



SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Search for the VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT LIFE
SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
GEORGETOWN, TX

THE SEARCH

Southwestern University, a residential liberal arts college located 25 minutes outside of Austin, TX, seeks an experienced and innovative leader to serve as its next Vice President of Student Life (VPSL). Reporting to the President and serving as a valued member of the Senior Staff, the VPSL will be an active and visible student advocate who proactively builds collaborative relationships within the Division of Student Life and across campus. The VPSL will join Southwestern at an exciting time as the university moves to implement its recently completed Tactical Plan designed to enable Southwestern to realize its visionary potential as a distinctive liberal arts institution. The VPSL will be critical in these efforts, developing and implementing a strategic, holistic approach to student life that enriches and strengthens the student experience for all.

Serving 1,500 undergraduate students with a distinctive, high-impact, and interdisciplinary approach to the liberal arts, Southwestern University enjoys a reputation for teaching students how to make connections, be curious, and think critically, all as a means to create positive change in the world. The student body is incredibly diverse with 40% of the fall 2022 incoming class coming from underrepresented groups, 26% of whom were Latinx. To best serve this population, Southwestern is in the process of pursuing a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation. The next VPSL must possess a nuanced understanding of the complexities of liberal arts education, experience interweaving curricular and co-curricular offerings, and a demonstrated commitment to supporting and advancing diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging in all that they do.

The VPFL will serve as the Chief Student Life Officer of the University and in that capacity will oversee a portfolio including Counseling and Health Services, Dean of Students, Diversity Education, Mosaic, Intramurals & Recreation, Spiritual and Religious Life, Student Activities, Residence Life & Housing, and University Police. The VPFL will articulate a shared vision and strategic direction for teams across the Student Life Division, empowering staff to take an innovative approach to serving students and implementing a culture of assessment to track and measure the impacts of their efforts. They will work closely with the Dean of the Faculty and with academic leadership to integrate curricular and co-curricular student experiences, always looking to productively collaborate. As a visible and respected community

member, they will be the leading advocate for students, leveraging knowledge of student development trends to support Southwestern's diverse student body with changing needs.

Southwestern University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Southwestern is a selective, private, national liberal arts college comprised of the Brown College of Arts & Sciences, the Garey School of Natural Sciences, and the Sarofim School of Fine Arts. Chartered by the Republic of Texas in 1840, Southwestern is the oldest institution of higher education in Texas. Originally founded by Methodist missionaries, the school continues its affiliation with the Methodist Church today. The University is currently ranked #85 in National Liberal Arts Colleges by U.S. News & World Report.

The University prides itself on providing its 1,500 undergraduates with distinctive, high-impact learning designed to foster intellectual and personal growth. The University enjoys a reputation for academic excellence and for a distinctive curriculum that encourages students to make connections through a special focus on incorporating perspectives from multiple disciplines and modes of learning.

Over the last six years, Southwestern has enjoyed record enrollments and the most diverse and academically talented classes in the University's history. Approximately 40% of the fall 2022 incoming class was from underrepresented groups, 26% of whom were Latinx. 87% of the University's students are from Texas while the remainder hail from 37 states and 15 countries.

Southwestern is guided by its [Mission, Purpose, and Core Values](#): fostering a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions towards the well-being of humanity.

Academics

Southwestern provides a top-ranked integrated arts and sciences curriculum that incorporates the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, and natural sciences. The University offers four degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science in Education, Bachelor of Music, and Bachelor of Fine Arts. It is a Phi Beta Kappa institution that also has chapters of the Alpha Chi honors society and Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership honors society.

All Southwestern students participate in Paideia, Southwestern's approach to interdisciplinary education throughout their years at the University. The First-Year or Advanced-Entry Seminar introduces students to the practice of making connections, with a special focus on incorporating perspectives from multiple

disciplines. Students engage in self-directed connections within all courses, across their major, between disciplines, and in-and out-of-classroom experiences, such as community-engaged learning, intercultural learning, internships, student-faculty research, advanced language study, and student-directed creative projects. Students are also encouraged to pursue a more intensive Paideia path that includes elements above and beyond the graduation requirements and leads to the designation of Paideia with Distinction.

Nearly one-third of students study abroad, with the University providing a listing of study abroad programs by major. Southwestern also offers opportunities for semesters in New York City and London (in the arts) and Washington, DC (in politics), as well as internships, both domestic and abroad.

Southwestern benefits from 108 full-time and 40 part-time faculty who are talented teacher-scholars committed to creating a learning environment focused on preparing students to succeed in an ever-changing and dynamic society. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 11:1 and an average class size of 18, student-faculty collaborative research and publications are a critical part of the program of study.

Mosaic

Southwestern University supports learning wherever it takes place: the classroom, laboratory, and library, but also the residence halls, student organizations, internships, and countless interpersonal interactions. Mosaic is Student Life's intentionally designed approach to these curating co-curricular experiences.

The Mosaic approach encourages students to develop as a whole person. From the moment students join the Southwestern community, they can get involved in experiences that align with their personal and professional growth objectives. Student Life intentionally creates opportunities for students to:

- **Engage** meaningfully in experiences outside the classroom,
- **Reflect** on their experiences, and
- **Articulate** the value of those experiences to others.

Greek Life

Southwestern is home to six national sororities and four national fraternities. Founded on the principles of academic achievement, leadership, community service, and life-long friendships, the Greek community at Southwestern includes nearly 500 members, approximately one-third of the student population.

Fraternities have a long history and tradition at Southwestern University, with local founding dates going back to 1883. The four fraternity chapters at Southwestern, all of which provide family-style living in fraternity houses on campus, are Kappa Alpha, Kappa Sigma, Phi Delta Theta, and Pi Kappa Alpha.

The Sorority community at Southwestern is especially dynamic, attracting about a third of the student body into its membership. Sorority members gain a home away from home where they can make friends,

develop as leaders, serve their local community, and focus on academics. During an average year, the Southwestern sororities complete approximately 3,000 service hours in the greater Georgetown and Austin communities. Sorority chapters on campus are Alpha Delta Pi – Zeta Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha – Upsilon Alpha Chapter, Alpha Xi Delta – Theta Lambda Chapter, Delta Delta Delta – Theta Epsilon Chapter, Kappa Delta Chi, and Zeta Tau Alpha – Lambda Chapter.

Athletics

More than 60% of students participate annually in some form of organized physical activity. Known as the [Pirates](#), Southwestern student-athletes compete in NCAA Division III basketball, cross-country, golf, lacrosse, soccer, swimming and diving, tennis, and track and field for men and women; men's baseball and football; and women's softball and volleyball. Most teams are members of the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference, while the football team is an affiliate member of the American Southwest Conference. Additionally, students can choose from 22 intramural sports and two club sports, cheerleading, and dancing, to participate in a competitive sports environment. Intramural and Recreational activities fall under the Student Life Division.

The Campus

The 150-acre academic campus is an attractive blend of historic buildings and modern cutting-edge glass buildings. In the last few years, the University has completed a \$40 million renovation of and addition to Fondren-Jones Science Center. This 107,000 square-foot facility supports active and collaborative learning for faculty and students. The Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center houses the Sarofim School of Fine Arts where students and faculty produce professional stage productions, perform musical recitals, and exhibit their original artwork. The campus also includes an observatory and a community garden.

Southwestern has developed a Capital Improvement Program that includes the construction of two new multi-use residence halls renovations to an existing central utility plan and a new satellite utility plant, various athletics improvements, and major renovations to the Mood-Bridwell academic building, the Smith Library Center, the Cullen building, and the Mabee Residence Hall.

Sustainability is central to the campus character and operations. The Wilhelmina Cullen Welcome Center and the Prothro Center for Lifelong Learning are both LEED-certified. In addition to those buildings, the University made a formal commitment to sustainability by signing the College and University Presidents Climate Commitment and was the first university in Texas to change to 100 percent wind energy.

Location: Georgetown, TX

Southwestern University is located in Georgetown, Texas, a medium-sized city of approximately 75,000 residents, with a charming, Victorian square and lovely, historic neighborhoods. The campus is a short and easy 25-minute drive to downtown Austin to the south by Interstate 35. In recent years, Austin has

experienced strong economic growth and has become a global technology hub attracting organizations as diverse as consumer technology, cloud computing, biotechnology, and the arts. The City hosts the internationally known Austin City Limits and South by Southwest, a collection of film, music, and interactive media conferences and festivals. The entire Austin metropolitan area has a wealth of outdoor opportunities, ranging from hot springs to hiking and biking trails.

Financial Strength

Southwestern enjoys a balanced budget and is in a strong financial position. As of Fiscal Year 2021, the endowment stood at \$365 million. The University's operating budget for Fiscal Year 2023 is \$65 million and is built on the assumption that the FTE enrollment will be 1,500. For 2022-2023, a student's tuition and fees totaled \$48,450 and the average room rate ranged from \$5,904 for a two-person room in the oldest residence hall to \$16,410 for a one-bedroom apartment in the newest residential center.

A major factor in strengthening the financial picture of the University and beginning the implementation of the Tactical Plan has been fundraising, which in recent years has been at an all-time high. The University recently completed the fourth year of the most ambitious comprehensive campaign in its history by announcing over \$90 million in new gifts and pledges. The campaign funded twelve newly named faculty chairs and professorships, hundreds of new scholarships and high-impact experiences for students, a substantial expansion to the Center for Career and Professional Development, philanthropic funding for the Mosaic program and Residential Life Experience, and multiple capital renovation projects across campus. Not included in the campaign total is an additional cash gift of \$15 million to the endowment to support academic programming, financial aid, and other priorities including funding to underwrite high-impact experiences for 32 Garey Scholas; up to eight annual mid-cycle sabbatical semesters for tenured faculty; need-based financial assistance for students; and five endowed chairs in the natural sciences. Alumni participation has increased in recent years from 20 to 26 percent in 2020.

Southwestern University Tactical Plan

Southwestern University's Senior Staff, which includes the Vice President of Student Life, led the development of the University's [Tactical Plan 2020](#). This plan lays out an exciting vision for the University's priorities and focuses on offering unparalleled liberal arts education for students, embracing and valuing all community members, and envisioning an exceptional living and learning environment. This plan commits the University to pursue tactics that target six Central Priority Areas:

- **DIBE:** Building and sustaining a culture of Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Equity (DIBE) for students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees to emphasize our commitment and identity as an institution.
- **Retention:** Reinforcing our commitment to student success by focusing on strategically recruiting, providing access, and retaining a diverse, talented, and committed student body that values our

distinctive identity, and who feel that they belong at Southwestern and will remain connected as alumni.

- **Program Development:** Sustaining, developing, and integrating curricular and co-curricular programs central to Southwestern's distinctive identity—especially Paideia, Mosaic, the Residential Experience, Center for Career and Professional Development, and on-campus and off-campus High Impact Experiences (HIEs)—to best serve our students while clearly demonstrating our unique liberal arts emphasis on educating the whole person.
- **Physical and Technological Infrastructure:** Creating and maintaining an appealing and sustainable campus infrastructure that aligns with the Strategic Plan and Campus Facilities Master Plan and supports other Tactical Planning priorities around Retention, DIBE, and Program Development—especially in our recent commitment to a 3-year residency requirement.
- **Competitive Financial Aid:** Ensuring that financial aid funding capacity and awarding practices reduce overall student indebtedness and increase access.
- **Competitive Compensation:** Ensuring that compensation for faculty, staff, and student employees is appropriate and reflects national and regional cohort groups and salary studies.

LEADERSHIP

President Laura Skandera Trombley

Laura Skandera Trombley, a gifted scholar, proven leader, and passionate advocate for liberal arts education, became Southwestern's 16th President in July 2020, becoming the first woman to lead the University. Trombley is president emerita of Pitzer College and of The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, as well as the former president of the University of Bridgeport. Trombley is also emerita chair of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, appointed by President Barack Obama in 2015. Previously, she served as vice president for academic affairs at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Recognized by her peers as a champion of liberal arts institutions, Trombley's leadership has earned praise for her ability to raise sustainability awareness, establish best-in-class university operations, and drive exponential growth in fundraising. Under her leadership, both Pitzer College and the University of Bridgeport experienced transformational change, realizing a dramatic improvement in the schools' national rankings and fundraising capabilities. Over the years, Trombley has also written extensively about the underrepresentation of women and people of color in academia.

Trombley is a preeminent Mark Twain scholar. Her most recent book is *Mark Twain's Other Woman* (Knopf, 2011). Her first book, *Mark Twain in the Company of Women* (University of Pennsylvania Press), was published in 1994. In May 2018, The Huntington Library presented her with the Dixon Wecter Distinguished Professor of American Literature Award; in August 2017, the Mark Twain Circle of America awarded her the Louis J. Budd Award for excellence in scholarly achievement; and in July 2013, she was recognized as the inaugural Thomas Nast Gast professor by the University of Koblenz–Landau.

More information about President Trombley can be found [here](#). There also is information about President Trombley's [Senior Staff](#), the University's [board of trustees](#), and the [board of visitors](#).

THE ROLE: VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT LIFE

As the Chief Student Life Officer for Southwestern University, the VPSL has oversight over all Student Life departments on campus with the primary goal of implementing programs and delivering services that promote values-centered education of the whole person. The VPSL reports directly to President Trombley, but also may, from time to time, receive direction from the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Bylaws of the University.

As the person responsible for the Division of Student Life, the VPFL's primary duties include:

- Serving as the Chief Student Life Officer of the University, providing counsel to the President regarding overall student welfare.
- Directing the Counseling and Health Services, Dean of Students, Diversity Education, Mosaic, Intramurals & Recreation, Spiritual and Religious Life, Student Activities, Residence Life & Housing and University Police departments with appropriate management staff over each area.
- Implementing programs and developing services that facilitate student's development of competencies within an undergraduate liberal arts community.
- Developing and maintaining Student Life related policies and procedures.
- Developing and implementing a broad array of educational and developmental programs in areas related to the enhancement of life for students.
- Providing and presenting Student Life related reports and information to the President, President's Staff, Board of Trustees, Faculty, and other constituents as appropriate.
- Working in close partnership with the Enrollment Services and Dean of the Faculty Offices regarding student retention programs.
- Managing the Student Life budget.
- Serving as the Division liaison with other university staff on issues dealing with student parents and communicating with parents on student-related issues, as appropriate.
- Overseeing the selection, training, and supervision of all Student Life staff ensuring that all University policies and procedures are followed.
- Serving as the liaison between the University and Aramark to ensure performance standards outlined in the contract are being met.

Additional duties may also include:

- Participating in various committees such as Budget Committee, Facilities Committee, various ad hoc task forces, and regular attendance at Senior Staff Meetings and Faculty Meetings.
- Co-advising Student Government Association, Panhellenic.
- Actively participating in professional associations such as The National Association for Student Personnel Administration.
- Collaborating with other chief student life officers within the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS).
- Performing other duties as assigned.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES + CHALLENGES

The new VPSL will join Southwestern University at a moment of great energy and promise. Working closely with President Trombley, they will position Student Life as a key component of the student experience at Southwestern, including curricular and co-curricular activities and student health and well-being. With the support and partnership of Southwestern's Senior Staff, the VPSL will be a key leader in setting a strategic vision for Student Life and moving forward Divisional priorities that provide a transformational and empowering liberal arts experience for all students.

Specifically, the challenges and opportunities for the next VPSL include:

Provide strategic leadership and bring a culture of assessment to Student Life

The next VPSL will be tasked with developing and mobilizing a comprehensive strategic approach to student life at Southwestern rooted in a nuanced appreciation for the liberal arts, grounded in best practices, and guided by meaningful metrics. Upon arrival, the VPSL will take time to assess and evaluate current Student Life programs and offerings, developing an understanding of how the Division fits into and contributes to the larger campus community, and identifying priorities, gaps, and underperforming areas. The VPSL will work closely with the President and Senior Staff, develop a strategy for the Division that aligns with Southwestern's Tactical plan and works towards the overarching goal of strengthening retention. As they develop this strategy, the VPSL should keep in mind and leverage Southwestern's many assets and values including the campus landscape and proximity to Austin; diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging; the residential community; and interdisciplinary and experiential learning.

Central to their strategic approach, the VPSL will develop a culture of assessment. They will develop systems and tools to measure and track the progress and impact of programs, initiatives, and services, all in the spirit of continual improvement. Working with their teams, the VPSL will establish meaningful metrics that shed light on the performance of offerings across the Division and can be harnessed to strategically direct the allocation of resources for the greatest impact.

Integrate curricular and co-curricular student experiences

Southwestern offers two distinctive and high-impact offerings: Paideia, an approach to interdisciplinary education designed to develop the intellectual practice of making connections across different ways of knowing, and Mosaic, an intentional curation of co-curricular experiences designed to help students grow as a whole person. Currently, there is great potential to enhance connections between these two offerings and strengthen relationships between faculty and staff to better align the academic and non-academic dimensions of the student experience and work collaboratively to improve retention and student success holistically. The VPFL, working closely with campus leaders, will support the vision of a fully integrated student experience at Southwestern. They will seek opportunities to engage faculty meaningfully in student affairs efforts and will partner with the Dean of the Faculty to ensure all students have knowledge of and access to the resources, services, and programs they need to be successful on campus. Likewise, the VPFL will ensure Southwestern faculty have the resources they need to support students.

Support a diverse student body with changing needs

The next VPSL will need to anticipate and develop creative solutions to address the changing social and academic needs of today's college students. Southwestern faces many of the same challenges as other residential liberal arts colleges, including maneuvering through the impacts of the pandemic and responding to an increased demand for academic support and mental health services – a demand that was growing before 2020. The VPSL will continue to support Southwestern's Counseling Center as well as prioritize programs, resources, and trainings that direct students to the help they need. To this end, the VPSL will be attuned to trends in student development in both secondary and post-secondary education. They will be a close partner to the Dean of the Faculty in conveying these changing needs to the faculty and enlisting their collaboration in ensuring a distinctive and transformational student experience.

Prioritizing diversity, inclusion, belonging, and equity (DIEB) is central to the 2020 Tactical Plan and it will be imperative that the next VPSL works to foster a campus culture where students recognize and benefit from the incredible diversity that exists within their community. The VPSL will envision new ways to encourage student social engagement that align with the University's values and aspirations and bring people together across lines of difference.

Be a highly visible and engaged advocate for students

The VPSL will be charismatic and highly visible, interacting openly and genuinely with students, and developing strong relationships across campus. Southwestern is an intimate community that requires the VPSL to be approachable, trusted, and respected as the students' advocate. Students at Southwestern are bright and inquisitive with a wide range of interests and are involved across campus through Greek life, athletics, and numerous organizations, groups, and activities. The VPSL will be a student champion and advisor who finds meaning, joy, and satisfaction in facilitating student development.

Lead, support, and inspire teams of passionate student affairs professionals

The VPSL will oversee the recruitment, management, development, and retention of professional and support staff in the Student Life Division and promote the development of a strong leadership team. Bringing exceptional management skills, the VPFL will be experienced in organizational development and have a track record of building and retaining vibrant teams.

Teams across Student Life are made up of dedicated student affairs professionals who possess deep institutional knowledge and insight into the student population. The next VPSL will support and mentor this team, harnessing the expertise of seasoned members and empowering them to serve as strong partners across the university. They will build an action-oriented culture that embraces creativity, flexibility, shared accountability, and an appetite for trying and implementing new approaches and emergent best practices. Importantly, they will be unifying in their teambuilding efforts, helping members across all levels and units to understand their interconnected roles in realizing a shared mission.

The VPSL will continually strive to harness talent across the Division. They will encourage and support interaction across Student Life as well as with units outside of the Division, such as Athletics, to break down silos and position teams as valued and collaborative partners to the entire campus community.

Serve as a trusted and valuable member of the President's Senior Staff

Serving as a member of President Trombley's Senior Staff, the VPSL will be a thought partner and collaborator, providing leadership informed by a broad view and nuanced understanding of the student affairs landscape. The VPSL will be an active contributor to the University's strategic discussions, representing the best interests of students and the Student Life Division, and serve as a principal advisor to the President on decisions that affect student affairs. The VPSL will also be a key voice in implementing the 2020 Tactical Plan, identifying creative pathways for achieving medium- and long-term institutional goals, and advocating for personnel, programming, and facilities improvements that advance priorities under the purview of Student Life. They will work closely with their Senior Staff peers, thinking holistically about issues related to recruitment, retention, student success, advancement, and communications. In moments of crisis, the VPSL will be an open and proactive communicator, engaging with Senior Staff and drawing on expertise and imagination to offer constructive ideas and effective solutions. Lastly, VPSL will serve as a representative for Student Life with external partners, including the Board of Trustees, alumni, parents, and other potential supporters of the College.

EXPERIENCE, SKILLS + QUALIFICATIONS

Position Requirements:

- Terminal degree in Student Development, Higher Education Administration, or a related field.

- Experience at a senior management level in a Student Life division of a liberal arts college or university.
- Ability to relate to traditional college-age individuals.
- Understanding and commitment to a liberal arts education, including the ability to relate to a liberal arts faculty and all other University constituents.
- Demonstrated record of being flexible and having knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and a willingness to serve and interact with all individuals without regard to sex, race, color, religion, age, disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or any other impermissible factor.
- Demonstrated record of building successful student life programs and overall vision of student welfare.
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with and unite the various constituencies represented within the University community.
- Demonstrated record of an open, collegial management style.
- Ability to be creative and engage others in creative conversations.
- Excellent computer skills utilizing software such as Microsoft Word and Excel, and integrated database systems such as Datatel.
- Demonstrated leadership skills, including a strong desire to present at student functions.
- National presence in the profession, participation in conferences; deep knowledge in best practices.
- Possess excellent interpersonal, interaction, and communication skills (verbal and written).
- Demonstrated professional manner with all internal and external University constituents.
- Recognition as a leader in the Student Life profession.
- Ability to be flexible, adjust to fluctuating priorities, and produce a reliable work product.
- Proven ability to perform well in stressful situations.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resumes and letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller executive search team via the link below.

Dan Rodas, Partner
Katy Ryan, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<http://www.imsearch.com/8765>

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