



### **Search for the Vice Provost for Student Affairs**

**University of Pittsburgh**

Pittsburgh, PA

#### **THE SEARCH**

The University of Pittsburgh seeks a collaborative, engaged, and student-centered leader to serve as its Vice Provost for Student Affairs (VPSA). Reporting to the provost and serving as a standing member of the chancellor's senior leadership team, this is an extraordinary opportunity to lead a highly respected and motivated student affairs division during a time of new leadership and continued growth at a leading research university. The Division of Student Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh is a student-centered department, with the goal of providing every single Pitt student with the best collegiate and post-collegiate experience in the world by actively contributing to the education and well-being of the whole student, and providing experiences, opportunities, and support to prepare students for success in the global community.

The University of Pittsburgh is a top ranked, public institution and a member of the Association of American Universities. Pitt is known for its global impact in a wide array of fields, as well as continuously advocating for ways to better society. As a result of its high-quality research and commitment to learning, as well as ongoing discoveries, the University of Pittsburgh is recognized as one of the most innovative universities in the world, inventing the paths of the future and forging ahead. With 16 schools and colleges, 652 degrees and certificate programs, five campuses, and nearly 34,000 total students, Pitt is an academic and economic powerhouse that is consistently ranked among the nation's top universities.

The next VPSA will have a tremendous opportunity to assess, build, and envision a future that enhances the student experience for all students, including but not limited to graduate, undergraduate, non-degree, transfer, international, online, and commuter students. The VPSA should have an innate ability, experience with, and desire to develop genuine connections and relationships with students, staff, and faculty. It is important that they embrace existing and contribute to new strategic partnerships at the University, as well as at local, national, and global levels. The incumbent is responsible for fostering a culture of diversity and inclusive excellence, accessibility, and belonging for all students at every stage and in every part of the University. The VPSA will play a principal role in setting and implementing the University's priorities affecting students and will work collaboratively across the institution with senior

leaders, faculty, and staff in support of co-curricular programs and activities that advance student life, student learning, and development.

In addition to supporting the student body, it is imperative that the VPSA is relatable to their colleagues across the institution, and to constituents at all levels. They must be able to assess the well-being and sustainability of the division staff, advocate for change as needed, and must be able to navigate the current pace of change in higher education. The University is seeking a candidate who will involve themselves in broad-ranging efforts, such as social justice, global education, structural improvements, and real estate development in a landlocked campus. The VPSA must be able to remain diplomatic, calm, and positive in the face of adversity, and must facilitate the University's efforts to make transparent and data-driven decisions.

The University of Pittsburgh has engaged the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, in this recruitment effort. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed in confidence, as indicated at the end of this document.

## **UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AND THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH**

Since 1787, Pitt has never stopped pushing the edge of what's possible. From research achievements to the quality of its academic programs, the University of Pittsburgh ranks among the best in higher education. With an enrollment of over 29,000 students on the Pittsburgh campus, Pitt is internationally respected as a center for learning and research.

Faculty members have earned such prestigious honors as the National Medal of Science, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation "genius grant," the Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award, and election to the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Medicine, the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Inventors, and received the National Medal of Technology and Innovation. In 2023, Pitt was ranked 16th in the U.S. for patent production. Staff members' enthusiasm, talent, and dedication to the University's mission ensure smooth and effective institutional operations and an exceptional student experience. Students come to Pitt from all 50 states, three territories, the District of Columbia, and more than 110 countries.

With four regional campuses in Bradford, Greensburg, Johnstown, and Titusville, Pitt offers a vast array of opportunities and more than 650 degree and certificate programs. More than 14,000 faculty members, research associates and postdoctoral associates, and staff members are employed on the Pittsburgh campus, and another 700 work at the University's four regional campuses. Pitt offers generous [benefits](#) and values [work-life balance](#).

The 132-acre Pittsburgh campus, in the vibrant and beautiful Oakland neighborhood, is home to the Cathedral of Learning, a renowned and popular landmark that, at 42 stories, is the tallest academic building in the Western Hemisphere. The Cathedral houses 31 Nationality Rooms, each designed to reflect and celebrate the cultures of the diverse communities of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh campus is

also home to the University's health sciences schools and is co-located with the highly ranked UPMC (formerly University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) and its flagship medical facilities. Pitt has served as an integral partner and a key player in driving the growth of the education and health services super sector in the Pittsburgh metropolitan region. Pitt's NCAA Division I athletic program includes 17 varsity teams that compete at the highest level of U.S. collegiate athletics.

The University views the city of Pittsburgh as an extension of its campus, and Pittsburgh is no ordinary college town. The city is transforming from an industrial capital to a center of education, research, and innovation. Pitt actively engages with the surrounding community through its [Community Engagement Centers](#), community-driven partnerships, and volunteer service. The city hosts a high concentration of influential nonprofits and, as an international center of emerging information technology, is home to companies such as Duolingo, one of Google's national offices, and over 140 robotics companies. The city also has a long history in banking and manufacturing and is becoming a leader in advanced manufacturing technologies and nanotechnology.

The city's reinvention since its days as a smoky steel town has received national acclaim and garnered numerous [accolades](#). Pittsburgh is a vibrant, approachable, midsize city with world-class arts and cultural institutions. Wrapped in rivers, intertwined with trails, and packed with parks, Pittsburgh is a green and outdoor city with fantastic urban views and a famed downtown skyline. In the eyes of its many visitors, Pittsburgh offers a surprising and unexpected experience, with natural beauty, unique terrain, and diverse offerings at every turn.

## THE PITT COMMUNITY

[Chancellor Joan Gabel](#), [interim Provost Joseph McCarthy](#) and the broader [University leadership](#) lead the University of Pittsburgh, serving more than 24,500 undergraduate, and over 9,000 graduate and professional students. University wide, international students represent 9.5% of the student population, and approximately 35.5% of students self-identify as students of color (6.1% Black or African American; 6.7% Hispanic or Latino; 18.5% Asian; 4.3% two or more races). Follow this [link](#) for more Pitt facts and figures.

Essential to all University activities and initiatives are the employees who tirelessly support and advance the institution's mission and provide world-class curricular and co-curricular experiences. [Pitt faculty members](#) are renowned for expanding boundaries of knowledge while educating new generations of thinkers and doers. The Pitt faculty are committed to great teaching, are leaders in their fields, are known for innovations that benefit humankind, and push the boundaries of knowledge with their research.

Pitt's core values of academic excellence, collaboration, community, inclusion, innovation, and sustainability inform the institution and its future. The University is a diverse community of scholars, learners, partners, and leaders dedicated to a common cause: the pursuit of knowledge. Pitt's initiatives and operations fuel opportunities of the highest quality in three key areas: academic excellence, research

and scholarship, and community service. The Pitt community is committed to the shared purpose of improving lives and communities—at every scale—by creating knowledge and leveraging expertise to tackle some of society’s greatest and most pressing challenges. More information on Pitt’s mission and vision can be found [here](#).

## **THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

The Division of Student Affairs works collaboratively to prepare and empower students to thrive and make meaningful contributions to the global community. Student Affairs complements and supports Pitt’s academic mission of inclusive excellence by providing students with transformational and diverse learning experiences and student programs and services that support students’ sense of belonging and lifelong well-being. Student Affairs supports an active and engaged student body with over 700 student organizations.

Student Affairs is committed to honoring students’ strengths, acknowledging their individual and collective needs, and helping them achieve their goals. The Division promotes the holistic development of students and supports students’ growth and development, especially as they encounter and overcome challenges. Student Affairs cultivates spaces where students can be their authentic selves and is committed to achieving equitable student outcomes. Student Affairs innovates and works creatively, leading with integrity.

In addition to the [Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Students](#), the Division of Student Affairs is organized around four areas: wellness, engagement, experience, and belonging. More information on the structure of the division can be found [here](#).

## **STUDENT AFFAIRS INFRASTRUCTURE**

Guided by input from faculty, students, staff, and community members, the University of Pittsburgh has developed a [campus master plan](#) that serves as an infrastructure road map. The University is currently engaged in a space study to assess existing student program spaces including the [William Pitt Union and the O’Hara Student Center](#) to understand how best to meet evolving student needs based on enrollment growth and find ways to increase engagement of students and student organizations.

### **Student Housing**

Pitt has a variety of [residential options](#) for students including first-year housing, apartment-style, suites, and leased apartments. Pitt also provides the option of gender-inclusive housing and living-learning communities. In Fall 2023, Pitt housed approximately 6,200 residence hall students and 1,800 students in University-owned apartments.

### **New Campus Recreation and Wellness Center**

Construction is currently underway on a groundbreaking new [Campus Recreation and Wellness Center](#) slated for completion in the 2024-25 academic year. The center will serve as a total health and wellness destination. From recreation and fitness areas to yoga and meditation spaces, this innovative multistory facility will encompass all aspects of health and wellness, taking a holistic approach to support and enriching the student experience. The center, estimated at 270,000 sq. feet, will include amenities such as a recreation pool, a jogging track, weightlifting equipment, basketball and volleyball courts, and more. In addition to physical and mental health benefits, the new facility will target LEED certification. The center is expected to include ample natural light and energy efficiencies, sustainable stormwater management, and biophilic design elements—a showcase for sustainable design that will support Pitt’s leadership and commitment to sustainability.

## **THE ROLE**

Reporting to the provost and serving as a member of the provost’s leadership team, the VPSA plays a principal role in setting and implementing the University priorities affecting students and will work collaboratively across the University with senior leaders, faculty, and staff in support of co-curricular programs and activities that advance student life, student learning, and development. The VPSA will also be a standing member of the chancellor’s senior leadership team and serve as the liaison to Student Affairs leaders on the Bradford, Greensburg, Johnstown, and Titusville campuses.

Through programming and implementing best practices throughout the division, the VPSA ensures that the Division of Student Affairs is providing experiences outside of the classroom that will facilitate personal growth, broaden student perspectives, create community connections, and help students discover their passions and shape their futures. The VPSA will support student success and retention by cultivating student engagement and support; providing programming, resources, and safe and welcoming living and learning spaces; and fostering a vibrant, challenging, nurturing, and inclusive environment for students to explore and grow.

The VPSA supervises six direct reports and has oversight for the Student Affairs Strategic Leadership Team and the Student Affairs senior staff. The Division of Student Affairs includes more than 225 professional staff and over 730 student staff. The VPSA manages an annual operating budget of \$13.3 million. The next VPSA should be energized by the unique opportunity this role offers to deeply impact Pitt students, professional staff, the University, and the Pittsburgh community.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PROVOST FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS**

### **Provide visionary and strategic leadership.**

The Pitt Division of Student Affairs has been in an exciting period of growth and reinvention focused on integrating student affairs more widely across the institution to better serve all Pitt students. Over the last three years, the Division of Student Affairs has expanded the role of the VPSA in University leadership,

created the Dean of Students/Associate Vice Provost role, reorganized the division around five themed teams led by associate deans, and added new staff in key areas. The VPSA, in collaboration with the dean of students, will be responsible for assessing and further refining the new divisional structure to ensure that it is supporting student success, divisional goals, and operational effectiveness.

In addition, the VPSA will have the opportunity to play a key role in formulating a broader institutional vision and strategy in collaboration with the new chancellor, the new provost, and the rest of the senior leadership team. The VPSA will be responsible for making sure that the division's goals and strategy are in alignment with and amplify institutional goals and aspirations. Pitt has a highly collaborative culture and the VPSA must be prepared to build and maintain strong collegial relationships across campus at all levels. They will need to be able to effectively communicate and translate between senior leadership, the Division of Student Affairs, campus partners, and the student body.

The VPSA will inherit a strong division that is well respected across the University. Pitt Student Affairs is poised to become an exemplar for other institutions. The VPSA should have a sophisticated understanding of the key issues in student affairs and be well positioned to increase the visibility of the Division of Student Affairs on a national level.

**Serve as a highly visible and engaged advocate for students and their needs, including graduate students, online students, and other non-traditional student populations.**

Pitt's students are eager to engage directly with campus administrators at all levels within the University in order to sustain and enhance an environment that centers the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the student body. The VPSA will work closely with students, earn their trust and respect, and provide a model of engagement with students for other administrators and faculty. This individual will be expected to sustain a high level of direct and visible involvement with students and to be a known presence in their campus experiences. The VPSA should be attentive to the unique needs of all student populations, in particular examining how best to support populations beyond residential undergraduates.

The VPSA will advocate for the student voice, particularly in settings where students are not present, to ensure that their perspectives are represented. Through attentive listening, authentic attempts at responsiveness, and transparency about decisions and decision-making processes, the VPSA will reinforce the students' confidence in and collaboration with the administration. The VPSA must be an effective communicator across all platforms and should have expertise in crisis communication. They should also be prepared to help the University community understand and navigate issues of equity and free speech in the context of a state-related institution.

**Recruit, develop, and inspire dedicated and talented professionals.**

The successful candidate will inherit a talented and highly motivated senior team, with varying lengths of leadership experience and tenure at the University, and a diverse and dedicated staff. The VPSA must be

prepared to inspire, support, and manage professionals who will require a customized approach to professional development and growth. Through accessible and supportive leadership, clarity of purpose, and ongoing opportunities for development, the VPSA will enable the team to continue to flourish. The VPSA will need to assess and enhance the division's overall effectiveness and structure to ensure it is appropriately addressing the evolving needs of students at the University. The VPSA will be attentive to exploring how to support work-life balance and avoiding burnout. The VPSA should be an engaged and visible presence across the division.

**Identify and implement innovative approaches to evolving student programming and housing needs.**

Pitt is in the process of revisiting its campus master plan in response to the growth of the student body and evolving student needs, including evaluating the student unions and student programming spaces. The VPSA will need to bring innovative and creative approaches to reimagining space, identifying priorities, and balancing competing interests. The VPSA will need to work in close collaboration with Housing Services to continue to explore how best to meet the on-campus and off-campus housing needs of all students and ensure that campus housing positively contributes to students' quality of life. The VPSA will also play a critical role in the completion and opening of the new Campus Recreation and Wellness Center slated for completion in the 2024-25 academic year.

**Cultivate an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment where all students will thrive.**

Pitt has worked hard to increase the diversity of its student body and the VPSA will need to be well versed in the changing nature of higher education and the social and academic needs of students across a range of backgrounds and intersectional identities. The VPSA will need to work with University leadership and the Division of Student Affairs to ensure that University systems and structures support and cultivate a sense of belonging and are reflective of current and evolving student needs. The VPSA should be compassionate, someone who listens deeply to students and develops authentic relationships with them, and can advocate for equity and inclusion across the University. The VPSA must be prepared to navigate the complexity of current issues with empathy, finesse, and an educational mindset.

**QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

Minimum Qualifications

- Ten or more years of experience in roles demonstrating increasing levels of leadership and supervisory responsibility in complex, demanding, and fast-paced higher education environments.
- Effective leadership, supervision, and crisis management skills.
- Knowledge of and/or experience with student conduct policies, Title IX regulations, FERPA, and residential campus environments.

- Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to the importance of inclusive excellence as a cornerstone of a just, equitable, and diverse community.
- An advanced degree in college student personnel, educational leadership, counseling, or a related field; an earned doctorate or terminal degree is preferred.

#### Desired Characteristics

- Ability to lead a team through strategic planning and implementation.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently, or with minimal supervision, and make transparent, responsible, informed, data-driven, and community-centered decisions.
- Superior interpersonal skills and a commitment to building trust and fostering genuine, positive relationships with undergraduate and graduate/professional students, staff, faculty, alumni, and other constituents.
- Exceptional judgment and the ability to make informed decisions and recommendations with the highest levels of integrity, fairness, and ethical standards.
- Experience handling freedom of expression/free speech issues on campus.
- Outstanding listening and written and verbal communication skills.
- Ability to be agile and respond appropriately in exceptionally challenging times and in ambiguous situations.
- Demonstrated ability to build partnerships and promote collaboration within the unit and beyond, particularly as it relates to the interface between student development and undergraduate, graduate, professional, and international education.
- Experience in campus crisis management and demonstrated knowledge and understanding of student mental health and well-being issues, challenges facing students today, student conduct and discipline, judicial affairs, and relevant legal issues in higher education.
- Knowledge of current and emerging issues and best practices in student affairs and higher education and interest in driving innovation in student affairs.
- Ability to recruit, develop, and retain an outstanding staff; exemplifying ethical leadership and active, ongoing engagement with division staff and colleagues
- Engagement with professional organizations such as NASPA, ACPA, and ACUHO-I.
- Shared commitment to the University's values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and respect for all, and an understanding of the needs of a highly diverse and rapidly changing student body at both the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels.
- Strong grasp of diversity, equity, and inclusion competencies.
- Understanding of international education and its impact on the development of student intercultural and global competence and student learning, engagement, and support.
- Demonstrated knowledge of strategic enrollment management.
- Ability to work collaboratively with others and to find common ground.



## **APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS**

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters addressing the qualifications and characteristics articulated above should be sent via the [Isaacson, Miller search website](#). Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged. For fullest consideration, application materials should be received by March 11, 2024.

**Keight Tucker Kennedy**, *Partner (she/her)*

**Liz Braun**, *Senior Associate (she/her)*

**Alexis Scott**, *Senior Search Coordinator (she/her)*

Isaacson, Miller

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