



Widener University

Associate Vice President for Human Resources

Widener University seeks an insightful, strategic, and compassionate leader to serve as Associate Vice President for Human Resources (AVP). The next AVP will find the Widener community to be collegial and collaborative and the human resources division staff to be talented and forward-leaning. The AVP will continue the progress Widener has made in modernizing and innovating its processes and policies, as well as prepare the community for the future of work and wellness in a post-pandemic world. Reporting to incoming Vice President for Finance and Administration Linda Kiraly Gilbert and working closely with Chief Diversity Officer Michelle Meekins-Davis, the AVP for Human Resources will be a human resources expert as well as a critical partner in ensuring that the university community is one in which all are welcome and all can thrive.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

Since its founding in 1821, Widener has undergone multiple transformations to become a selective, nationally ranked, doctoral university. Today, Widener offers bachelor's, master's, doctoral and certificate programs to approximately 6,500 students across three campuses and online.

Widener's distinctive collection of programs reflects its foundational belief that the liberal arts and sciences and professional/pre-professional programs are mutually reinforcing. The University is proud to embrace the following eight schools and colleges:

- College of Arts & Sciences
- College of Health & Human Services
- School of Business Administration
- School of Engineering
- School of Nursing
- Commonwealth Law School (in Harrisburg, PA)
- Delaware Law School (in Wilmington, DE)
- Center for Graduate & Continuing Studies

In addition, Widener has developed a number of innovative interdisciplinary offerings and research programs, including: new undergraduate majors in Business Analytics and Robotics Engineering (one of the few in the country); a pioneering graduate program in Human Sexuality; a PsyD/MBA program that prepares executive coaches; groundbreaking multidisciplinary research and programs addressing challenges in neuroscience and medical care; and a sustainability law and policy program combining environmental science with legal education.

Widener University's main campus in the City of Chester is located just off I-95 and is only twenty minutes from Philadelphia, the nation's sixth-largest city and home to world-class art, culture, sports,

entertainment, and history. The main campus sits on 110 acres and has benefited from over \$220 million in new construction and renovations over the past decade.

On its other two campuses, Widener has the unusual distinction of hosting two law schools that operate independently from each other: Widener University Commonwealth Law School and Widener University Delaware Law School. Widener University Law School was separated into two independently accredited and operating law schools in 2015 in recognition that the two campuses had developed powerful and distinctive identities and career pathways specific to their geographic locations. Widener University Commonwealth Law is focused in particular on the interaction of law and government and leverages its location in the Pennsylvania state capital to enrich students' experiences. Widener University Delaware Law, the only law school in Delaware, has particular strength in corporate law and is an integral part of the legal community in America's corporate capital.

MISSION AND VALUES

Widener recently articulated [a new statement of mission and of University values](#). The University is embarking on a new University strategy, for which planning was completed in 2020. The strategy focuses on agility and the enhancement of the student experience.

A Commitment to Academic Rigor and Student Success

At the heart of a Widener education is the transformation of its students into scholars, leaders, and globally engaged citizens. Its faculty, supported by staff and administrators, meet this goal in several ways. A 12:1 student/faculty ratio allows for close interactions between faculty and students and facilitates experiential learning.

Since the turn of the 21st century, Widener has emerged as one of the nation's leading metropolitan universities. Strong leadership, shared vision, a global perspective, and an empowered university community have combined to position Widener as a university on the move and one to watch internationally, nationally, and regionally. Widener's powerhouse, top-ranked programs make full use of the numerous interdisciplinary opportunities at the University.

The University is committed to the highest levels of academic rigor. The Delaware Law and Commonwealth Law Schools are ranked among the best law schools nationally by The Princeton Review. Widener's Social Work program was ranked as the top online social work graduate program. Widener's School of Business Administration and its Small Business Development Center have been named a SAP Next-Gen Lab for Design Thinking and Analytics, making it the only small business development center to earn this designation out of 1,100 centers nationwide. The School of Nursing has been designated as one of six Centers of Excellence for Advancing the Science of Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing, the oldest professional nursing organization in the United States.

A Commitment to Civic Engagement

Widener's civic engagement is known, valued, promoted, and lived by senior administrators, faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students alike. A 21st-century Widener education looks to the surrounding communities as a laboratory, and this is a win-win for all—partners, faculty, students, the community, and Widener. The University operates numerous clinics and centers on and around its

campuses. Through its leadership and conviction to work with and in the local community, Widener has created an environment of service and a willingness to engage in partnership. This environment is enhanced by and reinforces the academic rigor and focus on student transformation that is at the heart of the Widener mission.

The Widener Partnership Charter School (WPCS), the state's first university-sponsored charter school, offers a holistic curriculum for grades K to 8. The University supports the charter school by providing management support, access to University facilities, and administrative assistance for fundraising. The management support includes both strategic and day-to-day technology support. In turn, WPCS provides learning opportunities for Widener students in Education, Social Work, Clinical Psychology, Physical Therapy, and Nursing. Graduates from WPCS who meet criteria for admission to Widener University are guaranteed a generous financial aid package.

A Commitment to Leadership Development

Increasingly, a Widener education is about global leadership. Widener encourages all of its students to partake in short- or long-term international study and makes numerous opportunities available. Students in various fields in the College of Health and Human Services work together to provide services to one of the largest orphanages in China. Undergraduate engineering students helped to bring electricity to a rural village in Panama, and undergraduate environmental science students have conducted research in the Amazon forest and are working with farmers in Costa Rica to encourage the growth of organic, sustainable, shade-grown coffee. The University has also established a greater global presence through partnerships with Chongqing Technology and Business University in China and Dongseo University in South Korea.

Widener regularly invites nationally recognized leaders to the Main Campus to speak about pivotal leadership moments and share their wisdom with the Widener community. Last year, the University brought Disney's Duncan Wardle and Samsung's Terry Halvorsen to speak to the campus community. Similarly, for the past nine years, Widener has co-sponsored the High School Leadership Awards with television station NBC 10. These awards recognize high school leaders throughout the Philadelphia metropolitan area. In 2012, there were 69 students recognized by their high schools; in 2020, there were 159. The honored students are invited to take part in a leadership experience at the University and receive a \$20,000 scholarship if they enroll at Widener.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

The 10th President of Widener University, Dr. Julie E. Wollman is a passionate, fearless, and effective leader. Guided by a relentless pursuit of excellence, she has articulated a clear vision and distinct goals for the University focused on agility and an unparalleled student experience.

Leading with enthusiasm, authenticity, and respect for others, Dr. Wollman is committed to building community and bringing people from varying perspectives together. Dr. Wollman launched Common Ground, a nationally recognized campus initiative designed to encourage conversation on challenging topics.

Dr. Wollman serves on the boards of local, regional, and national organizations, including the Riverfront Alliance of Delaware County, an economic development organization, where she serves as Board Vice-

President; the Global Philadelphia Association; the Middle Atlantic Conference of the NCAA where she serves as Board Secretary; the Baldwin School; the American Association of University Administrators; and the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia where she chairs the Regional College and University President's Alliance.

As chair of the President's Alliance she has led a project to unite the many member institutions, in partnership with local business and industry leaders, to advocate for the value of higher education as a public good, essential to ensuring a thriving region and strong, healthy communities.

Prior to joining Widener University, Dr. Wollman served as president of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and she has held academic leadership positions at Wheelock College, Worcester State University, and Rhode Island College. She earned her undergraduate degree from Harvard University, her master of science from the University of Pennsylvania, and her doctor of philosophy from New York University.

Dr. Wollman is a frequent commentator and dynamic speaker on education-related policy issues, on higher education access and affordability, and on leadership, appearing regularly in print, online, and broadcast media outlets. She is the recipient of numerous teaching, academic, and professional awards and recognitions. A lifelong educator and advocate for the transformative power of education, she regularly teaches courses to incarcerated individuals.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

The Associate Vice President will provide strategic leadership for the human resources division and work collaboratively with individuals and leaders across Widener's eight schools and colleges and three campuses to support the University's mission. The human resources team has enjoyed good success in its recent work to improve processes both within the division and across multiple campuses. Widener seeks a human resources leader who will support these ongoing efforts as well as help to re-imagine the experience of all University employees in the new world of work and wellness post-Covid.

The AVP will also work closely with Chief Diversity Officer Michelle Meekins-Davis on a variety of University initiatives, including professional development workshops, implicit bias training, and the bias response team. The partnership between Human Resources and the Chief Diversity Officer is a relatively new one that has produced positive early results and has enormous potential for the future.

The AVP will report to incoming Vice President for Finance and Administration Linda Kiraly Gilbert and manage a team of eight:

- Director of HRMS, Benefits, and Compensation
- Director of Talent Management
- Benefits Manager
- Information Systems Specialist
- Project Manager and Investigator
- Talent Management Program Manager
- Benefits Assistant
- Human Resources Assistant

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The new Associate Vice President for Human Resources will have the opportunity to help Widener employees imagine and prepare for the future of work post-pandemic, as we reconsider many of our previous assumptions and processes. In addition, the AVP will:

- **Support the University's overarching mission by collaboratively developing and implementing a complementary strategic vision for Human Resources that includes embracing the University's commitment to sustaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all employees:** Guided by the University's strategic direction at the highest level, the AVP will set appropriately ambitious priorities and goals for the work of the human resources division. The AVP will be pleased to find that the talented and knowledgeable team within the division are eager to innovate and welcome high-level strategic leadership.
- **Assess Widener's current human resources practices and policies against national best practices and lead ongoing process improvement and innovation:** The AVP will bring deep expertise in human resources in particular and change management in general to their initial evaluation of Widener's current practices and structures. As an accessible and compassionate leader, the AVP will be sure to listen closely to faculty, administrators, staff, and students in all areas of the University to ensure that all proposed changes are well informed, carefully considered, and thoughtfully designed.
- **Communicate complex, sensitive, and/or challenging information in an accessible, transparent way to a variety of audiences across the University:** In order for Widener's faculty, staff, and administrators to make well-informed decisions about a variety of complex and sensitive matters, they must be able to rely on the Human Resources team for clear and accurate information. The AVP will lead the way in ensuring that critical concepts are accurately translated into language that is relevant and helpful for Widener employees. The AVP must also be comfortable negotiating difficult conversations with individuals or groups, and to model best practices for the division's team.
- **Proactively partner with the Chief Diversity Officer, faculty and staff leaders, and others throughout the University to ensure that Widener is a place where all are welcome and can thrive:** In addition to ensuring that recruiting and hiring practices facilitated within the division are as inclusive and equitable as possible, the AVP will be an important partner in assisting the faculty and other constituencies in optimizing their hiring processes as well. The AVP will also collaborate with the Chief Diversity Officer and others on a wide range of programmatic initiatives, such as developing professional development programming related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and an anti-bias response team. The AVP should bring a sophisticated understanding of best practices around DEI to this role in order to be an effective leader, ally, and advocate.
- **Collect and use data thoughtfully to inform strategic decisions:** The AVP will work collaboratively with a wide range of partners to ensure that the right data is being captured across the University and within the division. The AVP will model best practices by using data to inform discussions and determine resource allocation in a wide range of contexts and scenarios.

- **Support and mentor the Human Resources team, both individually and collectively:** The AVP will help the division's dedicated staff to grow and advance in ways that help them achieve their own personal goals, as well as the division's.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will hold an advanced degree in a related field and hold relevant professional certifications. Whether an individual comes from inside or outside higher education, they must bring a high degree of skill in working collaboratively with a wide range of constituencies. In addition, the AVP will bring many of the following qualities and characteristics:

- Deep and broad expertise in all facets of human resources work, including an awareness of national trends and best practices in the field, particularly in the context of higher education;
- Strong leadership and management skills, including a proven ability to support and mentor a high-performing team, forge and deepen collaborative cross-organizational relationships, and bring innovative ideas to life;
- A rich and nuanced understanding of DEI principles and best practices and genuine enthusiasm for serving as a key facilitator of and partner in Widener's efforts to ensure an inclusive, equitable environment for all;
- Experience handling complex personnel and organizational issues with discretion, sound judgment, and emotional intelligence;
- A transparent, compassionate, and accessible leadership and communication style; and,
- A commitment to advancing Widener's commitment to student success, employee satisfaction, civic engagement, and leadership development.

CONTACT

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



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