduate students receive financial aid, including grants, scholarships, and loans. The average award is \$36,600 with a range from \$5,500 to \$47,000. Approximately 21 percent of Eckerd students receive the Pell Grant.

Eckerd has operated as a lean institution while navigating significant financial pressures, including the COVID-19 pandemic and two hurricanes that impacted the campus in the fall of 2024, all while maintaining a strong commitment to student support and engagement. The campus's location in a warm climate and commitment to in-person education allowed for flexibility to remain open during the pandemic and Eckerd creatively leveraged its coastal location to build outdoor classrooms. This allowed students to continue attending classes safely in person. The lessons learned through these adversities helped faculty understand how to offer long-distance learning effectively during the evacuations. Although hurricane-related deductibles created short-term financial strain, rebuilding efforts have strengthened campus infrastructure by upgrading roofs and windows, thereby improving long-term resilience. The College temporarily shifted to remote learning for approximately one month after the hurricanes before returning to campus, reflecting effective planning and operational adaptability.

Eckerd has undertaken a series of strategically focused fundraising campaigns over the past two decades, each aligned with advancing institutional priorities, including facilities, endowment growth, academic programs, and student experience. The comprehensive "Many Experiences, One Spirit" campaign (2006–2011) raised approximately \$85.7 million, exceeding its \$80 million goal, with investments spanning new facilities, scholarships, endowed professorships, study abroad, and annual operating support. This was followed by the Intermezzo Campaign (2014–2018), which generated more than \$24.2 million to support capital projects, including the Nielsen Center for Visual Arts, renovations, and multiple endowments. From 2018 to 2020, the Campaign for Endowment successfully built a \$127.6 million pipeline, surpassing its

\$125 million target through a combination of existing endowment, new gifts, and planned giving commitments. More recently, the Innovation Fund (2020–2022) raised \$14.8 million to advance priorities such as interdisciplinary innovation, community engagement, inclusive excellence, and sustainability. Current fundraising continues through the Distinctive Programs initiative (2021–2027), which seeks to secure \$22.2 million in endowment support for key program areas, building on Eckerd’s broader emphasis on strengthening long-term funding and sustaining the College’s signature educational offerings. In addition to engaged alumni donors, Eckerd has also benefited from highly involved and generous ‘friends’ of the relatively young College.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

As the chief executive officer, the President holds responsibility for the overall management and direction of the College. As such, the President works with the Board to set the vision and strategy. Since Eckerd is a community-centered institution, the President is a present and visible figure on and off-campus, fostering strong relationships with constituents, both internal and external, and demonstrating a commitment to shared governance. At the same time, the President is the chief fundraiser, developing resources to support the College’s continued growth. The President is supported in this work by senior staff. Direct reports to the President include: the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, Vice President for Business and Finance and Treasurer, Vice President for Student Success, Vice President for Advancement, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing, Director of Athletics, Chief Human Resources Officer, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and New Programs, and Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

Develop and implement a bold vision for the future that builds on Eckerd’s strengths and is responsive to the current moment in higher education for small liberal arts institutions.

The next President will have the opportunity to partner with a collaborative board, senior leadership team, and committed campus community to develop a long-term strategy for Eckerd College that embraces its unique identity while preparing for the future. In recent years, Eckerd has expanded its undergraduate and continuing education programs to complement its current offerings and attract potential students, particularly in marine science. The next President will be charged with engaging deeply with the College community, listening intently to develop a strategic plan that identifies opportunities for future growth, building cohesion among existing programs, and setting an exciting and sustainable vision for the future. The next president will be a champion for the value of liberal arts in a rapidly changing world that increasingly questions the benefits of higher education. A successful plan for the College will be grounded in Eckerd’s liberal arts mission and values, which embrace critical thinking and the anticipation of shifts in student needs, market demands, financial pressures, and emerging technologies.

Ensure the College's future financial strength and stability.

The next President, in close collaboration with the Board of Trustees and senior leadership, will be responsible for developing a data-informed plan for the College's short- and long-term financial sustainability. The President should be prudent and responsible with institutional finances, leading with a business mindset to identify growth opportunities and cost efficiencies, and adapting creatively to new challenges as they emerge, including strengthening the campus in hurricane preparation and addressing challenges presented by climate change, to promote the long-term resilience and sustainability of the College.

Eckerd has benefited from the generous alumni and friends of the College, and in the coming years, must continue growing its fundraising base. As the chief fundraiser, the President will tell the Eckerd story and value proposition in a compelling way that motivates donors and partners, utilizing the College's next strategic plan as the foundation for a comprehensive campaign.

Champion the recruitment, retention, and support of students.

Like many small private colleges, Eckerd is facing challenges in the recruitment and retention of students. While the College has adopted new approaches with promising results, the President still needs to work with the enrollment and marketing team to develop new strategies to raise brand recognition and visibility in an increasingly competitive market. The President will champion broader marketing efforts to increase regional and national recognition of the College, leveraging Eckerd's top academic programs, its student-centered approach, and its distinct campus culture that helps students realize their full potential. To aid retention efforts, the President will work with the senior leadership team to ensure continued focus on services that support holistic student development.

Intentionally engage campus constituents to develop and support faculty and staff.

One of Eckerd's greatest assets is a deeply committed faculty and staff who are passionate about their students, the College, and its mission. At the same time, many are stretched thin, and financial and people resources are limited. The President, alongside the senior leadership team, must conduct a careful analysis of roles and responsibilities across the institution to support the ongoing professional development of faculty and staff amid resource constraints.

THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE

Eckerd seeks a visionary President to lead and inspire students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The search committee understands that no single candidate will have all the ideal qualifications, but it seeks candidates with the following experience, abilities, and characteristics:

- A deep commitment to the mission and values of Eckerd College; an appreciation for academic excellence, shared governance, and the values of the academy;
- Success as a visionary, strategic, transparent, and entrepreneurial leader; the ability not only to imagine an exciting path forward for an institution but also to bring it to fruition; the ability to lead teams, delegate, and execute plans with fiscal responsibility;
- A student-centered approach to institutional leadership; a demonstrated commitment to enhancing the holistic student experience; the ability to engage meaningfully with alumni;
- An understanding of the finances of a private college, including experience with institutional budgeting; the ability to grow revenue by working closely with Academic Affairs and the senior leadership team to develop new programs and enhance enrollment and retention efforts;
- Experience representing an institution compellingly to external audiences, including donors and community partners; the skills, personality, and passion to fundraise successfully; the presence needed to raise the profile and visibility of Eckerd regionally and nationally;
- An ability to cultivate trust, build relationships, and bring campus constituencies to actionable consensus; experience developing mutually beneficial partnerships between organizations;
- The skill to communicate effectively in many settings; the ability to listen closely to varied stakeholders at all levels, both internal and external to the College;
- Knowledge of current and emerging issues, trends, and strategies in higher education; experience developing strategies that anticipate the changing landscape of higher education;
- Integrity, humility, sound judgment, compassion, courage, and a strong moral compass;
- A record of academic or professional accomplishment to inspire the Eckerd community.

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/eckerd-college/president>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Kate Barry, Managing Partner
 Karen McPhedran, Managing Associate
 Kristen Andersen, Senior Associate
 Kaitlin Cruz, Managing Search Coordinator
 Isaacson, Miller

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