



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Wayne State University

Detroit, Michigan

THE SEARCH

Wayne State University (Wayne State or the University) seeks a strategic, visionary, and collaborative leader to serve as the next Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost). The Provost will work in close collaboration with the newly appointed President, [Richard A. Bierschbach](#). With dynamic new leadership, Wayne State is on the cusp of critical acceleration of innovation across faculty-driven academic programming, undergraduate student recruitment and success, graduate and professional degree enhancement, and advancement in distinction as a pre-eminent public urban research university.

Wayne State stands as Michigan's third-largest and only public urban research university, offering more than 375 academic programs across 13 schools and colleges, and serving more than 24,000 students from across the U.S. and 70 countries. As a U.S. News top 100 public university and a national leader in economic and social mobility, Wayne State is recognized for its commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and its mission. Wayne State is one of only four universities in Michigan to receive the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's classification of doctoral university: very high research activity, and has annual sponsored research expenditures of more than \$290 million. Wayne State is a member of the [Research Universities for Michigan](#) (RU4M), an alliance of these four Carnegie R1 institutions that fosters a powerhouse of talent, research, and economic growth across the state. The University's unique connection to its home city of Detroit — a city known for its rich history, legacy of innovation, and resilient spirit — represents a model for how a university and its community can improve the lives and health of all. As one of the city's largest employers, Wayne State has a \$4.6 billion annual economic impact in Detroit and has been a driving force behind the city's resurgence.

The next Provost will have the unique opportunity to drive transformation during this period of transition and opportunity. The University has moved initiatives forward that reflect its essential mission in this rapidly changing higher education context including enhancing undergraduate [student success](#), advancing [College to Career](#) and Undergraduate Research Opportunity programming, moving mobile health access to the forefront of its health affairs programming, building diverse faculty strengths across schools and colleges through “Pathway to Faculty” programming, and focusing this year on the [intersection of AI, innovation, and social impact](#).

To build on Wayne State’s upward trajectory, the Provost must demonstrate a clear understanding of and commitment to Wayne State’s mission and the importance of academic excellence through both careful faculty and academic leadership recruitment and continuing innovation in graduate and professional education and undergraduate student success. The position requires an experienced entrepreneurial mindset and the ability to guide the academic division through the changes necessary to ensure that this urban research university can thrive despite the extraordinary challenges currently facing higher education. The Provost will have significant administrative and academic leadership experience, including a record of success managing a highly complex organization and demonstration of strong fiscal and budgetary skills. The Provost must be a strong communicator, enthusiastic collaborator, and a motivational leader who genuinely pursues transparency in managing changes that impact faculty, staff, and students. Essential to the position is an understanding of and a deep commitment to shared faculty governance. The Provost must show a proven ability to promote an inclusive culture that demonstrates authentic dedication to social mobility. An earned terminal degree is required, as is scholarship that merits a tenured appointment as a full professor at Wayne State University.

Wayne State University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Located in Midtown Detroit, Wayne State University was established in 1868 and has grown into one of the nation’s premier urban research universities. Wayne State was originally founded as the Detroit Medical College and has since evolved into a major, Carnegie R1 institution and Michigan’s only public urban research university.

Wayne State’s mission emphasizes access to a high-quality education, advancement of knowledge through research, and community engagement. The University is strongly committed to educational access, urban revitalization, and the recruitment and graduation of a diverse student body.

Wayne State is home to more than 24,000 students and is the third-largest among Michigan’s 15 public universities and one of the 50 largest in the nation. The University offers a vibrant student life with over 400 student organizations, NCAA Division II athletics (competing as the Warriors), student media, Greek

life, and cultural events. The students at Wayne State experience an academically rigorous, community-centered university and benefit from learning experiences through internships, externships, clinics, and other opportunities to connect with people and institutions throughout the city of Detroit and beyond.

Wayne State is among Detroit's largest employers, with more than 7,000 regular employees and more than 1,700 student employees. The University has 2,396 faculty members - of whom 1,469 are full-time - and nearly 4,700 staff members. Approximately two-thirds of faculty and staff are represented by one of the 12 unions on campus. Wayne State has over 300,000 alumni spread throughout the country and the world, of whom about 75% live in Michigan.

University Leadership

[Richard A. Bierschbach](#) was elected the 14th President of Wayne State University by the Board of Governors on February 24, 2026. Since he was appointed interim President in September 2025, Bierschbach has ensured progress, stability, and continued growth and innovation. Under his leadership, Wayne State launched its Institute for AI and Data Science, funded 10 new College to Career Awards to support student success, built on the momentum of the new Grand Challenges research initiative, and celebrated strong, continued enrollment and record years for both fundraising and research expenditures. Bierschbach has been a member of the Wayne State community for nine years and previously served as dean of Wayne State Law School, where he led the school through a period of unprecedented growth and institutional transformation.

Academics and Research

Wayne State offers over 375 academic programs through 13 schools and colleges:

- [Mike Ilitch School of Business](#)
- [College of Education](#)
- [James and Patricia Anderson College of Engineering](#)
- [College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Irvin D. Reid Honors College](#)
- [School of Information Sciences](#)
- [College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#)
- [Law School](#)
- [School of Medicine](#)
- [College of Nursing](#)
- [Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences](#)
- [School of Social Work](#)

The University is developing plans for a new [School of Public Health](#), merging public health bachelor's degree programming from CLAS, Master's in Public Health from the School of Medicine, and community health programming from the College of Education. The current goal is to achieve accreditation in spring 2030.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education considers Wayne State an R1 Doctoral University, placing it among the nation's top research universities. The University has several important research centers and is recognized for its research in the health sciences, basic sciences such as chemistry, physics, and psychology, urban studies, and cutting-edge automotive and manufacturing technologies. Wayne State had total research expenditures of \$291.7 million in the 2024 academic year, an increase of 16% from the previous year; it most recently ranked among the top 75 public research institutions in the country. Wayne State plays a key role in the Research Universities for Michigan (RU4M), a collaborative effort to drive innovation and economic development in the state and generate 90% of the state's research. Underscoring its commitment to access, U.S. News also ranks Wayne State No. 1 in Michigan and No. 62 in the country for social mobility. The University's combination of R1 activity, community engagement, and commitment to access for a diverse undergraduate, graduate, and professional student body defines its identity and differentiates it from many other major public research universities across the country.

More detailed information and data about Wayne State can be found in the University's [Living Fact Book](#).

Strategic Plan

Wayne State's [2022-27 strategic plan, *Our Moment in Time*](#), has served as a strong foundation for the University's vision and goals since its adoption in 2022. It remains a vibrant framework guiding Wayne State's ongoing efforts, even as the University has already achieved some of the original goals, including reaching the national benchmark of a 60% six-year undergraduate graduation rate. Wayne State continues to evaluate best practices as it actively reviews and refreshes the strategic plan during the current academic year and prepares to launch the public phase of a new \$1 billion comprehensive fundraising campaign.

To support the pillars of the strategic plan, the University has invested heavily in the [campus plan](#), including [additional funding](#) for the renovation of existing buildings. Results of the plan include the recently opened fieldhouse, the Hillberry Gateway Performance Center, the complete renovation of M. Roy Wilson State Hall, the construction of the new health sciences research building, which is underway and will open in 2028, and a plan for a new Law School classroom building.

Location

Wayne State's 200-acre urban campus is located in the heart of Midtown Detroit—one of the nation's fastest-growing neighborhoods and a vibrant cultural hub that draws over 2.5 million visitors annually.

Just steps from world-renowned institutions such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Public Library, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the campus blends historic architecture with cutting-edge facilities. Detroit's rich musical legacy—home to Motown, Aretha Franklin, and Eminem—continues to thrive through live music venues and festivals like the Detroit Jazz Festival. As a global city on an international border, Detroit is a center of innovation and industry, housing major health care systems, multinational corporations, and a dynamic startup and tech scene. With its celebrated arts scenes, diverse communities, and nationally acclaimed riverfront, Detroit offers an energetic, welcoming environment for leaders ready to shape the future.

ROLE OF THE PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The Provost is the chief academic officer and second-ranking executive officer of the University. The Provost reports directly to the President and works closely with the President and other executive officers in formulating University goals and policies. The Provost acts on the President's behalf to oversee the University during the President's absence, including representing Wayne State externally. As head of the Division of Academic Affairs, the Provost is responsible for the development and administration of academic programs and policies relating to instruction and curriculum, enrollment management, faculty and academic staff appointments and performance evaluations, public-service initiatives among faculty, and collaboration with the vice president for research on faculty research activity.

In consultation with the President, the Provost oversees the academic management of the University's 13 schools and colleges. The four health-related deans (medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and future public health) report directly to the Senior Vice President for Health Affairs, while the Provost maintains final responsibility for admissions standards, faculty appointments, and academic programs to enable unified operations of Academic Affairs at Wayne State. The Provost presides over the council of deans and works closely with the Senior Vice President for Finance and Business Affairs/Chief Financial Officer on operational and fiscal matters relating to the academic mission. Under the Academic Senate's bylaws, the Provost serves as chair of the Senate's monthly plenary sessions during the academic year, as well as attending the year-round weekly meetings of the Senate's Policy Committee. Given the wide scope of responsibilities, the complexity of the University, the large size and central function of the Division of Academic Affairs, and the large number of units reporting to the Provost, the position requires an experienced and energetic leader with a proven record of success as both a scholar/researcher and academic administrator.

For a detailed organizational chart of the Division of Academic Affairs, [visit this site](#).

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Implement a refreshed strategic plan

With the appointment of a new President, Wayne State has a rare opportunity to clarify and advance an exciting academic vision that aligns its R1 research identity, mission, and role as a driver of social mobility and workforce development. The University's current five-year strategic plan was scheduled to conclude in 2027, and a process to refresh it began in 2025. The purpose of the refresh is to ensure that Wayne State has a clear, thoughtful, forward-facing strategic plan through 2030 that is both relevant and adaptable to the University's current context and reflects where it is headed as preparations are underway to publicly launch the comprehensive fundraising campaign in 2027. In close partnership with administrative leadership and faculty leaders, the Provost will play a central role in guiding, coordinating, and implementing the refreshed strategic plan and the President's vision. The Provost will serve as the President's primary and trusted thought partner in translating institutional ambition into an executable academic strategy and will be expected to lead independently while aligning closely with presidential priorities.

Advance Student Success 2.0: Every Warrior Rises

Wayne State has made undergraduate student success a high priority, with impressive improvements in the six-year graduation rate from 26% to 59.7% since 2011. Nonetheless, there are still achievement gaps across the diverse student population that must be addressed, the four-year graduation rate must also be improved, and the University hopes to achieve an overall six-year graduation rate of 75% by 2040 (the "Drive to 75"). The Provost must work with faculty through shared governance to explore ways to streamline degree programs and incorporate greater flexibility in course delivery options where possible, nurturing ongoing efforts to ensure broad school and college engagement in the planning and implementation of undergraduate student success strategies. These strategies will require attention to the diverse range of student needs, the incorporation of data-based intervention strategies, and the creation of more opportunities for career-engaged learning that prepares students for Michigan's emerging knowledge economy. The Provost will identify campus-wide practices that require alignment of budget resources, personnel, facilities, and programming to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation.

Lead academic program prioritization and strategic allocation of resources

The higher education landscape continues to evolve, shaped by demographic change, intensified competition for students and research support, and constrained public funding. In this context, it is imperative that the University adopt a more strategic approach to its academic program portfolio to sustain excellence and invest in programs that serve Detroit, the region, and the broader public good. With the President's support, the Provost will consult broadly across the University in leading an academic program review to determine where changes may be needed, including understanding enrollment trends in existing programs, where there are demands for new academic programming, and faculty needs to satisfy those new expectations. Accordingly, the Provost will consult broadly across the University to gain an understanding of needs and expectations. The Provost will work closely with the SVP for Finance and

Business Affairs, deans, and the Budget Planning Council to develop budget plans that support strategic priorities and program growth as needed.

Foster a healthy culture of shared governance

Wayne State places a high value on shared governance. The Provost must engage effectively in a sophisticated shared governance system that includes school/college elected assemblies and standing committee structures that permit faculty and academic staff input into school/college planning, as well as the university-wide Academic Senate that is organized under a provision of the Board of Governors statutes to represent faculty and academic staff across the university. The Academic Senate has several standing committees, including the Policy Committee, which serves as its executive committee. There is also a Graduate Council whose members are elected by schools/colleges that is organized under a separate Board of Governors statute to develop policies and procedures for doctoral programs and graduate faculty. The statutes also provide for a General Education Oversight Committee that works with the Provost and the Senate to suggest revisions to the general education requirements. The Provost works collaboratively with these school/college and university-wide shared governance bodies to ensure inclusive decision-making on academic policy matters, engagement of the campus in planning for the future, and clear communication about key challenges, opportunities, and decisions.

Wayne State also has a number of academic unions, with whom the Provost works collaboratively through the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Academic Personnel, who has primary responsibility for the administrative relationship with these unions, through both the collective bargaining processes and the contract implementation and grievance processes.

In both the shared governance contexts and the union relationships, the Provost will serve as a model of good judgment and principled action, called upon to balance with care the interests of all stakeholders while keeping open channels of communication to promote a culture of engagement, trust, and innovation.

Develop a high-performing leadership team and culture

Wayne State's academic affairs staff is large and currently operates within an organizational structure that, with the deans, includes more than thirty direct reports to the Provost. The Provost will identify and implement opportunities to streamline the reporting structure, optimize and incentivize communication and collaboration between and among academic and central support units, reduce duplication of effort and services, and increase overall effectiveness. The Provost will set a clear tone and expectation of operational excellence and innovation throughout Academic Affairs, partnering closely with the University's new Division of Digital Strategy and Operational Excellence to increase impact centrally and across the Schools and Colleges. With several planned dean searches, the Provost must select, mentor, and develop a diverse team of highly competent academic leaders and build a culture of teamwork, collaboration, innovation, and shared accountability that positions Wayne State to achieve its long-term

goals. Additionally, the Provost will champion and support faculty research and scholarship, recognizing their central role in driving Wayne State's academic excellence and national reputation.

Increase Wayne State's stature and recognition

Wayne State embodies the project of democratic higher education, bringing together a diverse array of students—many first-generation and from all over the world—and providing opportunities that transform both their lives and those of the people of Detroit. An essential responsibility of Wayne State's leadership is to advance the University's reputation, mission, and visibility. The Provost must be one of its best champions, amplifying Wayne State's unique engagement with and for Detroit in all aspects of its mission, from education and research to community service and economic development. Wayne State's next Provost should boldly proclaim these virtues throughout the region and beyond and embrace opportunities to build upon them as a model for other institutions across the nation.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

To ensure Wayne State's success, the Provost will demonstrate many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- An earned terminal degree is required, as is a record of scholarship that merits a tenured appointment as a full professor at Wayne State University
- Academic and administrative leadership experience at or above the dean level, preferably in a comparably complex university
- A high regard for academic quality and experience with the measures of its success, including institutional accreditation
- Experience managing a complex budget in a resource-constrained environment; the ability to work in close partnership with the President, the Senior Vice President for Finance and Business Affairs, and deans to manage the institution's resources; and ideally, a practical appreciation for new and emerging budget models
- A demonstrated commitment to championing, supporting, and advancing faculty research and scholarship across disciplines, ensuring that these efforts remain central to the University's mission and reputation
- Demonstrated understanding of the pressing issues in higher education, including the distinctive role of research universities; the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration; the value of the liberal arts; the relationship between the arts, humanities, sciences and professional schools; the challenges facing enrollments and tuition costs; the distinct needs of undergraduate and graduate education; and the power of innovation, entrepreneurship, and opportunities for technology-enhanced pedagogy
- A demonstrated commitment to advancing cultural diversity and gender equity, including in the recruitment, hiring, and support of faculty and academic staff
- An understanding of and commitment to the urban mission of Wayne State University

- A clear vision for achieving excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional academic programs in an urban research university and the leadership skills to implement that vision, including a strong commitment to general education and continuous academic planning and program development, as well as academic program evaluation
- An understanding of and commitment to the research, teaching, and service missions of the University and very high standards in judging the effectiveness and value of activities intended to carry out those missions; an appreciation for the unique research, teaching, and service obligations of professional schools
- The ability to work collaboratively and collegially with the President and others across the University community through both formal and informal channels, in support of Wayne State's strategic priorities, including engaging external constituents and articulating a compelling case for support
- A commitment to respect for the role of shared governance through cooperative consultation with students in the Student Senate and with faculty and academic staff through the university-wide Academic Senate, accompanied by a commitment to the importance of collective bargaining
- The ability to provide leadership to deans, directors, and other administrators in the Division of Academic Affairs; a capacity for thorough, orderly, and prompt administration of diverse responsibilities and a large number of operating units
- The ability to lead outreach, engagement, recruitment, and support of undergraduates, and to support schools and colleges in similar outreach, recruitment, and support of graduate students
- The ability to recognize leadership potential in others and a willingness to mentor and develop management talent, including an appreciation for creative thinking and problem-solving through collaboration
- Excellent communication and relationship-building skills; the competence and personal qualities that inspire respect and trust, including integrity, transparency, and empathy

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Wayne State University has retained the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. All applications, nominations, referrals, and inquiries should be sent via the [search for the Wayne State University Provost](#) page on the Isaacson, Miller website.

Amy Segal, Partner

Robin Dougherty, Managing Associate

Olivia McVicker, Managing Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller

Wayne State University is an equal opportunity employer. No person will be discriminated against or harassed in employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status, arrest record, height, weight, sexual orientation, qualified Vietnam era

veterans, qualified special disabled veterans, recently separated veterans and other protected veterans, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal or state law.

Isaacson, Miller, and Wayne State University are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodation.

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