Vice Provost for University Life

The University of Pennsylvania seeks an innovative, collaborative, inclusive, civic-minded, high-touch, and dynamic leader to serve as its next Vice Provost for University Life. The Vice Provost will lead the important work that supports the University-wide student experience at Penn.

Reporting to the Provost, the next Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL) will lead the Division of VPUL, working collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students across Penn’s 12 schools and interdisciplinary centers and institutes. The Vice Provost will lead all campus initiatives related to student life in a manner that is inclusive, innovative, strategic, data-informed, and maximizes the value of available technologies, while maintaining the responsiveness and individualized approach to students that Penn has always exemplified.

The University invites applications and nominations for this important leadership role.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

The University of Pennsylvania’s 300-acre West Philadelphia campus reflects its rich heritage—a heritage closely bound with the birth of the United States—with more than 200 buildings and many notable landmarks, including the nation’s first student union (Houston Hall) and first double-decker college football stadium (Franklin Field). The 165 research centers and institutes on campus also reflect the University’s innovative, civic-minded, and pragmatic creator. More than 250 years after Ben Franklin broke new ground in founding Penn, its faculty, students, and alumni continue to make breakthroughs in research, scholarship, and education. Its many subsequent “firsts” include the world’s first collegiate business school (Wharton, 1881), the world’s first electronic, large-scale, general-purpose digital computer (ENIAC, 1946), the first woman president of an Ivy League institution (Judith Rodin, inaugurated in 1994), and the first female Ivy League president to succeed another female (Amy Gutmann, inaugurated in 2004).

From campus walkways engraved with Franklin’s words of wisdom to the University’s most important strategic initiatives such as Penn Compact 2022, Penn continues to educate and inspire future leaders to move our now-global society forward.
HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Penn dates its founding to 1740, when prominent evangelist George Whitefield had the idea of building a Philadelphia charity school that would double as a house of worship for his followers. After construction was underway, however, the cost was much greater than the available resources, and the project went unfinished for a decade. Then in 1749, Benjamin Franklin—printer, inventor, and future founding father of the United States—published his famous essay, Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth, circulated it among Philadelphia’s leading citizens, and organized 24 trustees to form an institution of higher education based on his proposals. The group purchased Whitefield’s “New Building” and, in 1751, opened its doors to children of the gentry and working class alike as the Academy and Charitable School in the Province of Pennsylvania. Franklin served as president of the institution until 1755 and continued to serve as a trustee until his death in 1790.

Franklin’s educational aims—to train young people for leadership in business, government, and public service—were innovative for the time. In the 1750s, the other Colonial American colleges educated young men for the Christian ministry, but Franklin’s proposed program of study was much more like the modern liberal arts curriculum.

In addition to challenging the educational conventions of the day, Franklin pushed boundaries that moved science and society forward and helped shape America’s very nationhood. His broad knowledge spanned multiple disciplines, and far from regarding it as an end in itself, he saw knowledge as an asset that required practical application to be of value.

Franklin’s new institution went on to obtain a collegiate charter (1755), graduate its first class (1757), establish the first medical school in the American colonies (1765) and become the first American institution of higher education to be named a university (1779). In 1802, the University expanded to a new campus, but by the 1860s had outgrown even that space, so in 1872 the trustees built a new campus in the streetcar suburb of West Philadelphia.

SCHOOLS

Penn’s 12 schools include some of the top-rated undergraduate and graduate programs in the world. Because they share one contiguous campus, collaboration and the integration of knowledge across the disciplines happen in formal and informal settings every day. The unique aspect of a Penn education prepares students to excel in an increasingly complex 21st-century world.
STUDENT BODY

Students come to the University of Pennsylvania from all over the United States and around the world and are diverse in every conceivable way. The University enrolls over 10,000 full-time undergraduates and over 11,000 full-time graduate and professional students. An additional 4,400 part-time students pursue degrees for a total student population of over 26,000.

Race & Ethnicity (Undergraduate)
- International: 1,364
- African American/Black: 797
- Native American or Alaskan Native: 11
- Asian American/Pacific Islander: 2,282
- Hispanic/Latina/o: 1,045
- White: 3,963
- Two or more races: 518
- Race/ethnicity Unknown: 254

Race & Ethnicity (Graduate)
- International: 4,066
- African American/Black: 839
- Native American or Alaskan Native: 9
- Asian American/Pacific Islander: 1,846
- Hispanic/Latina/o: 944
- White: 6,173
- Two or more races: 372
- Race/ethnicity Unknown: 554

Penn is a wide-ranging, ever-changing community that draws its strength from a multitude of races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, ages, religions, interests,
perspectives, and socioeconomic backgrounds. For more information about diversity offices, school-specific initiatives, and student organizations championing diversity and inclusion efforts at Penn, please visit: https://diversity.upenn.edu/.

LOCATION AND LOCAL CULTURE

Philadelphia is known for being walkable, historic, bustling, and unpretentious. From the Constitution Center to the Liberty Bell and many famous firsts — including the country’s first zoo, library, stock exchange, hospital, and medical school (Penn’s own Perelman School of Medicine), Philadelphia contains 67 National Historic Landmarks and the World Heritage Site of Independence Hall.

Penn’s setting—a tight-knit, beautiful, green campus in the nation’s sixth-largest city—offers the best of two worlds. The campus has more than 215 buildings (excluding hospitals) on 300 acres. While distinctly urban, the West Philadelphia campus alone has so much green space that it was officially declared an arboretum in 2017. Penn is an environment like no other, bringing together intellectual and social connections, and fostering an indomitable community spirit.

The urban campus is highly regarded for student safety. Penn has been ranked first for safety in the Higher Education Sector by Security Magazine for seven straight years. With a private police force and a 24-hour-a-day walking or riding escort program for students, Penn is one of the nation’s safest campuses. Learn more about Penn’s Clery reporting.

The Penn campus is well served by an extensive network of subway, bus, regional rail, national rail, and trolley lines. Penn Transit’s comprehensive system provides integrated transit free of charge to all PennCard holders. Penn buses make continuous loops downtown and through Penn’s surrounding neighborhoods. Discounted passes for the Philadelphia and New Jersey transit systems are available to full-time Penn students. Visit Penn’s transportation page for more information.

DIVISION OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR UNIVERSITY LIFE (VPUL)

Penn’s Division of the Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL) is part of the Office of the Provost and includes 157 staff and 15 campus departments that address the myriad social and support needs of Penn’s diverse students, providing academic and career programming, campus and community engagement, and much more. The Division of the Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL) also includes an administrative office supporting communications, design services, development, and alumni relations for the Division.
University Life Programs and Services:

Activities

Civic House supports student volunteer involvement and work in the public interest. From arranging volunteer placements to providing training for student work with community agencies, Civic House helps students engage in the community and make a difference.

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life administers and oversees Penn's Greek letter social fraternity and sorority system, including three Greek governing councils (Multicultural Greek Council, InterFraternity Council, and Panhellenic Council), the 49 recognized undergraduate social fraternities and sororities, and chapter housing.

The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) is a primary source of information and advice for students regarding campus co-curricular opportunities and resources. OSA advises and helps administer student activities and governance, the PENNacle pre-orientation program, University Life leadership training programs, and major campus-wide special events, including Family Weekend, No Place Like Penn Weekend, Homecoming, Spring Fling, U-NITE, Hey Day, and Ivy Day.

Platt Student Performing Arts House provides administrative and production support, rehearsal, performance, and work space to the member organizations of the Performing Arts Council (PAC). Platt also offers performance-related programming, pre-orientation programs, and training opportunities for the entire campus community, as well as opportunities for students to engage the greater Philadelphia community in arts.

Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) educates and trains qualified young men and women for service as commissioned officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. Students are awarded scholarships through a highly competitive national selection process and receive tuition, books, fees, and other financial aid.

Cultural Centers

The Greenfield Intercultural Center fosters intercultural understanding on campus through cross-cultural activism, reflection, and dialogue. GIC's numerous co-curricular educational and cultural programs bring together diverse groups to raise awareness of the rich traditions and diversity within the Penn community. The Center also provides consultation, guidance, and workshops for affiliated student groups on diversity and cultural competency issues.
The Center for Hispanic Excellence: La Casa Latina promotes greater awareness of Latino issues, culture, and identity at Penn. La Casa Latina works closely with the Penn community to offer a supportive environment where all students are welcomed and engaged in programs, events, and dialogues that address important issues affecting Latinos/Hispanics locally, nationally, and internationally.

The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center enriches the experience and fosters the success of Penn's LGBT students. The Center assists faculty, staff, and alumni in their efforts to serve students, and it increases the general Penn community's awareness, understanding, and acceptance of its sexual and gender minority members through outreach and education, supportive services for individuals and campus organizations, and advocacy for sensitive, inclusive University policies and practices.

Makuu: The Black Cultural Center seeks to enrich and support the principles of diversity and community in Penn student life, with an emphasis on students of African descent. Makuu utilizes the seven principles of Kwanzaa to provide support and guidance to individuals and student groups and aims to identify student-evidenced challenges, enhance collaborative efforts among students, and become a repository of Penn resources that will increase students' academic, intellectual, social, cultural, and professional success.

The Pan-Asian American Community House (PAACH) serves as the central resource for advising East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander American students, student organizations, and their activities, as well as those interested in the Asian American diaspora. PAACH provides co-curricular events focusing on Asian American research, culture, history, politics and social issues, and develops and implements innovative programs for leadership development in close collaboration with student and community groups, faculty, and staff.

The Penn Women's Center (PWC) seeks to foster community, expand awareness, and enhance the educational experience for the women of Penn. PWC supports and advocates for Penn women and presents and sponsors programs on issues important to them, including career, health and wellness, safety, economic, political, and global matters.

Student Supports
Career Services helps students define their career goals and learn how to achieve them. The office helps students and alumni obtain permanent and short-term career-related employment and graduate and professional school admission through counseling sessions, workshops, alumni networks, a large career resource library, and online information. Career Services also hosts employer interviews through the on-campus recruiting program and establishes and promotes contact between employers, graduate/professional schools, and the University.
Student Intervention Services assists the University community in handling emergencies or critical incidents involving the welfare and safety of students.

Weingarten Learning Resources Center provides academic support and accommodations for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The center includes three offices: the Office of Learning Resources, the Office of Student Disabilities Services, and the Tutoring Center. The professional staff of these offices collaborate with faculty and staff to ensure that students receive comprehensive services that enhance their learning experiences and intellectual development at Penn. All services and programs are free and confidential.

The Office of Learning Resources (OLR) provides professional instruction in skills such as academic reading, writing, study strategies, and time management.

The Office of Student Disabilities Services (SDS) provides comprehensive, professional services and programs to ensure equal academic opportunities and participation in University-sponsored programs. On a case-by-case basis, staff determine reasonable accommodations, including academic adjustments, e-text, accessible campus housing, and transportation and parking. SDS also coordinates auxiliary aids and services such as sign language interpreters and Computer Aided Realtime Translation (CART) reporters, as well as the loan of equipment and assistive technologies.

The Tutoring Center provides tutoring, training, and access to academic resources for undergraduate students. Tutorial services are provided by undergraduate peer and graduate student tutors for core and introductory courses.

Penn Violence Prevention (PVP) engages the Penn community in the prevention of sexual violence, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment on campus. It fosters collaborative relationships across campus to ensure a survivor-centered, multi-faceted approach to support services and primary prevention. Through collective community action, PVP is committed to ending interpersonal violence by addressing gender inequity, social injustice, and oppression through outreach and education.

VPUL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As Penn's foremost provider of student services and educational access, the Division of the Vice Provost for University Life enhances the ability of Penn students and other community participants to reach their fullest potential through diverse academic, personal, and professional development experiences in support of the Penn Compact. To achieve this, Penn fosters a welcoming, stimulating campus life environment where students and participants develop intellectually, experience meaningful co-curricular opportunities, evidence civic responsibility, and model intercultural and interpersonal understanding. Penn students and community participants will leave prepared to freely
pursue lifelong personal and professional fulfillment, engagement, and stewardship of ever-changing local and global communities.

VPUL’s Divisional Strategic Priorities:
• Addressing the evolving needs of our diverse student community
• Fostering innovative practices in University Life
• Enhancing student co-curricular learning and development
• Advancing student scholarly and career ambitions
• Encouraging local and global engagement
• Creating a culture of evidence-based assessment

THE ROLE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR UNIVERSITY LIFE (VPUL)

The Vice Provost for University Life (VPUL), oversees a nationally honored division providing services, support, and leadership development opportunities to support a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Penn students benefit enormously from the University's rich global diversity and renowned interdisciplinary educational opportunities. VPUL, as the division is known, plays an integral role in students' lives, integrating student supports and co-curricular experiences in civic engagement, peer education, career planning, mentoring, and cultural programming.

Reporting to the Provost, the next Vice Provost will lead a complex portfolio of responsibilities, including the following:
• Lead University Life departments and programs serving over 26,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students;
• Provide leadership in the areas of long-range University Life strategic planning, student outcomes assessment, VPUL facilities planning and renovation, development and resource acquisition opportunities, program review, and staffing;
• Lead 15 departments and services with annual division operating and associated budgets of over $50 million;
• Develop, recommend, and implement long- and short-range VPUL goals, objectives, policies, and procedures; and
• Serve as a member of the President’s Senior Planning Group, the Council of Graduate Deans, the Council of Undergraduate Deans, and the University Academic Planning and Budget Committee.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The next Vice Provost for University Life will ensure the vision and implementation of divisional strategic priorities following three decades of consistent leadership of VPUL under Dr. Valarie Swain-Cade McCoullum. The next Vice Provost will be energized by the following opportunities and challenges, among many others:
Bringing innovative practices to student life – The next Vice Provost will ensure that VPUL continues to be a national and campus model for proactive, inclusive student-centered practices that promote and support student success and fulfillment. The Vice Provost will prioritize professional development of VPUL staff with an eye toward bolstering strategic partnerships. Recognizing that the national landscape of student affairs is ever changing, the Vice Provost will lead in a way that is transparent, consultative, and innovative in approach, taking strategic risks to maximize impact, while maintaining the responsiveness and highly personalized student services that Penn has always exemplified.

Bringing vision to an evolving division – As the portfolio within the division continues to evolve, the Vice Provost will work closely with the Provost and senior leadership to re-envision the division’s work across the University, how it serves students with excellence, and how its culture and approach support the University. The Vice Provost will bring vision towards new and ongoing initiatives aimed at championing students’ intellectual, personal, and professional growth.

Partnership, communication, and collaboration across a decentralized university model – Keeping the well-being and success of students at the forefront, the next Vice Provost will develop strong and collaborative relationships across the University. This includes working with academic units and all areas that engage with the student experience, as well as partnering with the student affairs teams positioned within Penn’s 12 schools. Close collaboration with student health and wellness, which is a separate organization reporting directly to the Provost, is essential to provide holistic student wellness services.

Developing programs and approaches that meet the needs of an evolving student demographic – The student body at Penn ranges from traditional-aged, full-time undergraduates to graduate and professional students from diverse national and international backgrounds to part-time, adult learners pursuing educational opportunities in Penn’s expanding online offerings. The Vice Provost will engage with Penn’s broad array of students to understand their varying and evolving needs and to ensure programs and supports are in place to serve all students. In addition, the Vice Provost will foster a shared identity and sense of community across the University through programs and resources that stimulate shared interactions and connections among students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members.

Creating an environment of continuous improvement and informed decision-making – By creating a culture of evidence-based outcomes assessment for each department, the Vice Provost will engage all staff and stakeholders in an ongoing process of information gathering, analysis, and self-reflection intended to inform future planning and resource allocation in an ultimate effort to better understand and serve evolving student needs.
Generating and strategically allocating resources – In partnership with University Advancement and other University leadership, the Vice Provost will work to attract additional resources to support student needs. The Vice Provost will also continue to support the ongoing improvement of fiscal operations, budget efficacy within the division, and physical space needs for VPUL units.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The University of Pennsylvania seeks a collaborative and visible campus leader with strong management skills who engages regularly and enthusiastically with students. Candidates must have a passion for Penn’s mission and a commitment to providing undergraduate, graduate, and professional students with an outstanding experience at Penn. An advanced degree is preferred.

The ideal candidate will possess:

- A deep passion for student life and the holistic student experience;
- Deep experience serving the unique needs of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students from a range of socioeconomic, racial, sexual identity, and other backgrounds;
- An unyielding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and a history of regular progress advancing these issues in a campus environment;
- An ability to build teams and to lead, inspire, mentor, and retain staff within a complex division;
- A track record of welcoming collaboration with a range of partners and constituencies across a campus to advance the overall student experience;
- An ability to navigate a large, decentralized, and complex research institution;
- An understanding of national best practices around important student issues, including how to engage with parents, and an ability to be a leading voice in the national discourse surrounding student affairs and higher education;
- Experience managing crises and demonstrated calm under pressure;
- Facility with data and its value in determining strategy and allocating resources;
- An understanding of complex legal regulations that may impact student affairs decisions or approaches; and
- A proven ability to be both compassionate and firm in managing complex student issues and concerns in a changing global environment.

APPLICATIONS

For best consideration, please send all nominations and applications to:

Ruth Shoemaker Wood, Partner
Lindsay Allison, Senior Associate
Penn is committed to ensuring that its academic, social, recreational programs and services as well as opportunities for admission and employment are available on an equitable and nondiscriminatory basis without regard to an individual's legally protected class status. Penn also has written affirmative action programs to address any underrepresentation of women, minorities, people with disabilities, and qualified covered veterans. The Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources and the Office of the Provost, oversees the implementation and administration of the University's equal opportunity, affirmative action, and nondiscrimination policies and programs. The University recognizes the right of members of the community to raise questions and pursue complaints of discrimination and adheres to a strict policy that prohibits retaliation for doing so. Questions, complaints of alleged discrimination, or concerns regarding these policies or their implementation may be directed to the Executive Director, Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, Franklin Building, Suite 421, 3451 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6205, (215) 898-6993 (Voice) or (215) 746-7088 (Fax).