



Hamilton

An invitation to apply for the position of:

Associate Vice President for Finance and Controller

Hamilton College
Clinton, New York

THE OPPORTUNITY

Hamilton College (“Hamilton” or “the College”), a preeminent residential liberal arts college of approximately 2,000 students located in the village of Clinton, New York, seeks a collaborative and thoughtful leader for the position of Associate Vice President for Finance and Controller (AVP). Reporting to the Vice President, Administration and Finance, the AVP will be a proven financial professional with strong and transparent communication skills and the ability to build interpersonal relationships, as well as lead and mentor a talented staff of twelve. The AVP serves as a core member of the Administration and Finance team and is an advisor to the College’s Trustees, President, Officers, and the Faculty Committee on Budget and Finance on various accounting, financial, and budgetary matters.

Hamilton is assisted in this search by the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller. Inquiries, nominations, and applications, should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of the document.

ABOUT HAMILTON COLLEGE

Originally founded in 1793 as the Hamilton-Oneida Academy, Hamilton College received its charter from the regents of the State University of New York in 1812. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the College built out a classic and beautiful campus which the Hamilton community enjoys to this day.

In the late 1960s, Hamilton took a series of bold steps to result in its modern identity. In 1968, all-male Hamilton created Kirkland College, an independent women's college physically adjacent to Hamilton's existing campus. Kirkland's curriculum was more experimental; its buildings were modern; its emphasis was on the fine and performing arts; and it stressed creativity, self-direction, and interdisciplinary learning. In the increasingly coeducational world at the time, the trustees of both colleges united the two in 1978. Hamilton today retains its teaching commitment, as well as a distinctive culture that blends the traditions of both institutions. Over the years, Hamilton has continued to evolve through an updated curriculum and renewed emphasis on integrating experiential learning to create a transformational educational experience for students.

Hamilton's 1,350-acre campus is situated on a hilltop overlooking the picturesque village of Clinton. The college is home to approximately 2,000 students and offers a Bachelor of Arts degree in over 50 areas of concentration. The college's namesake is Alexander Hamilton, U.S. statesman, first secretary of the U.S. Treasury, and member of the first Board of Trustees of the Hamilton-Oneida Academy.

The Campus

Hamilton's campus consists of the original Hamilton campus and the Kirkland campus built in the mid and late 1960s. Over the last two decades, largely funded by alumni and parent donors, the College has invested about \$340 million in new construction, renovations, and landscaping improvements. The campus has grown from 1.5 million to more than 2 million square feet across 1,350 acres. Academic space has been greatly expanded and upgraded with technology, art, and scientific equipment. Each new structure has been carefully sited and designed to conform to the existing architecture and to avoid overwhelming the historic charm of the campus.

Hamilton has welcomed new spaces for teaching and learning, the result of a comprehensive and deliberate process that seeks to match facilities with existing and emerging pedagogy. The 200,000-square-foot Taylor Science Center, dedicated in 2005, has increased opportunities for undergraduate science education and research that have often led to published papers and conference posters with students as co-authors. The building has an open floor plan that invites observation, engagement, and experimentation. Beyond the Taylor Science Center, many Hamilton students join ongoing faculty research, gaining firsthand research experience across all disciplines. Mostly through endowed funds, approximately 120 students receive grants each summer to [conduct research](#) in the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences.

The [Wellin Museum of Art](#) (2012) and the [Kennedy Center for Theatre and the Studio Arts](#) (2014) have provided a fittingly updated and expanded space for the visual and performing arts on campus. In 2009, Hamilton also renovated and expanded the Kirner-Johnson Building to provide new facilities for the College's social science departments, as well as space for Hamilton's signature programs in writing (the [Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center](#)), oral communication (the [Oral Communication Center](#)), and public policy (the [Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center](#)).

Looking to the future, Hamilton has developed a long-range capital plan that includes an average of \$11 million per year for the renewal of existing facilities. In addition, several programmatic enhancement initiatives are underway, including a new Digital Gateway building that will serve as the home for computer science and digital innovation programs. Humanities facilities have had renovations or have been repurposed. Recent projects have also focused on the improvement of athletics facilities, including a full renovation of the aquatics facility. The scope of building projects over the next decade is expected to be more modest given competing strategic priorities.

Academics

At the turn of the 20th century, Hamilton was known for emphasizing written and oral communication. The curriculum prioritized rhetoric and written expression, and the College required all students to give a speech in the Chapel. Over time, the College has continued to reinforce and build upon its emphasis on critical thought and expression, while also expanding the breadth of its curricular offerings. Hamilton today offers 44 majors and 57 areas of study, and the faculty recently adopted a fully articulated set of learning objectives. The rigorous and well-regarded centers for writing, oral communication, and quantitative and symbolic reasoning both mentor students and are home to pedagogical innovation. The First-Year Experience Program conveys knowledge, strategies, and skills to facilitate students' successful transitions to college. The senior program requires independent, closely advised work, often in connection with faculty scholarship, to demonstrate a student's mastery of their concentration. In recent years, Hamilton has also dedicated much focus to expanding digital pedagogy, strengthening the awareness and practice of inclusion and equity in its curriculum, and supporting the fusion of the curricular and cocurricular.

The College is distinguished by an outstanding faculty and exceptionally able administrators dedicated to student learning, scholarship, interdisciplinary discovery, and innovative academic programs. Students and alumni speak with deep and genuine affection for Hamilton, particularly about the close, meaningful relationships, and collaborations they have with academic advisors and faculty members. Hamilton has the equivalent of 203 full-time faculty members, of whom 107 are tenured, giving it a student-to-faculty ratio of 9:1. There are more than 50 contingent faculty, which Hamilton defines as term positions (i.e. visiting positions), created to meet various curricular needs for the College.

Students

Hamilton has a socially and intellectually diverse campus life that draws students with a broad spectrum of interests, and boasts a rich array of academic, athletic, artistic, and co-curricular activities.

Hamilton's most recent entering class was selected from a record-high applicant pool of 9,899, resulting in the lowest admit rate on record (11.8%). The College is need-blind in admissions decisions for domestic applicants and meets 100% of the financial need for all admitted and enrolled students. Hamilton's current financial aid budget of \$52.4 million supports roughly half the student body, with an average financial aid award of \$53,597. Overall, Hamilton students hail from 47 states and 51 countries; 27% of the total student body identify as U.S. students of color and 7% as international students; and 15% are from the first generation in their family to attend college. Hamilton's strong student profile, generous resources, and devoted employee base contribute to student retention (94.3%) and graduation (91.5%) rates that are among the highest in the country.

As a member of NESCAC, the College encourages participation in athletics, and roughly one-third of its students are varsity scholar-athletes, excelling both in the classroom and on the field.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Hamilton has long been attentive to the changing needs of students and employees, and will continue to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are integrated into all aspects of campus life, including academics. Hamilton's most recent work in this area includes action plans in four areas: people, planning, and practices; pedagogy and research; relationships; and reporting. These plans focus primarily on structural changes and will enhance earlier diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts throughout the Hamilton community. The College recently named its first full-time chief diversity officer, a direct report to the President. Working in tandem with the senior officers, and with a dedicated support team, the chief diversity officer will direct and coordinate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts campus wide.

Finances

Hamilton College has managed its endowment exceptionally well over the years. As of June 2022, the endowment and planned gifts stood at \$1.33 billion. The College's endowment is often listed among the top 150 of all 3,200 non-profit colleges and universities in the United States. The College's current and most ambitious campaign in institutional history, [Because Hamilton](#), exceeded \$380 million at the end of 2022, bringing it more than 95 percent of the way toward its \$400 million goal with 6 months remaining.

LEADERSHIP AT HAMILTON COLLEGE

David Wippman, President

David Wippman became the 20th president of Hamilton College on July 1, 2016. He arrived at Hamilton after serving as the dean of the University of Minnesota Law School. Before Minnesota,

Wippman was a professor and associate dean at Cornell Law School and vice provost for international relations at Cornell University. He earned a bachelor's degree at Princeton University and a master's degree in English literature and a law degree from Yale. President Wippman's tenure has been defined by high visibility, engagement, and learning that has translated into the current strategic plan and a highly successful capital campaign that concludes in 2023. Under President Wippman's direction during the pandemic, the College avoided faculty and staff layoffs, furloughs, and cuts to retirement, representing a deep commitment to members of the Hamilton community.

Karen Leach, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Karen Leach has served as Vice President, Administration and Finance at Hamilton College and has been a member of the College's senior leadership team since 2001. She has been a significant contributor to advancing the mission and strategic direction of the College and has provided leadership and stewardship for all aspects of the College's financial and administrative resources. She serves as a strategic advisor to the president and her senior staff colleagues and recommends financial and administrative objectives, policies, programs, and practices that ensure a sound financial and administrative structure for the College. Her duties include oversight, management and development of the College's budget, business and purchasing services, investment functions, facilities, human resources, and environmental health, safety and sustainability.

Prior to working at Hamilton, she was at Colgate University for sixteen years where she was first Associate Provost and then Chief Information Officer. Early in her career, Karen worked for Bristol Myers where she performed efficiency studies in quality control operations in Syracuse, New York and Puerto Rico. She earned a bachelor's degree at Vassar College and a master's in business administration at Syracuse University.

THE POSITION

Reporting directly to the Vice President of Administration and Finance, the AVP will be responsible for financial reporting, auditing, budget planning, tax compliance, payroll, accounts payable, and student accounts and will monitor a \$175 million annual operating budget involving approximately 90 individual departments and supervisors. The ideal candidate will be a collaborative leader, team builder, and careful listener who will continually strive for excellence in business functions and service to all of its varied constituencies.

The primary opportunities and challenges for the AVP include the following:

Ensure the highest level of financial accountability, compliance, policy and procedures, business systems, and financial reporting

The AVP will be responsible for the planning, development, organization, implementation, and evaluation of the College's fiscal functions. This next leader will ensure timely and accurate budget development and analysis, as well as financial reporting for senior leaders, the Board of Trustees, and state and federal regulators. As the staff lead for the Board of Trustees' Committee on Audit, the AVP will be charged with the planning, preparation, and presentation of the College's financial statements and supporting materials for the annual audit. The AVP will additionally lead budget development in close collaboration with the VP Administration and Finance.

Provide strategic leadership to the College through an enterprise resource planning system transition

As the College embarks on an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system transition, the next AVP will play a critical role in migrating the College from the Ellucian Colleague system to Workday for financial management and reporting. The transition to Workday begins this summer within HR and finance, coinciding with the summer audit season. As the use of Workday expands across the College, the AVP will employ a change management skillset to ensure that all constituents are informed of and well-versed in the new system.

Lead a team of high performing professionals

Inheriting a talented and collaborative team of finance professionals, the next AVP will leverage the skills and strengths of the group to uphold its reputation of delivering quality and timely services across Hamilton's campus. The team thrives on openness and communication, and the successful AVP will keep them abreast of current and new initiatives, working to create a connected culture among the staff. The AVP will be an active leader, willing to assist the finance staff when extra hands are required. A proponent of personal and professional growth, the AVP will also identify professional development opportunities for the talented group and advocate for the team across the campus.

Serve as a strategic and visionary leader for the College's financial and accounting activities

The implementation of Workday provides an opportunity for the incoming AVP to think progressively about the direction of College's finance function and reporting mechanisms. They will continue to identify opportunities for strengthening the College's financial systems, encourage and increase automation, and discover opportunities for greater efficiency. The AVP will keep abreast of the changing finance and accounting landscape and will develop and implement policies and procedures designed to improve the overall financial operation and effectiveness of the College.

Collaborate with multiple partners across the university

Trust is critical to a successful business operation, and the AVP will work with stakeholders across the campus community in formal and informal settings to foster trust, credibility, and transparency. Working carefully with campus partners, the AVP will drive and promote innovation and collaboration to achieve effective cost savings and budget planning and will work closely with colleagues across campus to ensure that the College is actively working to fulfill the goals and mission of the College.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will be a proven financial leader with progressive accounting and budgeting experience. The AVP will have a successful record of financial management within higher education, healthcare, consulting, or in a similar non-profit environment.

The best candidates will demonstrate evidence of many of the following qualities:

- Bachelor's degree in accounting or related field and at least seven years of administrative experience in accounting and financial management;
- The ability to lead with a decisive, consultative, and hands-on leadership style, foster open communications, and proactively build positive relationships across campus and with diverse constituencies;
- A track record of successfully hiring, developing, managing, and mentoring a large staff;
- A team player who fosters collaboration within the organization, and has a strong commitment to excellent customer service;
- An active listener who seeks to understand the needs of their team and organization;
- Brings enthusiasm for the job with a customer service approach and be willing to work within a team environment;
- Well-organized and self-directed individual who exhibits a high level of integrity that inspires trust and confidence;
- An intelligent and articulate individual who can relate to people at all levels of an organization; be a team player, and has the ability to operate with transparency;
- Adept at communicating financial information to senior leaders, and board members, as well as colleagues across the campus who do not have a finance background;
- Proven experience working with external and internal auditors, consultants, vendors, and students and a commitment to professional development by way of external industry organizations such as EACUBO and NACUBO;
- Experience using current and emerging technology and tools to support and enhance business services while juggling multiple projects and priorities, coupled with a strong

knowledge of accounting principles and best practices. Systems implementation experience is required;

- Preference will be given to those with an MBA degree or CPA certificate.

TO APPLY

Hamilton College has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed electronically and in confidence to:

Rebecca Kennedy, Partner (she/her)
Diana Carmona, Associate (she/her)
Elizabeth Arvanitis, Search Coordinator (she/her)
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/hamilton-college/associate-vice-president-finance-and-controller>

Hamilton College is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity employer and encourages diversity in all areas of the campus community. The community recognizes its collective responsibility to acknowledge its colonial history. Hamilton's campus is located on the ancestral and traditional lands of the Oneida Nation. The community commits itself to engaging in solidarity with the Oneida Nation and to ensuring that the perspectives and cultures of Indigenous peoples are honored and embraced.