



Wilkes University

President

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Position Description

Wilkes University invites nominations, applications and confidential expressions of interest in the position of President of Wilkes University (Wilkes). Reporting to the Board of Trustees of Wilkes, the President exercises broad responsibility for and leadership of all aspects of the academic, student, financial and administrative dimensions of the University. Wilkes seeks an energetic, accomplished and visionary individual to lead and to engage its faculty, staff, students and community.

The University

[Wilkes University](#) is a private, independent, non-sectarian institution of higher education dedicated to academic and intellectual excellence through mentoring in the liberal arts, sciences and professional programs. Founded in 1933 as Bucknell University Junior College, the institution became independent in 1947 and was renamed Wilkes College. Wilkes continued to grow its academic offerings, and by 1990 became Wilkes University.

Wilkes is on a mission to create one of the nation's finest small universities, offering all of the programs, activities and opportunities of a large university in the intimate, caring and mentoring environment of a small college that is open to all and with a special focus on access. *The Economist* named Wilkes 25th in the nation for the value of its education for graduates. In addition to 47 majors, Wilkes offers 25 master's degree programs and five doctoral/terminal degree programs, including a doctor of philosophy in nursing, doctor of nursing practice, doctor of education, doctor of pharmacy and master of fine arts in creative writing. In 2018, Wilkes was granted the designation of *Doctoral University* by the Carnegie Classifications, reflecting the University's growing population of doctoral students and an increased focus on research and scholarship.

These diverse degree programs are organized within numerous colleges and schools. Currently, the University consists of the [College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#); the [College of Science and Engineering](#); the [Jay S. Sidhu School of Business and Leadership](#); the [School of Education](#); the [Nesbitt School of Pharmacy](#); and, the [Passan School Nursing](#). The faculty at Wilkes are both dedicated to education of students as well as academically accomplished, with 90% possessing the highest degree possible in their discipline.

Wilkes enrolls approximately 2,500 undergraduates, nearly half of whom are first generation students and 91.6% of whom receive financial aid. Beyond undergraduates, Wilkes also has a graduate population of approximately 2,400. Together, they represent 41 states, Washington D.C., and 29 countries. Wilkes's commitment to its students is evident across the University. There are over 100 clubs and organizations on campus, 18% of students participate in at least one of the school's 23 Division III varsity sports programs, all students participate in research, internships or capstone projects, and Wilkes has a 94% job placement rate.

In the past decade, renovating and adding to the physical footprint of the campus has been a major focus of the University, with the goal of connecting through walkways and open spaces campus buildings while also better integrating the University with downtown Wilkes-Barre. Wilkes has invested heavily with over \$110 million in both new building and renovations. It has spread these projects across all aspects of the campus from the Cohen Science Center to the Sidhu School of Business and Leadership to the Sordoni Art Gallery. In 2019 a \$6 million investment in the Ralston Athletic Complex renovation will be completed. Support for many of these projects comes from the \$55 million Gateway to the Future Campaign, which will culminate in 2020 and has already exceeded its goal.

Wilkes-Barre and The Region

In the heart of the Wyoming Valley, the city of [Wilkes-Barre](#) is a progressive city with industrial roots located along the Susquehanna River. The city has experienced a recent revitalization driven by emerging businesses, institutes of higher education like Wilkes University, and non-profit organizations. It now boasts a population of over 40,000 with 11,000 downtown employees, making it the fourth largest urban workforce in the state. Kirby Park and Coal Street Park provide outdoor recreational activities, and the renovated River Common area boasts an amphitheater, walking corridors, a boat launch, and other infrastructure improvements to accommodate concerts and festivals.

Wilkes University plays a prominent role as one of the largest employers in the community, contributing to economic stability and anchoring redevelopment of much of the downtown. Wilkes and King's College frame the downtown of the city, and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine and Luzerne Community College are both nearby. Each of these institutions, with their complimentary programs, brings unique opportunities for growth in the city and region.

Downtown Wilkes-Barre has experienced a rebirth due to the repurposing of buildings for urban apartments and the expansion of locally owned and nationally recognized businesses. Beyond the city proper, the region has also begun to reinvent itself as well. Wilkes-Barre sits at the intersection of three major interstates with access to the tristate area, and is also only a short distance to both an international airport and the city of Scranton. Multinational corporations including Adidas and Chewy have recognized the strategic value of the location, and have built large distribution centers that contribute to significant growth in the number of jobs in the region.

Further, Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley offers numerous cultural attractions such as the F. M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts and The Mohegan Sun Arena. For individuals with a passion for the outdoors, the Pocono Mountains and its hiking and skiing trails are only minutes away.

The Position

The President reports to the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University. Reporting directly to the President are the Senior Vice President and Provost, Vice President of Finance and General Counsel, Vice President of Student Affairs, Chief Development Officer, Associate Provost for Enrollment, Assistant to the President for External Affairs, and Executive Assistant to the President.

The President has a high level of autonomy with respect to leadership and oversight of Wilkes, and is charged with ensuring the continued health and success of the University. The Board of Trustees has fiduciary responsibility for the University, and serves as a key partner to the President, who is also a member of the Board of Trustees.

Key Responsibilities and Opportunities

The President serves as the chief executive officer of Wilkes, providing vision and leadership to focus the intellectual vitality of the University and to maintain and foster a positive environment for its educational, research, cultural and service goals. The President acts as the university's primary representative to its many constituencies, Wilkes alumni and friends of the University, state and federal agencies and private and corporate foundations. Engagement with local communities, most especially in the greater Wilkes-Barre area, is central to the mission of the University. The President will:

Maintain the tradition of excellence in all aspects at Wilkes:

- Actively support the strong commitment to a high quality of academic instruction and standards, vibrant faculty research activities and robust metropolitan engagement
- Continue and enhance the university's strong commitment to inclusion and diversity
- Direct the formulation and implementation of strategic plans and policies

Supervise the administration and fiscal management of Wilkes:

- Oversee the development and administration of annual and long-term operating, facilities and research budgets
- Actively support the recruitment of talented individuals to the University to serve as professors, researchers and administrators
- Build a strong staff and delegate authority as appropriate
- Take an active role in collaborating with city and state legislators, other government and community leaders and other regional college and university executive officers
- Establish priorities, supervise and participate in the fundraising efforts and campus-based economic development efforts for the region and state
- Ensure timeliness and accuracy of operating and academic reporting to the Board of Trustees

Continue strong leadership of the University:

- Articulate a clear vision for the University, which will inspire faculty, students and administrators to work toward common goals; advocate on behalf of the interests, needs and accomplishments of the University community, particularly its students and faculty, both internally and externally
- Promote the University as a force of change and progress in the community and region, and act as a spokesperson for Wilkes
- Further past success in development and fundraising
- Leverage and build upon the successful capital projects, renovations, and campus improvements completed in the recent years
- Develop and maintain effective relationships among the units of the campus
- Communicate persuasively the University's mission, goals and needs to all constituents; demonstrate flexibility in dealing with all persons affiliated with the University; and preserve and encourage vital University/community partnerships
- Foster a culture of civility and professionalism through collaboration, transparency and open communication
- Respect and learn from diversity, disseminate its teachings and incorporate an inclusive climate throughout the campus community

Professional Experience/Qualifications

The new President will demonstrate:

- An outstanding profile of intellectual leadership, either through distinguished scholarship and teaching within academia or through active leadership in other relevant institutions or organizations
- Significant experience in higher-education leadership and a strong track record administrative and organizational accomplishment
- An ability to articulate broad challenges due to the evolving nature of higher education nationally and globally, and an ability to discern opportunities in that environment for Wilkes
- Strong advocacy for academic values, student success and community impact

- A capacity to identify and capture sources for external funding and support for University initiatives and growth
- Exceptional interpersonal skills and superb communication skills
- Ethical integrity
- An ability to lead within Wilkes’s unique culture, enabling it to make significant contributions to the continued success of the campus as an integral part of the greater Wilkes-Barre region
- A commitment to the core values of Wilkes: mentorship, scholarship, diversity, innovation and community

Contact

Wilkes University has retained Park Square Executive Search to assist in the search for the next President. Nominations, inquiries and applications may be sent in confidence to:

Jonathan Fortescue, Managing Partner or

Kyle Meingast, Principal

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