



## Search for the President Jacksonville University

### THE OPPORTUNITY

[Jacksonville University](#) (“JU” or “the University”)—a private, comprehensive university that combines the personalized experience of a liberal arts institution with a growing portfolio of professional, graduate, and applied programs—seeks a collaborative, strategic, and innovative leader to serve as its next President. Situated on a beautiful 240-acre riverfront campus in Jacksonville, Florida, the University prepares students for lives of leadership, service, and professional success with a focus on career readiness through experiential learning, close faculty mentorship, and meaningful community engagement. Today, JU enrolls nearly 4,000 students, employs 200 faculty and 350 staff, and has earned a reputation for innovation across healthcare, nursing, aviation, marine science, business, law, and the liberal arts.

The University's recent history is characterized by growth and transformation. JU has expanded its academic footprint through the establishment of a law school, the evolution of the nursing school into a standalone unit, and a groundbreaking partnership with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine that recently welcomed its inaugural class. Taken together, the school of nursing, college of healthcare sciences, and new medical school, all located in a city with an economy that is led by healthcare, give the next president something few institutions of JU's size have: an emerging academic health sciences identity with a direct line to the regional workforce. Having just completed a \$175 million comprehensive campaign, JU has significant momentum and opportunity. At the same time, like many tuition-dependent institutions, JU continues to navigate financial realities and a rapidly evolving landscape, creating a compelling opportunity for new leadership to have real impact.

The next President will arrive at a pivotal moment and will have the opportunity to articulate a cohesive vision that clarifies the University's identity and positions it for continued success. Working collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees, and community partners, the President will strengthen a culture of shared governance, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhance the student experience with a focus on improving retention and student outcomes. Externally, the President will serve

as JU's chief ambassador, elevating the University's visibility and reputation, advancing enrollment growth, developing partnerships throughout the region and beyond, and building on the University's recent fundraising achievements to secure new resources for the institution.

This is an exceptional opportunity for an entrepreneurial and mission-driven leader to guide one of the Southeast's most dynamic private universities. The successful candidate will bring experience leading a complex organization, tested financial acumen, strong communication and relationship-building skills, and a demonstrated ability to unite diverse stakeholders around a shared strategy. The next President will be a visible, transparent, collaborative, and forward-looking leader who embraces the University's distinctive strengths, champions the campus community, and advances an ambitious vision that ensures the institution's vitality and impact.

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

## JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1934, Jacksonville University (JU) is a private, comprehensive university located on a picturesque riverfront campus in Jacksonville, Florida. Established originally as William J. Porter University and later known as Jacksonville Junior College, the institution evolved into a four-year university in the late 1950s. Today, JU combines the personalized educational experience of a liberal arts institution with a strong portfolio of professional, graduate, and applied programs. Guided by its motto, *Fiat Lux* ("Let There Be Light"), JU has earned a reputation for innovation across the full breadth of its academic offerings. It is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

The University enrolls approximately 4,000 students, including nearly 2,700 undergraduates and more than 1,300 graduate and professional students. Students come to JU from 47 states and approximately 48 countries, contributing to a vibrant and increasingly diverse campus community. As of Fall 2026, the University had a 73% acceptance rate for undergraduate applicants, and a first-year retention rate of approximately 77%. [Full-time undergraduate tuition](#) is \$48,500, and JU's average tuition discount is 57%, with 35% of undergraduate students being Pell eligible. Many of the graduate and professional students are working adults in nursing, business, law, and health sciences, and their retention and outcomes rely on strong advising, access to faculty, and program design. Students are supported on campus by a broad array of [wellness resources](#), including [mental wellness](#) supports such as the [Student Counseling Center](#).

Students are highly engaged with [more than 100 student organizations and clubs](#) and the [Campus Recreation and Wellness](#) department. Athletics play a prominent role in the University's identity. As an NCAA Division I institution, JU competes primarily in the Atlantic Sun Conference (ASUN) and sponsors 19 Division I sports. In 2026, Women's Basketball won the 2026 ASUN Championship, returning to the NCAA Tournament; Men's Lacrosse secured the 2026 ASUN Championship with a 16-7 victory over Air Force; Women's Lacrosse captured its 10<sup>th</sup> ASUN Championship by defeating Delaware 16-11; and Women's

Rowing won its ninth MAAC Championship. In 2025, the JU Sporting Clays, Skeet and Trap Team secured its 42<sup>nd</sup> national championship. Approximately 500 undergraduate students participate in athletics.

The students are guided in their learning by 200 committed members of the faculty. 60% of faculty are in full-time positions and the majority of credit hours in academic programs are delivered by full-time faculty. The average class size is 16 students, and the student-to-faculty ratio for undergraduates is 14:1. Students cite the accessibility of faculty and their eagerness to teach and engage with students as a compelling part of campus life. The students and faculty are supported in their work by 350 members of the staff, who are integral and dedicated members of the JU community.

The University offers programs through several colleges and schools, including the [Linda Berry Stein College of Arts & Sciences](#), [Davis College of Business & Technology](#), [Brooks Rehabilitation College Of Healthcare Sciences](#), [Keigwin School of Nursing](#), [College of Law](#), [Cost Honors College](#), and [Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine at Jacksonville University](#). JU also has multiple centers and institutes that contribute to the vibrancy of the academic community, including the [Haskell Public Policy Institute](#), [Marine Science Research Institute](#), and [STEAM Institute](#). The University has expanded significantly over the past decade through strategic investments in high-demand academic fields and professional education. The Law School was founded in 2022 and quickly grew from its first class of 14 students to a current total enrollment of 185 only four years later. The School of Nursing became an independent unit in 2026, spinning off from the College of Healthcare Sciences. Additionally, the University established Northeast Florida's first four-year medical school through a partnership with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM), which just enrolled its inaugural class in August 2026.

Under the leadership of President Tim Cost, who has served in the role since 2013, JU has undergone a period of substantial transformation marked by expanded programmatic offerings and increased community engagement. The growth at JU, and the President's proactive approach to partnership, also helped attract millions of dollars in private investment and development throughout the Arlington area of Jacksonville. Cost, a JU alumnus, joined the University following a three-decade career in business serving in executive leadership at PepsiCo, Kodak, Bristol-Myers Squibb, ARAMARK, Pharmacia, Centocor/Johnson & Johnson, Wyeth/Pfizer, and APCO Worldwide. During the 2026-27 academic year, Cost will serve as Chancellor and support fundraising and revenue generation efforts while the Board of Trustees conducts a presidential search.

### **Campus Location in Jacksonville, Florida**

The University's 240-acre campus sits along the banks of the St. Johns River in Jacksonville's Arlington neighborhood, providing one of the most distinctive campus settings in the region. JU benefits enormously from its location in Jacksonville, which is the tenth most populous city in the U.S. The city serves as a major center for healthcare, logistics, financial services, advanced manufacturing, aviation, and military activity, creating exceptional opportunities for partnerships, internships, philanthropy, and workforce alignment. The University's strong relationships with civic leaders, corporations, healthcare

systems, and nonprofit organizations have become an increasingly important source of institutional strength and differentiation

In addition, Jacksonville is a great place to live, offering natural beauty, professional sports, abundant waterways, and enticing cuisine. Well-situated on the Atlantic coast, the city is home to 22 miles of beaches. It has an elite NFL team and a thriving arts and music community. Jacksonville also has the largest urban park system in the country, with more than 80,000 designated acres. The city was recently ranked third in “Top Cities for US Job Seekers in 2024”, second in “America’s Hottest Job Markets,” and first for “Best Cities for College Graduates.”

### **Finances and Fundraising**

The University has a centralized budget model. The vast majority of its revenue comes from tuition, fees, and auxiliaries. Its annual operating budget for FY27 is approximately \$130 million, and its endowment stood at \$86 million as of September 2026 (up from \$66 million in 2024). Like many small, private institutions, JU has faced a period of financial challenge in recent years, and University leadership made the difficult decision to further strengthen its signature offerings, pare less enrolled programs, and move forward with a reduction in force. The rightsizing of the faculty and staff was difficult, but it has set the University on the path to financial stability.

In 2026, JU announced the successful completion of “[Future. Made.](#)”, its comprehensive campaign, four years ahead of schedule. The University surpassed its original \$175 million goal in the greatest fundraising achievement in its history. The University has an engaged alumni network with more than 35,000 alumni and seven alumni affinity networks. It also has several advisory boards across its colleges and schools, which offer their expertise as well as financial support.

### **ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT**

Reporting to the [Board of Trustees](#), the President serves as the chief executive officer of the University. They are responsible for setting an inspiring vision and sustainable strategy for the University, leading the senior team in managing all institutional affairs, and ensuring the financial health of the institution. At a student-centered institution like JU, the presidency requires both internal and external focus. The president will be visible, accessible, and engaged on campus while also acting as the University’s chief ambassador to the broader world, building external partnerships, strengthening fundraising efforts, developing new resources, and enhancing the University’s visibility and recognition.

The president will be supported in this work by a talented [senior team](#), who manage the academic, administrative, and operational aspects of the University. The President’s Cabinet comprises the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Senior Vice President of Financial and Facilities Management/Chief Financial Officer; Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Senior Vice President for External Affairs; Senior Vice President, Chief Compliance Officer, Chief Culture

Officer, and Legal Counsel; Senior Vice President and Athletic Director; and Senior Vice President of Enrollment Management and University Brand.

More specifically, the President will address the following challenges and strive to use them as opportunities to lead the University forward:

### **Craft a cohesive vision for the University that clarifies its identity and guides it forward**

Jacksonville University has evolved significantly in recent years through the advent of the law school, the spinning out of the nursing school, and the inauguration of the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine at Jacksonville University, among other new initiatives. The President will lead an effort to articulate a cohesive identity for the University and craft a vision to guide it forward. This effort should be collaborative in nature, rooted in the strong sense of community that pervades the University, inherently connected to the institution's academic mission, and built upon the strengths of the students, faculty, and staff. Looking to the future, this vision and sense of identity should inform future programmatic innovations, marketing efforts, fundraising activities, resource allocations, and strategic decision making.

### **Ensure the financial sustainability of the University through prudent financial management, revenue generation, and fundraising**

Like many small, tuition-driven institutions of higher learning, JU has faced financial challenges in recent years. It has launched entrepreneurial programs that will generate new resources in the long term, but these are not yet turning a profit. At the same time, changing national attitudes around the value of higher education and the demographic cliff lead to a context where enrollment is challenged. The President must continue to monitor the financial realities of the University, making decisions that advance the University's mission as an educational institution and that are also responsible from a business perspective. More broadly, an ambitious President will seek to grow the resources that are available to the University. This work will involve direct fundraising efforts that build upon JU's recent success with its \$175 million capital campaign. It will also involve improving retention and developing innovative programs and partnerships that are market aligned, community engaged, and grounded in the University's strengths.

### **Engage the faculty and staff in the leadership of the University and foster a culture of shared governance**

The University benefits from talented faculty and staff members who love their connection to the institution. They crave opportunities to be more deeply engaged in the governance of the University. The successful President will seek opportunities to leverage the expertise of the faculty and staff in this work, engaging them in crafting a broader institutional strategy, creating more formalized structures to encourage shared governance, and communicating regularly about strategic decisions and institutional updates. The President will balance the need to make timely decisions with the imperative to engage broadly and will prioritize a collaborative approach to leadership that strengthens the University's culture.

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**Strengthen the holistic student experience with a focus on enhancing retention and student outcomes**

JU students embrace the University's size and the opportunities it provides them for personalized support. Students who find community and opportunities to engage on campus report benefitting from a strong student experience. The University's strength in athletics, its beautiful campus, its three-year residency requirement, and a breadth of student clubs and organizations create a context in which students can thrive. And yet there remain opportunities to curate an even stronger student experience, one that ensures students are prepared to work collaboratively and in teams in a world that is increasingly divided, and in which students benefit from mentorship and guidance from the very first time they step on campus as prospective students through their graduation and into their careers and lives as alumni. The successful President will strengthen the student experience, ensuring that all who attend benefit from the transformative power of a JU education. This might involve aligning student-facing offices and resources, activating the campus with more university-wide events, encouraging increased student activity, and being visible and present with the students. Guiding this work should be an understanding of the ways in which a strong student experience leads to better retention and student outcomes.

**Enhance the University's marketing and communications efforts with a focus on growing enrollment**

JU is well positioned to broadcast its many strengths more strategically to new audiences both near and far. The University successfully attracts students from across the nation and around the world, yet there are many who remain unfamiliar with the power and promise of a JU education. As a tuition-driven institution, JU relies heavily on enrollment to finance its operations, and new leadership in admissions has brought fresh vision and energy to this function. Working with key partners at the University—including leaders of academic units, external affairs, marketing and communications, and enrollment—the President will champion expanded marketing efforts, broadcasting the JU brand and identity, increasing its recognition and renown both regionally and nationally, and endeavoring to reach new populations of potential students.

**Foster interdisciplinary collaboration across the University's colleges, schools, and units**

The breadth of disciplinary approaches is a genuine strength of the University. With the advent of new schools and units in recent years, there now exists the opportunity for greater partnership across units and disciplinary boundaries. To be successful in today's rapidly changing world, students require programs that are flexible and that bring together multiple disciplines. Individual faculty and students are already finding opportunities for collaboration, for instance through co-taught courses, and the health sciences units offer interprofessional education and shared clinical partnerships. The President will lead the way in encouraging and incentivizing such collaborative efforts at the highest institutional level, promoting a culture where resources and expertise are shared and where programmatic innovations are collaboratively developed to ensure JU moves forward as one University community.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The search committee understands that no single candidate will have all the ideal qualifications, but it seeks candidates with many of the following qualifications, experience, skills, and abilities:

- A deep personal and professional commitment to the mission of Jacksonville University;
- An interest in and commitment to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students;
- Experience leading a complex organization; a record of academic or professional accomplishment;
- Knowledge of current and emerging issues and trends in higher education;
- The ability to foster collaboration, build trust, and mobilize students, faculty, staff, alumni, board members, and external stakeholders around a shared vision; commitment to shared governance;
- A recognition of the need to prepare students for an increasingly tech-enabled world (including AI preparedness) while also ensuring the importance of human-centered judgment in this work;
- Experience leading a team, delegating responsibility, and executing plans with fiscal responsibility;
- Budgetary experience and an understanding of the realities of a tuition-driven institution;
- The ability to serve as an excellent ambassador for Jacksonville University; demonstrated fundraising experience or the ability to cultivate meaningful relationships with donors, prospective donors, alumni, foundations, corporations, and other philanthropic partners;
- Demonstrated experience developing and executing complex institutional partnerships;
- An entrepreneurial approach; a willingness to take measured risks and seize opportunities;
- Emotional intelligence and intercultural competence; a demonstrated ability to communicate with nuance and foresight; a commitment to engaging and listening to diverse audiences;
- Integrity of the highest order, strong listening skills, and a transparent and open leadership style.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Applications (including resume/CV and cover letter), inquiries, and nominations should be submitted in confidence to Kate Barry, Keith Mason, and Kaitlin Cruz via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/jacksonville-university/president>

*Jacksonville University values diversity, equity, and inclusion and strives to create a welcoming community where all stakeholders feel valued and a sense of belonging. We believe in lifelong learning and preparing globally-minded citizens for the real world. We recruit students, faculty, staff, and leaders from all over the globe and respect differences in ability, age, appearance, athletic and student organization involvement, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender expression, immigration status, language, military/veteran status, nationality, political ideology, race, religion, talent, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. Jacksonville University is an equal-opportunity institution and prohibits discrimination. We consider each stakeholder to be a key player in Jacksonville University's civic responsibility and commitment to this work.*

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Jacksonville University. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Jacksonville University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*