

PennWest UNIVERSITY

JAMES FISHER, J.D., PH.D.

Interim President

Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest)

Dr. James Fisher serves as interim president of PennWest University, a position he assumed on Aug. 10, 2026. Appointed by Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) Board of Governors, Fisher brings decades of experience in higher education leadership, academic administration and teaching, along with a deep understanding of PennWest and its predecessor institutions.

Before becoming interim president, Fisher served as interim vice chancellor and chief academic officer for PASSHE, where he provided academic leadership and strategic guidance for Pennsylvania's public universities. He also previously served as PennWest's interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, leading the university's academic enterprise during a period of significant transformation and helping advance initiatives that support student success, academic excellence and institutional innovation.

Throughout his career, Fisher has held a variety of leadership roles at the university, including senior associate provost for academic administration and interim dean of the College of Social Sciences and Human Services. He also spent more than two decades as a professor of politics and legal studies at Edinboro, where he served for six years as chair of the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice.

An accomplished scholar and educator, Fisher's teaching and research interests include constitutional law, American politics and political theory. A commitment to academic excellence, shared governance, student-centered leadership and collaboration has defined his career.

As interim president, Fisher is focused on supporting student success, strengthening PennWest's mission of providing affordable, high-quality education, and building on the university's momentum as it prepares students to thrive in an evolving workforce and serve the communities of western Pennsylvania and beyond.