PENNSYLVANIA WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Position Profile

PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
Position Profile

PennWest University invites nominations, applications, and expressions of interest for the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

About PennWest

PennWest is a next-generation university formed in 2022 through the integration of California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities — each with deep roots in Pennsylvania's higher education landscape. As the second-largest institution in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, PennWest serves more than 10,500 students across three campuses and online, delivering high-quality, affordable education that meets the evolving needs of today's learners and tomorrow's workforce.

Capitalizing on the strengths of four unique campuses — California, Clarion, Edinboro and Global Online — with one shared vision, PennWest gives students more opportunities to thrive.

Our reach spans from Lake Erie to the West Virginia border, with an annual economic impact exceeding $750 million. PennWest is a regional leader in providing career-relevant academic programs within a strong liberal arts foundation. We offer over 90 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs across three academic colleges, supported by expert faculty and dedicated staff.

PennWest students are diverse and driven: 38% are first-generation, 37% are Pell-eligible, and 42% pursue fully online programs. Whether on campus or online, students benefit from flexible learning options, student-centered support services, and a commitment to academic quality — every course is taught by credentialed faculty, never by graduate assistants.

The university is proud of its vibrant campus life, NCAA Division II athletics, and its 204,000-strong alumni network. Recent investments in student success, campus facilities, and emerging technologies — including a new center for artificial intelligence — highlight our commitment to innovation and impact.

Under the leadership of President Jon Anderson, PennWest is charting a bold course forward, marked by strong outcomes: 96% of graduates are employed or pursuing further education within six months of graduation. We are expanding access through dual enrollment, pioneering workforce development programs, and strengthening pipelines in STEM, healthcare, and education.

PennWest is one university with a shared mission: to serve students, communities, and the commonwealth with excellence, equity, and purpose.

PennWest California

Home to the California Vulcans, PennWest California is situated along the scenic Monongahela River, less than an hour from Pittsburgh. With more than 100 student clubs and organizations, 18 NCAA Division II athletic teams, and women's flag football, the campus offers students countless opportunities to get involved, grow, and thrive.

PennWest Clarion

Home to the Clarion Golden Eagles, PennWest Clarion is nestled in a charming town amid the rolling hills of western Pennsylvania. Students enjoy access to more than 150 student organizations, 14 NCAA Division II varsity sports, Division I men's wrestling, and abundant outdoor recreation along the Clarion River and in nearby Cook Forest State Park.

PennWest Edinboro

Set on a picturesque 250-acre campus with a lake and natural surroundings, PennWest Edinboro is home to the Fighting Scots and located just 20 miles from Erie. A hub for artists, athletes, and outdoor enthusiasts, the campus offers more than 140 clubs and organizations, 18 NCAA Division II teams, Division I men's wrestling, and nationally recognized Wheelchair Basketball.

PennWest Global Online

PennWest Global Online delivers accessible, high-quality education through a dynamic platform that unites the strengths of our California, Clarion, and Edinboro campuses. With 20+ years of experience in online learning, we offer flexible, affordable programs led by dedicated faculty who provide personalized support and engaging instruction. Serving a global community of learners, our interactive, tech-enabled environment prepares students for success in today's evolving workforce.

University Priorities

PennWest continues to build on momentum and is focused on three strategic priorities for FY25-26.

Priority 1: Create Density

- Finalize and begin implementing a Facilities Master Plan to enhance and focus campus environments.
- Refine the Academic Array to strengthen offerings and streamline pathways to success.
- Align operations to support institutional priorities, improve effectiveness, and foster sustainable growth.

Priority 2: Build the Leadership Team

- Finalize key searches for VP of Finance and Administration/CFO, and Provost/VP of Academic Affairs.
- Strengthen shared governance across our university, balancing campus-specific engagement with institution-wide collaboration.
- Enhance shared governance through a staff senate.

Priority 3: Expand Our Reach in Western PA

- Deepen partnerships with local schools to build student pipelines.
- Launch a capital campaign to invest in programs, scholarships, and facilities.
- Build stronger industry partnerships for workforce development, and student opportunity.

As part of this work, we will develop a new university-wide strategic plan — an actionable roadmap that will guide PennWest's future.

The University

Mission

Through innovation, academic excellence, and empowering environments, Pennsylvania Western University provides accessible education that cultivates career-ready, lifelong learners and leaders who enrich and engage each other, their communities, the region, and beyond.

PennWest is a university centered on the student experience, where decisionmakers consider students first. Deeply rooted in service to the people and communities of western Pennsylvania, our community of educators is committed to providing exemplary, career-relevant higher education for learners at all stages of life, while supporting the region's economic and workforce needs.

Vision

Pennsylvania Western University empowers students to achieve meaningful goals through a broad array of nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate programs, career-focused learning, and support systems that foster lifelong success.

PennWest's innovative three-campus plus Global Online model was designed to expand opportunities for students while positioning the university for a strong and sustainable future. We have a steadfast dedication to operational efficiency and utilize technology not only as a teaching tool, but also to align processes and procedures as we deliver services to students, faculty, and staff.

As a state-owned university, PennWest embraces its role as the higher education option of choice for a population that includes many rural, urban, low-income, and first-generation students, including those who require substantial levels of financial, academic, and/or personal support to thrive in a university setting. We provide a strong scaffold of support for our students, empowering them to be successful in their studies and their lives.

Values

Learning: *We are a community of educators who provide a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.*

PennWest is devoted to helping our students reach their goals. We encourage the personal, intellectual, and professional development of our students by supporting their academic needs; recruiting, mentoring, and retaining high-quality faculty and staff; cultivating a widespread culture of assessment; and providing a cohesive support system that utilizes a full range of stakeholders (students and families, faculty, staff, and administrators) to deliver student success.

Growth: *We are student ready, guiding our students toward personal, financial, and academic success.*

PennWest is invested in the personal and social development of our students. We work to create a welcoming, diverse campus culture that respects and celebrates a sense of belonging. Across our three campuses and online, we identify and implement best practices that support the student experience; encourage participation in co-curricular activities and leadership opportunities; and utilize a holistic well-being model that seeks student input and provides the support programs, services, and resources students need.

Inclusion: *We advocate for all members of our campus communities and provide an equitable, supportive environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.*

The principles of our Office of Community, Opportunity, Responsibility and Engagement (CORE) are a hallmark of our university and are embedded throughout our strategies and initiatives.

Collaboration: *We engage in innovative partnerships, programs, and opportunities to address the needs of our regional communities and the commonwealth.*

PennWest is focused on understanding western Pennsylvania's unique strengths and needs, and helping to transform not only our students, but our communities as well. We work to align our programs and partnerships to advance existing regional and commonwealth plans for economic, workforce, and community development. We seek to grow innovation, entrepreneurship, and small businesses on our campuses and in our region, and to build the university's reputation through mutually beneficial engagement with our communities and their leaders.

Culture: *We share a sense of purpose that unites the PennWest community at large and provides opportunities to learn, work, and thrive.*
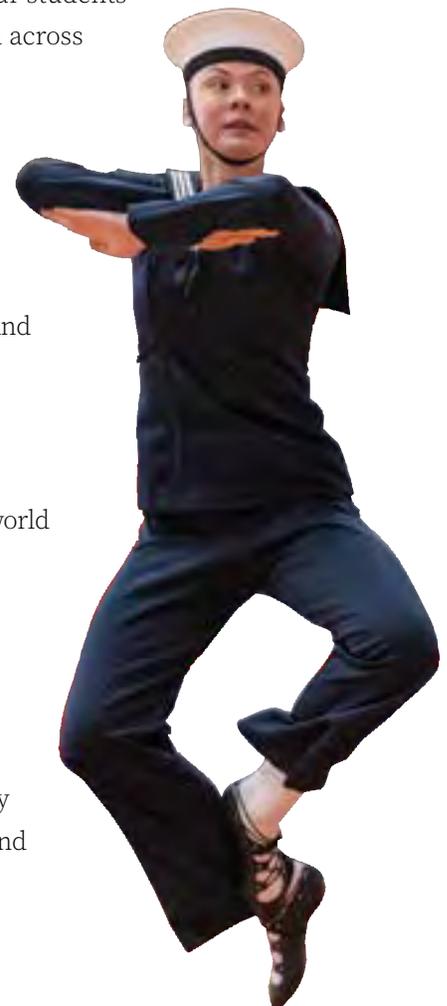
PennWest is a people-first organization that promotes lifelong learning. Within a culture built on collaboration and a commitment to personal growth, we aim to ensure the well-being of our workforce and celebrate its accomplishments. We invest in the professional and leadership growth of our faculty and staff, recognize the accomplishments of our students and employees, and actively work to foster a culture of collaboration across our three campuses and online.

College of Education, Arts and Humanities

The College of Education, Arts and Humanities at PennWest houses one of Pennsylvania's most comprehensive and accredited teacher-preparation programs. It offers a full range of undergraduate, graduate, and certification pathways in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and special education, and counseling, and administration.

With early field experiences, strong school district partnerships, and immersive learning environments such as the Rutledge Institute and School Psychology Clinic, the college blends academic rigor with real-world application. Innovative efforts — including dual enrollment pipelines, AI-integrated instruction, and community-based programming — demonstrate a deep commitment to preparing educators and mental health professionals to serve today's schools and communities.

The college includes the following departments and programs: School of Education; Criminal Justice; History and Politics; English, Philosophy and Modern Languages; Library and Information Science; and Visual and Performing Arts.

College of Health Sciences and Human Services

The College of Health Sciences and Human Services is home to high-impact programs led by a diverse and dedicated faculty committed to meeting the evolving workforce needs of the region. Offering both online and in-person pathways, the college equips career-focused students of all ages with the knowledge, technical skills, and hands-on experience needed for success in high-demand professions.

The PennWest School of Nursing advances health care in western Pennsylvania by preparing nurses through a focus on innovation, academic excellence, collaboration, and community engagement.

Academic offerings include Exercise, Health and Sport Science; Nursing and Health Professions; Psychology, Counseling and Art Therapy; and Social Work, Sociology and Human Services – each designed to address the critical health and human service challenges of today and tomorrow.

College of Science, Technology and Business

The College of Science, Technology and Business is aligned with evolving market demands, preparing students for a future where STEM and business expertise are essential. Students collaborate with expert faculty on innovative research, use advanced technology, and apply their knowledge in hands-on, real-world settings.

A new three-story, 63,500-square-foot science facility on the California campus— opening in early 2027 — will further enhance learning and research in biology, chemistry, and physics, with nearly all space dedicated to student labs and instruction.

The college includes the School of Business and academic programs in Business, Economics and Communications; Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics; and Computing and Engineering Technology.
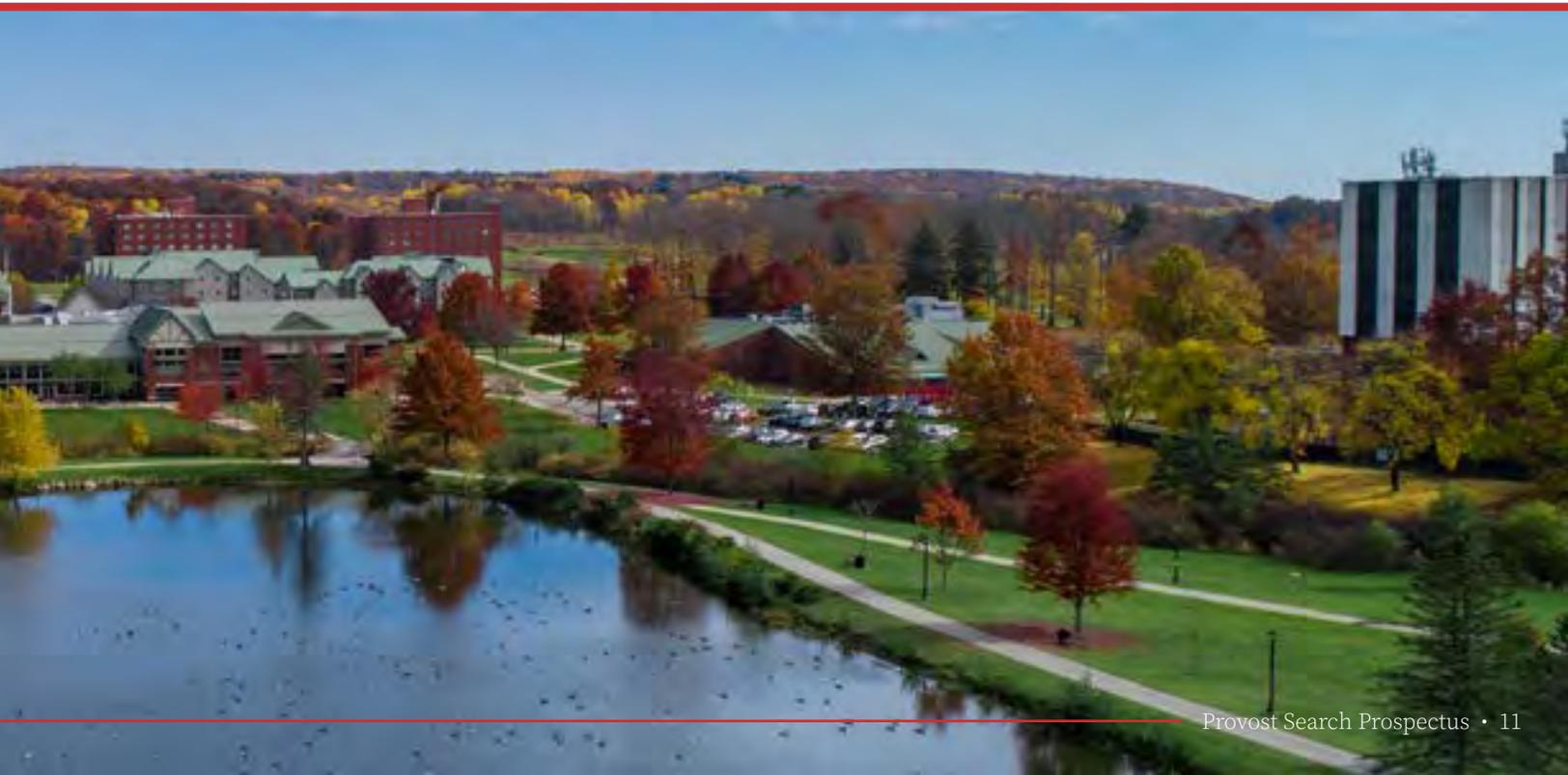
The Position

The provost and vice president for academic affairs serves as the chief academic officer for the university, providing oversight of and strategic direction to all academic functions within a collective bargaining and shared governance environment. This individual will reside in and travel extensively throughout western Pennsylvania and should embody the qualities of a seasoned executive and servant-leader, and be a strong advocate for higher education. Interested candidates should bring an optimistic attitude, positive energy, and a collaborative spirit to advance the university's mission and strategic goals.

Reporting directly to the president, the provost and vice president for academic affairs acts as a central node in the university's "neural network," playing a crucial role in developing and implementing a comprehensive academic vision that supports student success, faculty excellence, and institutional distinction.

The provost and vice president for academic affairs provides leadership and administrative oversight for the following areas:

- Office of the Provost
- Academic Colleges and Departments
    - College of Education, Arts and Humanities
    - College of Health Sciences and Human Services
    - College of Science, Technology and Business
    - 14 Academic Departments
    - Graduate Council

- Academic Support Units
  - Office of the Registrar
  - University Libraries
  - Career Center
  - Student Success Center
  - Office of Nontraditional Student Support
  - Office of Military and Veteran Success
  - Office of Global Education
  - Faculty Director of First Year Academic Success
  - Center for Faculty Excellence (includes distribution of faculty professional development funding)
  - Institutional Review Board
  - Honors Program
  - ROTC
- Academic Centers and Institutes
  - Frederick Douglass Institute
  - Center for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies
- Grant-Funded Programming
  - TRIO and Act 101
  - PA Thrive
  - Beehive Center for Branding and Strategic Communication
  - Clarion Small Business Development Center
  - GACO APEX Accelerator
- Academically Related Community/Donor Partnerships
  - The Rutledge Institute
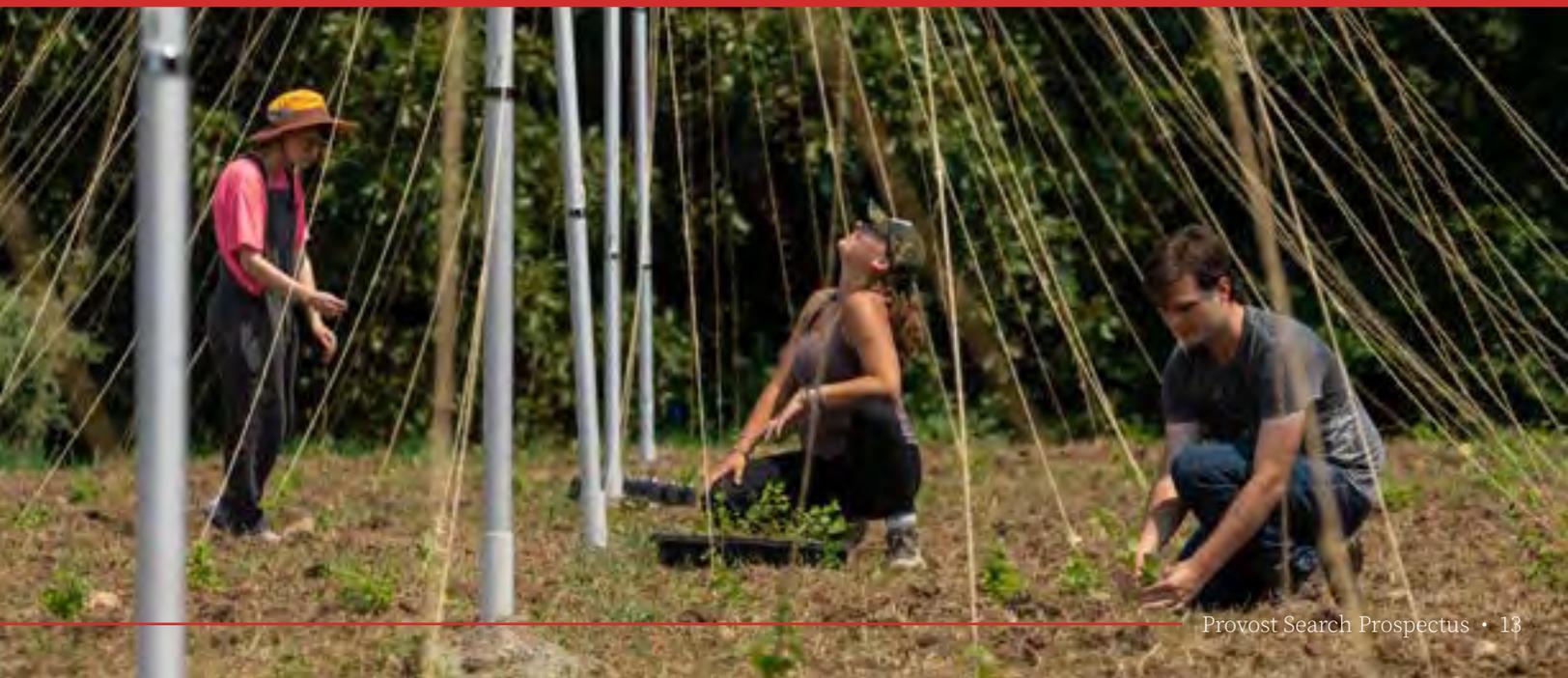 - Western PA School for the Deaf Preschool

Key Responsibilities
Development and Delivery of the Academic Array

- Provide vision and manage the development, implementation, delivery, assessment, and evolution of an academic array encompassing liberal arts-based and workforce-relevant associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as the First Year Seminar, general education program, sub-baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate certificates, minors, dual enrollment, Honors Program, ROTC, credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing continuing education, and related credentialing, as well as a full range of experiential learning opportunities.

- Provide vision and manage related academic programming and processes, including accelerated pathways, transfer credits, assessment for prior learning, program-to-program transfer arrangements, and apprenticeship-to-degree pathways.

- Manage the development, implementation, and adjustment of semester academic schedules, emphasizing optimization to maximize the student experience while remaining efficient and within budgetary goals.

- Oversee all aspects of student advising and class registration processes, including the development of incoming student schedules, with an eye toward continuous improvement of the student experience.

- Coordinate with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the Office of the Chancellor, and the Faculty Senate, manage processes for student learning outcomes assessment, periodic program assessment, general education assessment, and program accreditation.

Budget

- Strategically develop, implement, and monitor labor, operational, technology, and facilities budgets for the Division of Academic Affairs in collaboration with the chief financial officer and the President's Cabinet.

- Manage graduate assistantships and graduate worker wage budgets for the entire university and graduate worker wage budgets for the Division of Academic Affairs.

- Actively collaborate with the President's Cabinet to develop a university-wide budget consistent with the university's mission, long-range planning, and PASSHE guidelines and requirements.

- Participate in quarterly high-risk monitoring meetings with the Office of the Chancellor (that focuses on PennWest budget and enrollment forecasts as well as the implementation of strategic priorities).

- Participate in the preparation and drafting of the annual Office of the Chancellor Continuing Progress reports.

Employee Relations

- Work with the HR Office, the PASSHE Labor Relations Office, and the PASSHE Office of Legal Counsel to manage faculty labor relations in a collective bargaining environment, as well as staff relations with non-represented managers, AFSCME employees, and SCUPA employees.

- Serve as the management-side chair of the faculty union (APSCUF) meet & discuss meetings.

- With HR, co-manage the faculty contractual grievance process, as well investigate and resolve potential faculty contractual and policy violations.

- Oversee all faculty development, evaluation, and advancement processes, including faculty onboarding, student feedback, tenure, post-tenure evaluation, promotion, sabbatical, and emeritus processes, as well as professional development funding and programming (pedagogical, advising, and regulatory, such as Title IX training).

- Participate where needed in quadrennial PASSHE/APSCUF contractual negotiations.

- Manage student-faculty, faculty-faculty, and staff-faculty disagreement, complaint, and appeals processes.

Academic Policies

- Develop, implement, assess, and update all policies related to the academic enterprise, consistent with industry best practices and legal, regulatory, and accreditation requirements.

- Oversee and ensure Academic Affairs and cross-divisional compliance with Middle States accreditation, individual program accreditation, PASSHE, and state and federal regulations, requirements, and guidelines (for example, NC-SARA reporting).

Student Success
- Provide principal university oversight of and strategic direction for offices and programs focused on student onboarding, retention, career development, and timely graduation, including:
    - Key student success practices (for example, first-year seminar, peer tutoring, peer mentors, supplemental instruction, directed self placement, use of predictive analytics-driven retention software).
    - Student populations (for example, new students, adult learners, active-duty military and veterans, international students, exploratory students, Compass Program students, TRIO and Act 101 students).
    - Student academic probationary, suspension, and readmission processes.
    - Career development and placement across the student lifecycle.
- Collaborate with offices within and across the division to track, report, assess, and improve student success practices.
- Oversee faculty and staff relations with student support offices outside of the division, such as the Office for Students with Disabilities and Financial Aid.
- Oversee and provide strategic direction for the continuous improvement of degree audit, graduation monitoring, and graduation application processes, including monitoring and improving compliance with federal financial aid and PASSHE regulations.

Collaboration and Engagement
- Actively engage current and potential partners in school districts, industry, government, and the nonprofit sector.
- Develop and manage affiliation and articulation agreements with external entities, in collaboration with PASSHE Office of Legal Counsel.
- Provide information to the PennWest Council of Trustees through individual communications, quarterly meetings (public and internal), and written reports
- Represent the university with external partners, agencies, and constituents to promote programs and services.
- Travel regularly between PennWest campuses and participate in evening and weekend events as needed.
- Serve on the President's Cabinet and contribute to institutional strategy and decision-making.
- Serve on various institutional committees and task forces.
- Ensure compliance with relevant accreditation, legal, and policy standards.

Knowledge, Skill, and Abilities

- Demonstrated ability to model and cultivate a culture where every interaction reflects the values of The PennWest Way: ensuring that every person leaves every conversation feeling heard, respected, engaged, and eager to connect again. This approach is essential to building trust, fostering collaboration, and advancing PennWest's progress through a culture of inclusion, acknowledgment, and shared purpose.

- Ability to think clearly and execute sound decision-making under tight deadlines or high-stress situations.

- Expertise in political acumen; knowledge of and ability to understand governance structures, particularly as they relate to enrollment management decision-making processes and stakeholder engagement.

- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, both written and oral; ability to foster collaboration and engagement between internal/external constituencies.

Minimal Qualifications

- Terminal degree in a discipline represented within the university.

- Extensive experience leading in an academic environment with an administrative record that includes increasing responsibility and scope.

- Experience working in an academic environment with multiple collective bargaining units, including a unionized faculty.

- The breadth and depth of academic experience and leadership acumen to navigate the complexities of a collaborative union environment with multiple collective bargaining agreements.

- Experience as a tenured full professor.

- Experience working with modifications to the academic array.

- Extensive experience working with faculty, staff, managers, and outside entities in building student success.

- Experience collaborating with institutions of higher education in an ecosystem of shared learning.

- Experience working with other chief academic officers/provosts within a system of higher education.

- Experience working in a multi-campus environment.

- The ability to represent the president in any setting.

Application Process

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Search Committee will begin reviewing applications immediately and will continue to accept applications and nominations until the position is filled. Nomination letters should include the name, position, address and telephone number of the nominee. All applications and nominations will be handled in confidence.

A breakdown of the State System Employee Benefits Package can be found here.

Applicants must submit: a curriculum vitae/resume and a letter of interest describing interest and relevant qualifications as they relate to this position.

Submit application materials online, preferably as PDFs.

Questions and letters of nomination should be submitted by email to:
Theresa Croll
Chief Human Resource Officer
Email: *croll_t@pennwest.edu*

Include *PW Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs* in subject line

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