



**PURDUE
UNIVERSITY
NORTHWEST**

Vice Chancellor for Finance
and Administration



THE SEARCH

Purdue University Northwest (PNW), a student-centered regional university within the Purdue University system, seeks a strategic, fiscally disciplined, and entrepreneurial financial leader to serve as its next Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration (VCFA). Partnering closely with the Chancellor and serving as a key member of the senior leadership team, the VCFA will act as the University's chief financial and administrative officer and play a central role in aligning institutional ambition with sustainable financial and operational models. This leader will help shape PNW's trajectory as both a regional anchor institution and an integral member of the broader Purdue system.



Established in 2016, PNW is a two-campus institution, with locations in Hammond and Westville, Indiana, serving approximately 6,000 core students across undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. The University operates with an annual budget of approximately \$168 million, supported by a combination of state appropriations, tuition revenue, and auxiliary enterprises, with endowment resources managed at the system level. PNW serves a diverse population—including first-generation students, working adults, and commuters—while also supporting a growing cohort of traditional-age and residential students. At the same time, the University plays an important role in the economic and civic vitality of Northwest Indiana and the greater Chicagoland region through applied learning, industry engagement, and community partnership.

The University has undergone a period of institutional growth and advancement. This includes being the first Indiana institution to earn the FirstGen Forward Network Champion designation, the addition of a

third doctoral degree, and notable success in athletics, including championship seasons for several PNW sports programs. These efforts have been accompanied by broader institutional investments and the launch of a strategic plan, [Excellence Evolving](#), which will guide the University through 2030.

PNW is at a pivotal stage in its continued evolution, advancing a growing portfolio of applied research and innovation initiatives that connect faculty, students, and industry partners in meaningful ways. Central among these is the [Roberts Impact Lab](#), a multimillion-dollar regional technology hub and quantum commercialization center. In addition, construction of a new residence hall on PNW's Hammond Campus will be completed by fall 2026. The University is also building on established strengths, including multiple research centers that maintain long-standing partnerships with regional industry and continue to play a key role in applied research and workforce engagement.



PNW's campuses in Hammond and Westville, along with resources such as the [Gabis Arboretum](#) and other significant facilities, present opportunities for expanded research activity, community engagement, and strategic asset utilization. At the same time, PNW is in the midst of a transition from a predominantly commuter campus to a more residential institution, with expanded housing, growing athletics programs, and increased demand for on-campus experiences shaping the next phase of campus development.

The greater Chicagoland region further strengthens its strategic positioning. Located within close proximity to one of the nation's largest economic centers, the University is actively leveraging its location to expand partnerships with corporate, government, and research entities—particularly in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, technology, and emerging areas of innovation. These interconnected

priorities require financial and operational strategies that balance access and affordability with targeted investment in infrastructure, academic programming, and long-term growth.

As a regional campus within a large public research university system, PNW requires a finance leader who can navigate the complexity of a multi-entity financial structure while advancing the distinct priorities of the Northwest campus. Reporting to the Chancellor, with a dotted-line relationship to Purdue University's central finance leadership, the VCFA will provide strategic and operational oversight of the University's financial and administrative enterprise. This includes leadership of finance and accounting, budgeting and multi-year financial planning, procurement and business services, student accounts, auxiliary operations, facilities and campus planning, capital strategy, and public safety. The VCFA will play a central role in ensuring fiscal integrity, strengthening resource allocation processes, and aligning financial planning with institutional priorities.



The successful candidate will bring a demonstrated record of strong fiscal stewardship—ensuring that financial operations are accurate, balanced, and aligned with best practices in transparency and compliance. Equally important, the VCFA will be a forward-looking and analytically driven leader who leverages financial and institutional data to inform decision making, identify opportunities for strategic investment, and advance entrepreneurial initiatives that support long-term financial sustainability and growth. This includes maximizing the value of physical and real estate assets, advancing auxiliary and enterprise operations, and developing alternative revenue streams and partnerships, including public-private models.

This is an opportunity for a leader who can balance disciplined financial management with creative, data-informed thinking, thereby strengthening the University's financial foundation while positioning Purdue University Northwest for continued growth, innovation, and regional impact.

Purdue University Northwest has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1869 as Indiana's land-grant institution, Purdue University is a leading public research university recognized globally for excellence in science, technology, engineering, and agriculture, as well as its growing strength across the liberal arts, health sciences, and professional disciplines. Guided by its mission to advance knowledge, foster innovation, and prepare students for leadership and service, Purdue combines a strong commitment to access and affordability with a culture of discovery and applied impact. Known for its operational discipline and focus on student outcomes, Purdue has become a national model for scale and innovation in public higher education.



Purdue operates as a multi-campus system serving students across Indiana and beyond. In addition to its flagship campus in West Lafayette and Indianapolis, the system includes [Purdue University Fort Wayne](#) (PFW), serving northeast Indiana, and [Purdue University Northwest](#) (PNW), with campuses in Hammond and Westville serving northwest Indiana. Together, these regional universities expand access to high-quality education while emphasizing workforce-relevant programs, applied research, and deep engagement with regional industries and communities.

ABOUT PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST

Purdue University Northwest (PNW) was established in 2016 through the unification of Purdue University Calumet and Purdue University North Central, bringing together complementary strengths to better serve Northwest Indiana. As a regional comprehensive university within the Purdue system, PNW is focused on meeting the educational, economic, and civic needs of a diverse and evolving population, while maintaining close alignment with Purdue's systemwide standards, values, and expectations.



PNW serves approximately 6,000 core students across two campuses in Hammond and Westville, Indiana. The university offers a broad portfolio of academic programs at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels, grounded in experiential learning, applied research, and community engagement. Academic offerings are organized across the [College of Business](#), [College of Engineering and Sciences](#), [College of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences](#), [College of Nursing](#), [College of Technology](#), [School of Education and Counseling](#), [School of Engineering](#), and [White Lodging School of Hospitality and Tourism Management](#). Many students are first-generation, working adults, or commuters, underscoring PNW's central role in access-oriented public higher education.

Guided by a mission centered on student success, equity, and regional impact, PNW emphasizes inclusive excellence, workforce preparation, and partnerships with industry, healthcare systems, K-12 education, and municipal leaders throughout Northwest Indiana and the greater Chicagoland region. The University

has developed a growing research portfolio distinguished by applied, problem-driven scholarship and industry collaboration.

PNW has also made targeted investments in athletics and residential life that have contributed to a more engaged campus environment. The expansion of intercollegiate athletics (NCAA DII) has strengthened campus identity and community connection, while growth in on-campus housing has supported a shift toward a more residential student experience and enhanced student belonging.

Strategically located near Lake Michigan and within reach of Chicago, PNW benefits from proximity to major transportation corridors, healthcare networks, manufacturing and logistics hubs, and cultural institutions. This location supports strong employer partnerships, internship and career pathways, and applied research opportunities that align academic programs with regional and state workforce needs.



Leadership

[Kenneth C. Holford](#)

Chris Holford has served as Chancellor of Purdue University Northwest since January 2024. Under his leadership, PNW has advanced a student-centered vision focused on enhancing the student experience, strengthening faculty excellence and research, and expanding the university's impact across Northwest Indiana and beyond.

Holford has served the PNW campuses for more than 20 years. In his previous role as provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs, he provided leadership for the six academic colleges, commercialization and research, and student success. He prioritized the student experience at PNW while placing an emphasis on academic and research quality that led to a tripling of sponsored research activity.

A professor of Biology, Holford served as the founding dean of the College of Engineering and Sciences at PNW. He was also dean of the College of Sciences and chair of the department of Biology and Chemistry at the former Purdue North Central, which is now the Westville branch campus of PNW.

Holford earned a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from Illinois State University. He holds a master's degree in Zoology (Cooperative Wildlife Research Laboratory) from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Prior to these, Holford earned his baccalaureate degree from Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois with a major in Biology.

Current Financial Position

PNW operates with an annual budget of approximately \$168 million, supported by a combination of state appropriations, tuition and fee revenue, and auxiliary enterprises, reflecting a diversified yet enrollment-sensitive financial model. PNW operates an incentive-based budget model with financial operations embedded within a broader institutional framework that benefits from centralized oversight, shared infrastructure, and system-level scale. The University has paired financial discipline with a meaningful investment in strategic priorities. PNW has made targeted investments in academic programming, student success initiatives, and campus infrastructure.

Purdue University Northwest's broader contribution underscores its role in the surrounding economy. The University generates approximately \$745.9 million in total economic activity, representing roughly two percent of the region's gross product. This reflects a combination of research activity, startup development, and campus-driven engagement, as well as the long-term contributions of students and alumni entering the workforce prepared to support economic growth.

More information about the Purdue University system's financial position can be found [here](#).

ROLE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The VCFA serves as Purdue University Northwest's chief financial and administrative officer and senior fiscal steward. Reporting directly to the Chancellor of Purdue Northwest, Kenneth C. Holford, and serving as a key member of the Chancellor's senior leadership team with additional accountability to Purdue University's Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, the VCFA provides strategic leadership for the University's financial integrity, operational effectiveness, long-term sustainability, and regional impact.

The VCFA plays a central role in institutional budgeting and financial planning, strategic and capital

planning, policy development, and the stewardship of resources in support of PNW's mission to transform lives and serve the region through innovative education, impactful research, and community engagement.

The VCFA oversees a broad administrative and operational portfolio and represents the University to state agencies, system leadership, financial partners, and external stakeholders. Direct reports include the Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business Services; Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities; Director of Public Safety; and Assistant Vice Chancellor for University Enterprises. The role requires a collaborative, forward-looking leader who can guide complex financial and operational systems while supporting student success, academic excellence, and institutional growth.



The VCFA's profile comprises the following units: finance and accounting operation; administrative business services and procurement; budget planning, management and reporting; student accounts and bursary services; auxiliary units; campus master planning, capital renewal, facilities, and utilities management; and campus safety.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE VCFA

Shape the institution's next phase of growth, identity, and trajectory

PNW is at a pivotal stage, with leadership advancing a more research-active, student-centered, and regionally engaged model. As the University's chief financial strategist, the VCFA will advance long-term fiscal sustainability while aligning resources with institutional priorities. This includes leadership of

institutional budgeting, multi-year financial planning, forecasting, and reserve strategy within PNW's incentive-based budget model.

The VCFA will play a central role in developing transparent, participatory financial processes that engage shared governance bodies, academic and administrative leaders, and campus stakeholders. This work takes place in the context of demographic shifts, enrollment pressures, and evolving expectations for regional public institutions.

Align financial strategy with research expansion, innovation, and external partnerships

The University is investing in applied research, commercialization, and industry engagement, including initiatives such as the Roberts Impact Lab. The VCFA will oversee tuition and fee modeling, revenue forecasting, cost containment, and the identification of creative revenue generation and alternative funding opportunities.

Serving as a senior advisor to the Chancellor, the VCFA will contribute to institutional planning, policy development, and operational strategy, ensuring that financial and administrative systems support innovation, entrepreneurship, and long-term growth. This work requires balancing investment with fiscal discipline amid uncertainty in state appropriations and federal research funding.

Leverage assets and infrastructure while addressing utilization and capital needs

The VCFA will provide executive leadership for a broad administrative and operational portfolio, including finance and accounting, budgeting and reporting, procurement and business services, student accounts, and auxiliary operations such as housing, dining, parking, and events management. The role includes oversight of campus master planning, facilities and utilities management, capital renewal, and institutional real estate and capital assets.

Responsibilities include guiding capital budgeting and debt planning, managing major capital projects and deferred maintenance, and advancing space planning and long-term campus development strategies. PNW's significant physical footprint and underutilized space present an opportunity for strategic asset utilization, including partnerships, redevelopment, and potential divestment, while requiring careful prioritization in the face of competing capital needs.

Strengthen and modernize the financial model, systems, and resource allocation approach

The VCFA will lead the financial, business, and operational infrastructure of the University, ensuring regulatory compliance, effective service delivery, and alignment with Purdue system standards. This includes implementing modern financial systems and business solutions, strengthening internal controls, and ensuring compliance with federal, state, and university policies.

The VCFA also oversees campus safety operations, including university police, risk management, emergency preparedness, and environmental health and safety compliance. A key priority will be enhancing the clarity, accessibility, and effectiveness of budgeting and financial systems, including

refinement of the current incentive-based model, requiring navigation of legacy practices, decentralized decision-making, and the need for greater consistency across units.

Advance a more diversified and sustainable revenue model while maintaining affordability and mission focus

The VCFA will play a leading role in developing a more diversified and sustainable revenue model, including expansion of auxiliary enterprises, public-private partnerships, industry engagement, and applied research activity. Oversight includes housing and residential business operations—including financial models, debt, reserves, facilities planning, and vendor management—supporting the University’s transition to a more residential campus.

The VCFA will also serve as a key liaison to the Purdue University Treasurer’s Office and the Purdue Research Foundation, while representing the University with state agencies, legislators, auditors, and external partners. This work must balance system alignment with institutional flexibility while advancing campus priorities.

These efforts take place within a context of enrollment pressure, limited growth in state funding, and the need to maintain affordability and access. The VCFA must balance disciplined fiscal stewardship—ensuring accurate, transparent, and compliant operations—with forward-looking, data-informed investment strategies that support long-term sustainability, student success, and institutional growth.



QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no single candidate will possess every qualification listed below, the successful candidate will bring a strong record of senior-level leadership in finance and administration, along with the judgment, collaborative approach, and strategic perspective required to operate effectively within a complex public higher education environment.

Required Qualifications

- A master's degree in finance, accounting, business, public administration, or a related field, or an equivalent record of progressively responsible professional achievement
- Eight or more years of senior-level leadership experience in finance and administration within a university or a comparably complex public or non-profit organization
- Demonstrated understanding of higher education as an enterprise, including organizational structures, public funding models, and shared governance
- Significant experience in financial planning, budget development and management, accounting principles, compliance, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, and oversight of diverse administrative and operational functions
- Experience leading or supporting major capital projects and complex financial initiatives
- Proven ability to serve as a senior partner in institutional planning and policy-making and to work effectively with executive leadership, governing boards, and shared governance bodies
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with a transparent, inclusive, and collegial leadership and management style
- A record of integrity, sound judgment, and adherence to the highest ethical standards
- A collaborative, servant-leader approach with a strategic and analytical mindset, and the ability to use data to inform sound, timely decision-making
- Demonstrated ability to build and sustain effective relationships on and off campus, with a strong commitment to transparency, shared governance, and persuasive, credible communication

Preferred Qualifications

- A doctorate or CPA
- Experience in public higher education, state systems, or multi-campus environments
- Familiarity with incentive-based (IBBM) or responsibility-centered budgeting models
- Experience identifying and advancing alternative revenue opportunities, including public-private partnerships and entrepreneurial initiatives
- Experience overseeing capital projects, enterprise systems, auxiliary operations, and public safety functions
- A collaborative, data-informed leadership approach with the ability to guide change thoughtfully and effectively

NORTHWEST INDIANA

Northwest Indiana is a growing and evolving region along the southern shore of Lake Michigan, closely connected to the greater Chicago metropolitan area. The region offers a high quality of life shaped by its access to both metropolitan amenities and natural landscapes. Its proximity to Chicago provides cultural, professional, and transportation advantages, while everyday life reflects a strong sense of community and place.

Historically shaped by manufacturing, energy, and transportation, Northwest Indiana continues to evolve as its economy diversifies and reinvestment accelerates. Longstanding industrial strengths remain central, alongside growth in healthcare, logistics, advanced manufacturing, technology, and data-driven industries. Infrastructure improvements, expanded transportation options, and sustained public and private investments have strengthened regional connectivity and confidence in the future.

The region is defined by steady momentum rather than rapid change. It combines practicality with opportunity and offers significant potential for thoughtful, long-term growth. Northwest Indiana is a place where livability, economic development, and community engagement intersect, and where the next phase of progress is actively taking shape.

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/purdue-university-northwest/vice-chancellor-finance-and-administration>

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Purdue University Northwest is an equal opportunity/equal access university.

Purdue University Northwest (PNW) is a student-centered university that transforms lives through innovative education, impactful research and community engagement. Located in Northwest Indiana in the greater Chicago area and near the Indiana Dunes National Park, PNW serves approximately 9,000 students, including 6,000 core students, in a wide range of academic programs at the baccalaureate, master's and applied doctoral levels.

Purdue Northwest employs more than 1,000 faculty and staff members for operations at its main campus in Hammond, Ind., and its branch campus in Westville, Ind., plus additional sites in Northwest Indiana including the Gabis Arboretum near Valparaiso, Ind. PNW's values reflect the university's commitment to respect, innovation, a student-centric university, and excellence.

PNW is consistently ranked among the best public regional universities in U.S. News & World Report's annual Best Colleges report and is recognized as a FirstGen Forward Network Champion as well an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University. With its vision to cultivate leaders, inspire excellence, and impact our world, PNW advances the socioeconomic mobility of its students and positively impacts regional development.

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





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