



Samuel Merritt University

Search for the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Samuel Merritt University
Oakland, California

Samuel Merritt University (SMU), an innovative and dynamic multi-campus private institution dedicated to educating impactful, community-based healthcare professionals, seeks a strategic and collaborative leader to serve as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. With renowned programs in nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant studies, and podiatric medicine, Samuel Merritt University delivers a high-quality health sciences education with a focus on compassion and community engagement. In concert with a committed staff and dedicated leadership team, the provost will have a tremendous opportunity to build upon SMU's recent successes and lead the institution through an exciting period of growth, working to strengthen existing programs and explore opportunities to expand the University's reach and impact across its campuses and beyond.

Samuel Merritt University has a truly diverse student body of around 2,000 undergraduates and graduates across its four distinct California campuses – Oakland, Sacramento, San Mateo, and Fresno. With an 8:1 student to faculty ratio, students at SMU experience close connections to their peers and instructors while receiving a personalized approach to their education. Students across programs are trained to become skilled, caring, world-class professionals motivated by improving health outcomes and access to care in underserved communities and beyond. As a result, SMU is consistently recognized for its success in preparing students for work after graduation: graduates of SMU enjoy a 95-100% job placement rate within one year of graduation. As the largest nonprofit educator of registered nurses in California, the University is an indispensable healthcare workforce development engine in the region.

This is a propitious time to join the SMU community. In a rare moment of significant expansion of an academic institution in the San Francisco Bay area, SMU was recently approved for a new state-of-the-art 250,000 square foot campus in Oakland. Moreover, in January of 2022, SMU became an independent entity after being an affiliate of Sutter Health, a non-profit integrated health delivery system, since 1999. This has allowed the University to pursue its ambitious goal of building a new campus and unlocking their impact and potential by strategically creating new academic programs to meet the needs of the diverse communities SMU serves.

The next provost will be a key player in the execution of an ambitious academic master plan, along with its associated enrollment growth plan that has the student population doubling in the next decade. This will require strategic planning around infrastructure, facilities, and the hiring, retaining, and supporting of more world-class faculty and staff. There is also a tremendous opportunity for SMU to play a significant role in workforce development for the health sciences beyond patient care. This individual will assess existing programs' opportunities for growth and improvements while working to create new academic programs such as midwifery, kinesiology, medical social work, psychology/mental health, health data science, medicine, and nurse leadership, among others, across the University's four campuses. To that end, the provost will help shape the future of SMU by addressing the following key opportunities and challenges:

- Accelerate program growth through a clear, strategic, and compelling academic vision combined with disciplined and results-oriented strategy deployment
- Strengthen collaborative relationships across SMU's academic programs, campuses, and divisions
- Establish strong operational processes and infrastructure to support SMU's growth and student success
- Recruit and retain a diverse and world-class faculty committed to SMU's educational mission and scholarly achievements
- Serve as an effective advocate and respected representative for SMU with external stakeholders in the city of Oakland and across California
- Serve as a key contributor and member of the President's leadership team

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the position can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared by the search committee with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to provide background information and detail the key opportunities and challenges related to the position. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

About Samuel Merritt University

Samuel Merritt University educates students to become highly skilled and compassionate healthcare professionals who positively transform the experience of care in diverse communities. Students learn to advance health equity and make a lasting impact on individual health and community well-being. The philosophy of teaching and learning at SMU consists of a system of beliefs and values about the partnership between faculty and students in the teaching and learning process. The philosophy is directed toward the preparation of healthcare practitioners whose practice is planned and coordinated around the unique qualities of each person served. The philosophy requires that SMU graduates use sound reasoning which incorporates the current best evidence, clinical expertise, and the preference of the people served. Programs, curricula, and courses are designed to value active, experiential learning and collegial, scholarly, and effective interaction among students and faculty. Clinical and practical applications, grounded in the

basic sciences, social sciences, and humanities, provide a critical foundation for learning in the health professions.

History

The roots of SMU go back over a century. On January 26, 1909, Samuel Merritt Hospital opened its doors, along with a brand-new School of Nursing. During its first 75 years, the Samuel Merritt School of Nursing prepared hundreds of students for nursing careers. Over the years, Samuel Merritt maintained affiliation agreements with other local colleges to allow students to complete foundational science and liberal arts courses. These institutions included Mills College, California State University Hayward (now CSU East Bay), and the College of Alameda. In 1981, the School of Nursing became a college and initiated an innovative four-year baccalaureate nursing program in cooperation with Saint Mary's College of California in Moraga. Samuel Merritt College (SMC) thus became the first – and one of the few hospital-based nursing schools in the nation – to make a successful transition to a four-year accredited degree-granting institution.

A new era of program expansion and enrollment growth began in the 1990s when the College diversified its programs beyond undergraduate nursing by establishing several master's degree programs in physical therapy, nursing, and occupational therapy. In 1999, it established the first master's degree program for Physician Assistants in the western United States. In 2001, the College began expanding its programs outside the East Bay, and a 2005 grant from the Betty and Gordon Moore Foundation enabled the College to develop additional learning centers in San Francisco and San Mateo to address the critical nursing shortage through the expansion of its innovative 12-month Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. It also began offering a number of courses online along with a degree program to serve students from a distance. SMC became a doctoral-granting institution through the merger of the California College of Podiatric Medicine (CCPM), now known as the California School of Podiatric Medicine (CSPM), and the development of a clinical doctorate in physical therapy in 2002.

In 2009, Samuel Merritt College was officially renamed Samuel Merritt University to recognize its growing contribution to research and its success in broadening its mission to provide baccalaureate-, master's-, and doctoral-level programs in multiple health disciplines, preparing tens of thousands of students for entry-level and advanced professional practice in a variety of critical health disciplines.

Over the past four decades, corporate oversight of SMU has undergone a series of beneficial changes. In 1982, Samuel Merritt Hospital – SMU's original parent organization – merged with Peralta Hospital to form Merritt-Peralta Medical Center. Ten years later, Providence Hospital and Merritt-Peralta Medical Center combined to form Summit Medical Center. Finally, in 1999, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center was created by the merger of Summit Medical Center with Alta Bates Medical Center in Berkeley. Until 2022, Sutter Health Alta Bates Summit Medical Center served as the University's parent organization as the East Bay's largest private, nonprofit provider of tertiary care for the healthcare needs. This made SMU an affiliate of Sutter Health, one of the nation's leading non-profit, community-based health systems, delivering high quality medical services in more than 100 Northern California communities. As of January

1, 2022, SMU disaffiliated from Sutter Health and became an independent entity. SMU is regionally accredited by WSCUC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges – Senior College and University Commission).

Faculty and Academics

The University is organized academically into three colleges that operate across the Bay Area and Northern California; the College of Health Sciences, the College of Nursing, and the California School of Podiatric Medicine. Together, the colleges offer bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant, and podiatric medicine. The curriculum is rooted in the school's mission to educate students to become highly skilled and compassionate healthcare professionals. At SMU, students learn to transform the experience of care with kindness and respect, and to advance the health equity and well-being of diverse populations and communities. For a complete list of programs offered through each college, see Appendix 1.

SMU has a strong reputation for personalized instruction because of its outstanding faculty, who bring impressive academic and clinical backgrounds to life-long learning, and a deep commitment to students and to the community. The 197 full-time faculty and 273 part-time faculty are regularly published in peer-reviewed journals and books, many more are invited to serve on national boards or professional committees, and a growing number have been awarded research grants and other professional honors. The small student class sizes and personalized learning experience with faculty members is a hallmark of SMU, ensuring that students receive individualized attention.

Students

Student enrollment is just over 2,000, and the University strives to reflect the community it serves by recruiting students with a variety of ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. SMU attracts a diverse student body with respect to age, gender, and ethnicity. About 20% of students are aged 30 or over; 75% of students identify as female; 56% of students are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds (a student with at least one of the categories of economically, educationally, or environmentally disadvantaged). The financial aid office provides 84% of its students with the proper amount of financial aid to cover the cost of tuition, fees and living expenses. Notably, Samuel Merritt boasts a 94% timely graduation rate across its degree programs.

As a nonprofit higher educational institution, SMU is the largest source of new registered nurses in California. The University is also the largest provider of physical and occupational therapists, physician assistants and podiatric physicians in the greater East Bay. Most SMU passing scores on licensure and certification exams exceed state and national rates. Due to the University's reputation for academic and clinical excellence, its graduates are heavily recruited and have one of the highest rates of employment within one year of graduation, ranging from 95-100%. Furthermore, graduates of Samuel Merritt earn the highest salaries among undergraduates from all other California universities and from nearly all schools

nationwide. Reflective of SMU's mission, 91% of alumni choose to stay in California after graduation and 68% are working in urban communities.

Campuses and Facilities

The ever-growing healthcare field is in constant need of qualified, caring professionals. To answer this demand, SMU has expanded both its programmatic offerings and geographic reach to make more of a positive impact than ever. All administrative offices are located in the Oakland headquarters, with about half of students completing their degrees on that campus. Additional campuses in the San Francisco Peninsula, Sacramento, and Fresno capitalize on the tech and startup culture of the Bay Area, as well as the growing need for health care providers across the state of California.

Some notable facilities include:

- *Health Sciences Simulation Center (HSSC)*, nationally accredited, is one of the West's most advanced healthcare simulation facilities, with state-of-the-art medical equipment where SMU students, faculty, and working health professionals carry out hands-on, immersive teaching and learning activities.
- *Motion Analysis Research Center (MARC)* is among the best equipped healthcare sciences teaching and research laboratories in northern California. It is a 2,100 square foot state-of-the-art laboratory designed to advance the study of human movement in education, research, and patient care. The MARC serves as a teaching center on motion analysis for faculty and students from SMU's California School of Podiatric Medicine (CSPM), department of occupational therapy, department of physical therapy, and College of Nursing. Healthcare practitioners across several fields will also use the center to study biomechanics, gait, upper and lower body movement, and the effect of treatment modalities, and apply what they learn in clinical practice for the benefit of patients. Furthermore, the MARC will be a venue for clinical trials of new products and interventions designed to treat movement disorders.

In the spring of 2026, SMU will be moving its Oakland headquarters and facilities to a brand-new building in the center of downtown Oakland, further reflecting its commitment to the city and region. The 167-foot-tall project will create 225,000 square feet of teaching and learning space, with 40,000 square feet of simulation facility, and a 1,900 square-foot cafe. The interiors will include traditional classrooms, specialty laboratories, workspaces, and collaboration rooms. Amenities will include a terrace, campus store, study rooms, a counseling center, and a tenth-floor terrace. The top two levels will consist of a library and maker space. Administration rooms will be connected for various needs for SMU, including the College of Nursing, Department of Information Technology, the president's office, and a board room on the top level. The new headquarters will be easily accessible by public transportation, with a BART stop only half a block away.

Finances

Samuel Merritt, a 501(c)(3) organization, is primarily a tuition-driven institution with an approximately \$90M operating budget. As of 2021, the University had approximately \$288M of unrestricted liquid assets in cash investments and restricted investments. With the move onto a new Oakland campus, and a Moody's A level credit rating, the University will be taking on first-time debt to support this investment in infrastructure, an exciting prospect for a successful academic enterprise.

Leadership

Dr. Ching-Hua Wang became the second president of SMU on November 26, 2018, succeeding Sharon Diaz who served for 36 years before announcing her retirement. Prior to assuming her role at Samuel Merritt, Dr. Wang served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at California State University, Sacramento. Prior to joining Sacramento State, Wang served as the Dean of the School of Health and Natural Sciences and a Professor of immunology and biology at Dominican University and was one of the original 13 faculty members recruited to start California State University, Channel Islands in 2001.

The SMU Board of Regents guides the University efforts to sustain its excellence in clinical education and secure the financial resources to meet the University's needs. Board members bring a variety of executive experiences in educational leadership, health care, and business development. Together, the Board of Regents and President Wang work to fulfill the University's overall strategic vision by overseeing ongoing improvements to SMU's facilities and developing academic programs that will meet the health care needs of the communities they serve.

About the Division of Academic Affairs

SMU Academic Affairs serves students, faculty, and the community-at-large by providing outstanding undergraduate and graduate health science education programs. The division offers student-centered services and faculty support and resources promoting best practices in student learning, teaching, and education performance evaluation.

The division consists of SMU's academic programs and supporting departments, including Faculty Resources and Support, the Health Sciences Simulation Center, the Motion Analysis Research Center, Academic and Instructional Innovation (A&I), the Center for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL), the Institutional Review Board, Institutional Research, Institutional Effectiveness, and SMU Libraries. These offices support regional and specialty accreditation, student success, faculty orientation and development and commencement.

The provost oversees the Faculty Organization, a forum to foster excellence in the University's academic programs, support the mission of the University, actively participate in the shared governance of the institution, support academic freedom, uphold faculty rights and responsibilities, and promulgate sound

academic policies and practices. Meeting once a month during the academic year, the Faculty Organization is an important forum for faculty deliberation and decision-making on a wide range of matters pertaining to the mission of SMU.

For more information about the Academic Affairs division at SMU, please visit:
<https://www.samuelmerritt.edu/academic-affairs>

Role of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

The provost serves as SMU's chief academic officer (CAO), overseeing all academic programs, including instruction and research, and providing leadership for academic administrative operations. The provost has principal responsibility for the planning, development, implementation, assessment, growth, improvement, academic policies, quality assurance, and accreditation of all academic programs. Through appropriate faculty recruitment, as well as the rigorous review of faculty appointments, retention and promotion, the provost will work to implement consistent processes in pursuit of academic and scholarly excellence and achievements. The provost is also responsible for the planning, quality, and delivery of the education provided to all SMU students at all campus locations.

Reporting directly to the President and serving as a member of her cabinet, the provost will work collaboratively with administrative leaders, deans, faculty, staff, and students to advance strategic goals across the university. As Vice President, the provost also serves as the President's leading senior executive for day-to-day campus operations and makes decisions on behalf of the President when the President is not available. They will lead the development of strategic plans for academic and student affairs to ensure strategic expansion and growth of enrollment and academic programs.

In carrying out these broad duties, the provost will address several key opportunities and challenges, as detailed below.

Key Opportunities and Challenges for the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Accelerate program growth through a clear, strategic, and compelling academic vision combined with disciplined and results-oriented strategy deployment

As the CAO for the university, the provost will lead the development of a comprehensive academic vision that is focused on program growth, strategic expansion, and distinction in the academic marketplace. With an eye toward significantly increased student enrollment and mission impact, the provost will work to strengthen existing academic programs while simultaneously developing and implementing new academic programs in high-demand fields. They will have a deep understanding of local and national trends and market demand from students and healthcare professionals to determine program growth and geographic expansion. They will also consider the implementation of novel approaches to healthcare education through simulation, virtual healthcare options or blended learning models, and expanding the

reach of academic programs to new and emerging areas of health sciences and healthcare professions. The provost will be responsible for ensuring that academic programs, both old and new, are distinctive, of the highest quality, and in compliance with regional and professional accreditation requirements. As the institution continues to grow enrollment, especially in new programs, the provost will be nimble in their approach for continual improvement and to ensure expanded support, adapting the academic vision, strategy, and support structures regularly and communicating changes broadly and effectively.

Strengthen collaborative relationships across SMU's academic programs, campuses, and divisions

In close partnership with the President and working with the vice presidents of all the divisions, academic and admissions deans, the provost will help this distinctive multi-campus university mature in ways that integrate, embrace, and build upon the individual strengths of each of the campuses and programs. The provost will provide collaborative leadership, forging connections and better integration across the university with a goal of ensuring a richer student experience through strengthened connections with student affairs, business affairs, advancement, and other functional areas. The provost will mentor and empower academic deans to promote collaborative partnership, furthering the university's offerings in interprofessional education and capitalizing on the interdisciplinary and interconnected nature of health sciences education. To that end, the provost will help steward a culture change that values bottom-up collaborative leadership for the benefit of individual units and the institution as a whole. The provost will be a highly visible and active participant in the SMU community across all campuses in Northern California.

Establish strong operational processes and infrastructure to support SMU's growth and student success

As the university continues to innovate and grow, it will be important to have nimble and thoughtful structures, policies, and processes that support the work of faculty and staff in achieving new objectives and support students for their success. Now independent from Sutter Health, the provost will work with the Faculty Organization to set clear guidelines and expectations for the deans, faculty, staff, and students to succeed, and ensure that policies, processes, and resources reflect the university's commitment to high-quality health sciences education with a focus on compassion and community engagement. The provost will also ensure that resources are aligned and that the budgeting and funding models support these objectives.

Recruit and retain a diverse and world-class faculty committed to SMU's educational mission and scholarly achievements

The provost will drive the recruitment, promotion, and retention of a faculty who are diverse, highly qualified, and committed to the educational mission of the university and scholarly achievements. They will lead this endeavor with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, championing practices and policies to ensure that faculty reflect the diversity of its student body and creating an inclusive environment where all community members feel well-supported and empowered in their work. They will safeguard the quality

of academic standards and research accomplishments and be able to hold the deans and department chairs accountable based on clearly laid out expectations. In doing so, the provost will ensure that hiring, compensation, and comprehensive evaluation systems are not based on advocacy or biases but based on objective evaluations of substantiated evidence in the faculty, staff, and administrators' performance record, and keeping with university, federal and state regulatory policies, and best practices in higher education. As the university continues on its growth trajectory, the provost will need to be skilled in change management and ushering the community into a new era that capitalizes on the ever-evolving nature of health sciences education.

Serve as an effective advocate and respected representative for SMU with external stakeholders in the city of Oakland and across California

As the leader of the academic enterprise, the provost will work closely with the president and leadership team to ensure a seamless execution of campus priorities, which includes managing crucial relationships with all stakeholders. The provost will be expected to actively collaborate with external groups such as specialized accrediting agencies, clinical and corporate affiliates, and other academic institutions and healthcare and related corporations in effecting partnerships designed to meet current and future needs of academic program growth of the university. Additionally, the new building in Oakland will allow the provost to connect with the community more authentically and comprehensively and show the value of a community-based health sciences education enterprise. Though headquartered in Oakland, the provost will also be expected to form deep connections with the other campuses, capitalizing on their success and ensuring that the ethos of growth and innovation expands to all campuses.

Serve as a key contributor and member of the President's leadership team

As a group, the senior leadership team is responsible for leading a community of scholars and healthcare professionals toward a future of education, research, service excellence. The provost will be a visionary, strategic, and equity-minded member of this team and a key partner to President Wang. Additionally, the provost will be expected to collaborate closely with the student affairs and marketing teams to promote distinctive academic programs and to facilitate execution of strategic marketing strategies followed by consistent outcomes of robust admissions and enrollments in all academic programs at all campus sites. The provost will harness the shared commitment to students, healthcare education, and working with underserved communities across the leadership team to make progress toward future success, cultivating a culture of shared governance, transparency, and respect. The provost will work closely with the division of university advancement and lead the academic deans and faculty in university advancement efforts to grow university endowment funds and seek external funding from foundations, corporations, granting agencies, and donors to support faculty/student research, academic endeavors, and student success.

Qualifications and Characteristics:

- Earned doctoral degree in health sciences or a related field from an accredited college or university required;
- An exceptional record in teaching, scholarship, and college and community service to be able to serve as an example as the chief academic officer of the university;
- Substantive and progressive administrative experience and record of achievements in effectively leading and prudently managing personnel, budgets and facilities as department chairperson, dean, assistant or associate vice president in higher education, preferably in the health sciences and related fields;
- Demonstrated experience of bold, visionary, ethical, collaborative, and courageous leadership and always mindful of the best interests of the institution;
- Demonstrated record of leading institutional change with perseverance and results;
- Experience in successfully leading, developing, and implementing a strategic plan for academic affairs;
- Demonstrated business and operations acumen with strong leadership in holding direct reports accountable toward accomplishing SMART goals, safeguarding excellent academic standards, promoting high quality teaching and productive faculty scholarly pursuit, handling tough personnel issues, and willingness to make necessary change;
- A proven record of accomplishments in achieving inclusive student success;
- Experience in best practices of recruiting, developing and retaining a diverse faculty and staff and in developing prudent academic policies and procedures to uphold academic integrity, instructional quality, and scholarship standards;
- Demonstrated record of identifying, developing, implementing, promoting, and growing successful and innovative academic programs and removing ineffective academic programs;
- Proven record of achieving excellent academic accreditations;
- Experience in working closely with student affairs, with knowledge in enrollment management, admissions, tuition pricing strategies, student development and services, and best higher education practices, research, and policies;
- Ability to interface successfully with persons of various social, cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds;
- Knowledge of technology, database management, integrated student information systems, and other reporting systems;
- Exceptional oral, written, presentation, and interpersonal skills;
- Ability to lead effectively in a fast-paced, multi-faceted, and results-oriented environment while effectively managing others and diligently staying on top of major issues and data points within the academic affairs division and those at the University level;
- Strong understanding of contemporary student issues and values, and the ability to develop a natural rapport with students and student leaders;
- Demonstrated ability to facilitate partnerships among academic programs and other divisions of the university;
- Demonstrated ability to always take a bigger picture point of view on behalf of the university not merely that of academic affairs division.

Location

Though SMU offers classes on four campuses (Oakland, Sacramento, Fresno, and the San Francisco Peninsula), all administrative offices are housed on the main Oakland campus. Oakland is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the country, with more than 150 languages spoken among its 400,000 residents. Often called San Francisco's "Eclectic Sister", Oakland boasts beautiful weather, an abundance of public transportation systems, and an engaged community. Oakland is where SMU's mission heartbeat originated, but the passion to provide high quality healthcare to all citizens of Northern California and the Central Valley is the primary mission of all SMU campuses.

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 for the search: <http://www.imsearch.com/8763>. Electronic submission of materials is required.

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Samuel Merritt University has an institution-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We strive to build a welcoming and supportive campus environment and acknowledge that diversity is an educational imperative to achieve excellence.

Appendix 1: Programs and Degrees by College

College of Health Sciences

Program	Degree	Campus Location
Master Physician Assistant	Master's	Oakland
Doctor of Physical Therapy	Doctoral	Oakland
Doctor and Master of Occupational Therapy	Doctoral & Master's	Oakland

College of Nursing

Program	Degree	Campus Location
Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Bachelor's	Oakland, Sacramento, San Francisco Peninsula
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Bachelor's	Oakland
RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Bachelor's	Online
Entry-Level Master of Science in Nursing- Case Management	Master's	Oakland, Sacramento
Entry-Level Master of Science in Nursing- Family Nurse Practitioner	Master's	Oakland, Sacramento
Master of Science in Nursing- Case Management Program	Master's	Oakland, Sacramento
Master of Science in Nursing- Family Nurse Practitioner	Master's	Online
Master of Science in Nursing- Nurse Anesthesia	Master's	Oakland
Anesthesia- Doctor of Nursing Practice	Doctoral	Oakland
Doctor of Nursing Practice	Doctoral	Online
Family Nurse Practitioner- Doctor of Nursing Practice	Doctoral	Sacramento
Psychiatric Mental Health- Doctor of Nursing Practice	Doctoral	Online

California School of Podiatric Medicine

Program	Degree	Campus Location
Doctor of Podiatric Medicine	Doctoral	Oakland