



Search for the Provost
Missouri Western State University
St. Joseph, Missouri

THE SEARCH

Missouri Western State University (“MWSU” or “Missouri Western”) seeks an experienced, forward-looking, and collaborative academic leader to serve as its next Provost and Chief Academic Officer.

Founded in 1915, Missouri Western State University is a four-year open access, state-supported institution with a proud tradition of providing a high-quality, affordable education to students in the state of Missouri and beyond. Located on a serene 744-acre campus about 45 minutes north of Kansas City, MWSU is an active partner in the educational, economic, cultural, and social development of the people and the region that it serves. The new Provost will work in close collaboration with MWSU President Elizabeth Kennedy to fulfill the University’s mission of being a student-centered learning community that prepares students from all backgrounds to succeed and thrive through applied learning. The University enrolls over 3,800 students, which includes undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree-seeking students, primarily from Northwest Missouri, as well as students matriculating from across the United States and more than 30 countries.

The Provost serves as MWSU’s Chief Academic Officer and is a key intellectual and administrative leader on campus. This position requires a leader who is comfortable navigating complex challenges in a public university setting and has the collaborative talents necessary to bring together many campus constituents in service of important institutional objectives. In leading academic affairs and advancing Missouri Western’s vision to be the premier open-access regional university, the Provost must be a skilled communicator and relationship builder with a penchant for and a record of translating strategic vision into action.

The Provost will join Missouri Western’s “Griffon Family,” and play a key role in positioning the university for the next decade by strengthening the University’s applied learning mission; articulating a compelling academic vision that aligns with the institution’s objectives; inspiring curricular and pedagogical innovation; leading the financial strategy for MWSU’s academic units to ensure long-term sustainability; executing and investing in student success programs, supporting the University’s commitment to inclusion and opportunity, and embracing shared governance.

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

Missouri Western State University

Originally founded in 1915 as Saint Joseph Junior College, Missouri Western State University was designated a four-year college in 1969 and became a full member of the State of Missouri system in 1977. The institution is led by a Board of Governors appointed by the Governor of Missouri. Missouri Western officially became a university in August 2005, with a state-wide mission of applied learning. Today, Missouri Western State University serves as a four-year open access, state-supported institution with a proud tradition of providing a high-quality, affordable education to students in the state of Missouri and beyond.

For over a century, Missouri Western has remained committed to being a place where students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed and thrive in pursuit of degrees that emphasize their ability to succeed in science- and technology-based professional careers. The University's powerful mission of being a student-centered learning community that prepares individuals for lives of excellence through applied learning, coupled with a vision of becoming the region's premier open-access university, has made MWSU well-known for transforming the lives of its students and the communities they serve. The institution is currently in a period of renewing its commitment to its mission and vision, as outlined in the current strategic plan, ["Pathways to Excellence,"](#) which extends through 2025, and establishes student success as the University's overarching goal.

MWSU is designated as the State of Missouri's official applied learning institution and is committed to providing 100% of its students with an applied learning experience prior to graduation, which includes any activity in which students use course content, models, theories, and/or skills in real-world and/or hands-on settings to support career readiness. As a result, Missouri Western's 30,000 alumni have transformed their lives and the lives of their families and have made positive contributions to the social, economic, and cultural vitality of the City of Saint Joseph and the Northwest Missouri region and beyond.

Missouri Western State University currently serves 3,817 total students (3,604 undergraduates and 213 graduate students) with 61% self-identifying as women and 39% as men. The majority of students (73%) come from the state of Missouri, with 62% of those students hailing from the immediate ten-county service area. Additionally, 26% of MWSU students come from 35 other states, with 1% of students coming from outside of the United States. About 5% of the total undergraduate enrollment are transfer students, with 74% from the state of Missouri and 25% from other states, most notably Kansas, California, Iowa, Texas, and Florida. The student body is comprised of 68% White students, 11% Black/African American students, 2% Asian-American students, and 1% Hispanic students. Veterans or active-duty military represent 4% of students.

Missouri Western has 129 full-time and 102 part-time faculty members who are committed to providing students with an exceptional academic experience inside the classroom. As of the Fall of 2023, 56% of the faculty possess a doctorate or other terminal degree, and 37% possess a master's degree. Approximately 58% self-identify as women, 12% as members of a minority group, and 2% as nonresidents (international).

As a public institution offering open-access enrollment, Missouri Western prides itself on the academic achievements of its students and their success in pursuit of their own professional endeavors. The institution's retention rate is 3.29% higher than its national peers and its graduation rate is higher than its peers as well. Additionally, nearly 100% of MWSU graduates engage in at least one applied learning experience. Recently, 100% of Missouri Western's Nursing students passed the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) nursing exam, eclipsing the national average of 85%. The University offers an [Honors Program](#), which has been in existence since 1988, offering high-achieving students the chance to enhance their college experience through access to guest speakers, national conferences, study abroad opportunities, and faculty research collaborations.

Missouri Western graduates enjoy robust job placement rates. For example, more than 95% of Nursing students gain employment in their field immediately upon completing their program. The Department of Engineer Technology's construction graduates enjoy a similar level of success.

The Division of Academic Affairs

The [Division of Academic Affairs](#) at MWSU is comprised of five major academic units, including [the College of Liberal Arts \(which includes the School of Fine Arts\)](#), the [College of Business & Professional Studies](#) (which includes the [Craig School of Business](#)), the [College of Science and Health](#) and the [Graduate School](#). Additionally, the division includes several other offices and programs to support students in their academic endeavors, including the offices of Assessment and Accreditation, Applied Learning, the Honors Program, the Center for Academic Support, Institutional Research, the Library, the Registrar, and the Early College Academy. MWSU degree offerings include five micro-credentials, one pre-baccalaureate certificate, four associate's/associate of applied science degrees, thirty-eight bachelor's degrees, five graduate certificates, and seven master's degrees.

MWSU is a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA), which provides a voluntary, regional approach to state oversight of postsecondary distance education, and is accredited by the [Higher Learning Commission](#). Additionally, several academic programs hold program-specific accreditations, including accreditations from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB), the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM), the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission (ETAC of ABET), the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science (NAACLS), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). The Department of Education, formerly accredited by the National Council for

Accreditation of Teacher Education, is currently in the process of transitioning to accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.

The Current Context

Like most colleges and universities today, Missouri Western faces financial pressures with limited resources. In September 2020, the University brought together representatives from each college on campus, the Graduate School, the Faculty Senate, and administrators to develop the [2021-2025 Master Academic Plan \(MAP\)](#), which serves as the strategic plan for Academic Affairs, and provides a framework which includes four global initiatives (Applied Learning, Essential Skills Acquisition, Innovative Curriculum, and Belongingness and Sense of Community). The MAP was designed to complement MWSU's previous strategic plan (2018-2022), strengthen its identity as Missouri's applied learning institution, and support its overarching objective of student success.

In 2020, Missouri Western completed a sweeping review of its academic programs, resulting in a sharpened focus on its applied learning mission. The process involved the reorganization of the University's academic college structure and led to the elimination or absorption of majors with relatively low enrollments. As part of this process, several academic programs underwent significant curriculum revisions, and the University adopted the State of Missouri's general education requirements, which enable the transferability of general education courses across all public institutions. Today, a standing Academic Program Review Committee focuses on strategic improvements to current programs.

As part of the academic review process, the University has launched several new undergraduate degree programs (Performing and Cinematic Arts, Recreation Sports Management/eSports Management, Law, Cybersecurity, and Respiratory Therapy) as well as a graduate Master of Arts in Teaching, and has made strategic investments on campus. In 2022, in collaboration with the state and supported by a gift from Mosaic Life Care, the primary local healthcare system, the University unveiled [a state-of-the-art interprofessional lab](#) for use in its Respiratory Therapy program. In support of its applied learning mission, MWSU also recently partnered with North Central Missouri College to establish the Convergent Technology Alliance Center (CTAC) with the goal of growing the region's skilled manufacturing, construction, and cybersecurity workforce. Bolstered by nearly twenty industry partnerships, the nearly \$13 million facility is expected to begin hosting student labs in Manufacturing Engineering Technology, Construction Engineering Technology, and Cybersecurity in the Fall of 2024. In 2024-2025, the University anticipates establishing a new digital content development laboratory to enhance its digital animation, interactive design, digital cinema, and graphic arts programs. Taken together, each of these investments reflect key areas in which student interest and workforce demand are both strong, and they will help the University advance its contribution to the economic life of the region.

To ensure the continued success of the academic enterprise, the University is currently planning a cyclical academic program review that will provide a process by which the relevance and effectiveness of degree programs, minors, and certificates can be evaluated on an ongoing basis. The academic review process,

though challenging, has put MWSU in a better position to fulfill its mission, and meet the needs of the Northwest Missouri region it serves.

Finance and Budget

As a tuition-driven institution, MWSU faces many of the challenges that the higher education market is grappling with today. Historic enrollment peaked at around 6,259 total students in 2011, but the University has seen a 34% decline in enrollment over the last ten years. From challenging demographic trends in the college-aged population to resource limitations resulting from the pandemic, MWSU's current strategic plan aims to address the University's financial sustainability and stability by diversifying revenue streams, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, and ensuring the proper infrastructure is in place to support both its current and ideal future student population sizes and needs. Missouri Western has long been a lean organization, but attention to structure, efficiencies, and faculty and staff support will also be essential in ensuring its ongoing fiscal health.

Missouri Western's operating budget is approximately \$76 million, and its Foundation boasts \$60 million in assets. The operating budget is supported by the state's general revenues at 30% and an additional 70% campus-generated revenue. The estimated student expense is \$10,306 for in-state students and \$20,866 for out-of-state students. In fiscal year 2024, the Foundation achieved a record high in gift receipts of over \$3 million and value of new pledges booked of nearly \$4.5 million.

University Leadership

Dr. Elizabeth Kennedy has served as president of Missouri Western State University since 2021. Dr. Kennedy's 26-year career in higher education includes 17 years in the classroom as a Professor of Social Science in addition to multiple roles in upper administration. During the course of her presidency, Dr. Kennedy has been instrumental in launching the institution's Master Academic Plan and the Griffon Office of Applied Learning (GOAL), in addition to fostering key partnerships between Missouri Western, the St. Joseph School District, North Central Missouri College, and many local businesses, industries, and agencies. Under President Kennedy's leadership, MWSU has developed several new programs that are in high demand, including bachelor's degrees in cybersecurity and respiratory therapy and a Master of Arts degree in teaching/secondary education.

For more information about Missouri Western State University, please see:

<https://www.missouriwestern.edu/>

The Role of the Provost

Reporting directly to President Kennedy, the Provost serves as the chief academic officer at MWSU and leads the Division of Academic Affairs. The Provost will work closely with the deans and other academic leaders on campus, with the primary responsibility of advancing teaching, scholarship, and supporting

faculty excellence; elevating student persistence; and strengthening student success through diverse support services. The new Provost will join the President's cabinet and play a key role in the development and support of the University's strategic academic priorities and financial sustainability. This will include solidifying a shared vision as a career-oriented, open-access public university and strategically implementing that vision, with a goal of enhancing the institution's academic program, raising the overall profile of the University, and increasing student enrollment and retention.

The Provost oversees a talented team of eight direct reports, including two Vice Provosts and AVPs for Academic Affairs; the deans of the colleges of Business and Professional Studies; Liberal Arts; and Science and Health; and the Honors Program, the Library, and the Registrar.

The Provost will be an excellent communicator who recognizes the importance of being approachable and accessible as a senior leader on campus. They will be an active listener and an adept facilitator for growth and success through transparency and collaboration at Missouri Western. The Provost must be a strategic and decisive leader, keeping MWSU's mission and designated objectives as their "north star," and effectively articulating the academic vision and the rationale behind sometimes challenging strategic decisions in a timely and compassionate manner.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Provost

The next Provost of Missouri Western State University, will be charged with providing leadership to address the following opportunities:

- In collaboration with the president, cabinet, faculty, staff, students, and the greater campus community, the Provost will **champion a strategic academic vision** that aligns with the institution's objectives and that is responsive to the changing public higher education landscape and leverages MWSU's distinctive strengths, thereby enhancing the University's academic offerings and bolstering its commitment to student success.
- As an intellectual and administrative leader on campus, the Provost will **strengthen Missouri Western's applied learning mission** by ensuring it is reflected across the academic enterprise. To be successful, the Provost will need to demonstrate a deep understanding of applied learning and promote it throughout a diverse array of academic programs. The Provost must support the efforts of the faculty to grow extramural funding for applied learning activities.
- The Provost will work with the deans, chairs, and faculty to **inspire curricular and pedagogical innovation** by developing and implementing new, entrepreneurial academic programs that align with regional workforce and economic needs, drive enrollment, and help diversify the University's revenue sources. The Provost will also ensure that current programming is well-packaged and marketed.

- The Provost, in collaboration with MWSU's vice president for finance and administration, will **lead the financial strategy for the academic units to ensure long-term sustainability**. To address current budget challenges and diversify revenue sources, the Provost, as an institutional leader, will bring highly developed financial acumen to strategic conversations about enrollment, program development and assessment, organizational structure, and the implementation of the strategic plan. They must balance a realistic understanding of the financial pressures facing MWSU with optimism and inspiration and bring a solutions-oriented approach to academic and institutional planning.
- In an effort to **embrace and support Missouri Western's system of shared governance** that includes the faculty senate and staff association, the Provost will need to develop strong relationships with these representative bodies to implement initiatives that are essential to the success of Missouri Western. The Provost will maintain transparency and openness of communication and find ways to implement change efficiently and effectively in a manner that builds trust.
- The Provost will **support the institution's commitment to inclusion and opportunity**. This commitment contributes to transforming lives and demonstrates MWSU's values of freedom, respect, and courage. The Provost will help ensure that MWSU is a welcoming and supportive place for all to study, work, and live. The Provost must be an engaged student of these issues and have demonstrated a record of successful action and courage, both personally and professionally, in this important work.
- **Strategic investments in student success programs** will be an essential undertaking by the next Provost. The investment in these support structures will be critical to ensure students are on track towards graduation and prepared for their professional endeavors.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will possess most, if not all, of the following qualifications and experience:

- A deep commitment to Missouri Western's mission as a student-centered learning community and its vision of becoming the region's premier open-access university;
- The ability to compellingly communicate institutional vision and effectively engage faculty, academic administrators, and staff in meeting those objectives;
- A bridge-builder across academic disciplines, with a commitment to facilitating collaborative activities across institutional and disciplinary boundaries;
- The ability to communicate well and work cooperatively and effectively with administrators, faculty, students, staff, and other external stakeholders; an appreciation and understanding of the need for collaboration among these groups to make critical decisions on academic priorities and the allocation of resources;

- Exceptional academic judgment and high standards, including a history of recruiting, developing, and retaining faculty;
- An experienced, accessible, empathetic, and entrepreneurial academic administrator with a track record of success and constant improvement in a shared governance environment;
- Substantial and successful experience in the development, leadership, and management of academic programs, projects, committees, and/or departments;
- Experience with strategic enrollment management for both undergraduate and professional programs;
- A fair, collegial, and transparent leadership style that will engender trust among all members of the MWSU community;
- Understanding of the fiscal challenges facing public higher education institutions. Demonstrated budgetary management experience and a history of generating new public and private resources;
- Experience in overseeing accreditations and external reporting of institutional academic outcomes;
- Strong management, problem-solving, relationship-building, and conflict-management skills;
- Willingness to work hard and to respect and celebrate the hard work of others, balanced with the capacity to foster and model a culture of well-being and belonging;
- Emotional intelligence and intercultural competence; a demonstrated ability to communicate with nuance and foresight; demonstrated experience with and a commitment to engaging and listening to diverse constituencies and audiences;
- A distinguished record of teaching, research, and service commensurate with appointment at the rank of Professor with tenure.

Desired Characteristics

- Experience with applied learning
- An understanding of an open-access environment
- A track record of data-informed decision-making
- Demonstrated experience valuing diversity and advancing inclusion and opportunity
- A collaborative leadership style
- Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- Experience in academic budgeting and strategic planning
- Demonstrated commitment to student success

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Missouri Western State University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed electronically and in confidence to:

Micah Pierce, Partner (he/him)
David Grimes, Senior Associate (he/him)
Marlyn Desire, Search Coordinator (she/her)
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/missouri-western-state-university/Provost>

Missouri Western actively follows a policy of nondiscrimination in regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, pregnancy or parental status, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, disability, and all other legally protected classes. This applies to education programs, and activities including athletics, instruction, grading, awarding of student financial aid, recruitment, admission, employment, housing, placement and retention of students, faculty and staff. Missouri Western pledges continued compliance with all relevant state and federal laws and cooperation with governmental organizations in ensuring equal employment and educational opportunity.

As a student-centered learning community Missouri Western is dedicated to inclusion and the promotion of diversity as essential to our mission as a public university. This commitment to contributes to transforming lives and demonstrates our values of freedom, respect and courage. The University encourages applications from individuals whose differing backgrounds, beliefs, ideas, and past experiences will further enrich the diversity of our educational community.