

Northwestern University Position Profile

President



Northwestern
University



Position Profile for the President

Search Overview

In the last three decades, Northwestern University has firmly rooted itself as a preeminent national and global university. The University was chartered in 1851 to serve the Northwest Territory, and for much of its history, it retained its regional character, serving a dynamic metropolitan area that remains a dominant asset to the University. Northwestern's culture of scholarship, intellectual humility, and collaborative work, complemented by a passion to achieve ever-heightened ambitions, distinguishes Northwestern among top-tier universities. Northwestern's ascent into the upper echelon of major research universities has been guided by a series of excellent and long-serving presidents, who have consistently strengthened critical components of the University and attracted and enabled first-class faculty, students, and staff to realize the mission of the institution.

Northwestern has a broad array of 12 schools, all of which are highly ranked and recognized. These schools are integrated throughout three campuses—the primary campus in Evanston, on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan; the Chicago Campus, nestled in the heart of a world-class city; and the University's first global campus in Doha, Qatar. The University has made major investments in academic excellence that have accelerated the quality of its faculty, programs, and research across the full range of disciplines, and Northwestern has fostered an entrepreneurial environment in which all of its schools have thrived by encouraging, incenting, and enabling decanal leadership. Highly prestigious faculty accolades, including an impressive ten-year increase in the number of members in the National Academies and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences across a wide range of schools and departments coupled with a high standing among private universities for the number of prestigious NSF CAREER awards to junior faculty, exemplify Northwestern's commitment to excellence in faculty and research.

The Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences anchors the University; it houses many leading departments in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The Kellogg School of Management is securely situated among the top five business schools in the nation. The performing arts ecosystem, comprised of the Bienen School of Music and the School of Communication's theatre programs, is very highly regarded; faculty and alumni are consistently among the nominees and recipients of Grammy, Tony, and Emmy awards, and Northwestern is among *Playbill's* top 10 most represented universities on Broadway. The McCormick School of Engineering is a perennial top 20 school and is home to world-class materials science and industrial engineering programs. Northwestern Pritzker School of Law is regularly regarded among the top law schools nationally, and the School of Education and Social Policy is consistently considered one of the nation's best. The Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications is arguably the country's best known and most accomplished school of journalism, with alumni thriving across every major news outlet and media channel. The School of Communication further extends Northwestern's central role in media with its departments of communication studies and radio/television/film, in addition to its top-tier programs in communication sciences and disorders.



University administration has moved to strengthen every aspect of research and scholarship at Northwestern, investing in faculty and expanding research space on the Evanston and Chicago campuses by nearly 30 percent over the past ten years. In 2020, sponsored research—just one measure of scholarly excellence—totaled \$887 million, and is on a clear trajectory to exceed \$1 billion, putting Northwestern among a very small number of private research universities to approach this level.

The primary generator of Northwestern’s sponsored research funding is the large, successful, and enormously improved Feinberg School of Medicine, developed in a close partnership and alignment with its clinical health partners, including Northwestern Memorial HealthCare, Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, and the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. Combined, these affiliations represent the dominant and fastest-growing medical enterprise in Chicago. An agreement developed approximately ten years ago with Northwestern Memorial HealthCare unleashed the incredible research potential in the health sciences. The Feinberg School of Medicine now attracts more than \$640 million in sponsored research annually, twice the amount from a decade ago. Its funding levels have been among the fastest growing within its counterparts, averaging an 11 percent growth rate annually and putting the Feinberg School of Medicine on track to move into the top decile of medical schools in the next ten years, from its current position of 15th in both NIH funding and rank amongst medical schools.

The University is uniquely positioned in science and engineering with large academic and research programs within a comprehensive private institution. Northwestern holds a global leadership position in areas like materials science, chemistry, astrophysics, nanoscience—started in engineering and chemistry and quickly married into medicine—and molecular chemistry, enhanced today by an expansion of its computer science and data science activities. There are very few universities in the top ten that can boast the same level of excellence across arts, humanities, social sciences, and professional schools paired with a sizeable science, engineering, and medical complex. This full range of academic breadth is integrated through joint appointments and institutes across the University.

Powerful graduate, professional, and post-doctoral programs contribute to the prestigious brand and hallmark of quality for the institution. Today, Northwestern has 13,485 graduate students across a range of nationally ranked programs. At the crux of all of this is a collaborative and naturally interdisciplinary ethos that fosters creative and path-breaking programs and research across schools and disciplines. As the graduate and professional schools strengthened, they curated their PhD programs and built post-doctoral programs to bolster the evolving research enterprise.

Northwestern has made exceptional progress in undergraduate education for its 8,642 students. The University has emphasized the undergraduate experience over the last decade, and undergraduate applications have responded to Northwestern’s growing reputation. Applications have trended steadily upwards, reaching over 47,000 in 2021. Acceptance rates have mirrored applications, dropping from 23 percent in 2010 to 6.4 percent in 2021 while yield rates have continued to climb. Northwestern is the school of choice for top students from a broad range of backgrounds who bring wide-ranging interests to the University.



Northwestern has made deep commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion across the enterprise, and nowhere are those commitments more evident than in undergraduate admissions. Northwestern classes are increasingly diverse: preliminary numbers for the incoming class of 2025 indicate more than 12 percent of students identify as Black or African American; 17 percent as Hispanic/Latinx; and more than 24 percent as Asian American; and an increasing share of Northwestern undergraduates are first generation and/or Pell-eligible. Additionally, over 10 percent of undergraduate students hail from outside of the United States. Northwestern has promoted access by substantially increasing financial aid over the last few years, resulting in 64 percent of undergraduate students receiving some financial aid. The University has been need-blind for many years and in 2016 announced a no-loan policy. In addition to the diversity and access efforts in the undergraduate student body, parallel efforts in the graduate and professional student bodies are equally prioritized at the University, and in concert with this diversification, the University has implemented programs to support the academic and personal growth of all students.

Northwestern is a founding member of the Big Ten Athletic Conference and sponsors 19 varsity teams that compete against the best in the nation. Student-athletes at Northwestern have the highest graduation rate among schools in the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), which is the most competitive subdivision of the NCAA. In 2020, Northwestern was the Big Ten champion in women's basketball, swimming, and wrestling and had recent titles in lacrosse, field hockey, soccer, diving, golf, fencing, and tennis. Northwestern's combined excellence in academics and athletics is unparalleled.

The achievements of the University have been financially possible due to generous alumni and the translation of its powerful science enterprise. Northwestern's endowment stands at approximately \$14 billion, placing Northwestern among the best endowed institutions in the world. The latest fundraising campaign, *We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern*, is on track to surpass its goal of \$5 billion. The administration's stewardship of the endowment positions Northwestern to maintain this upward trajectory.

As our national and global societies face unprecedented challenges and tremendous uncertainty, Northwestern is poised to be a leader in developing knowledge and solutions to address profound issues, such as health and wellbeing, social justice and racial equity, global warming, threats to democracy, rebalancing of global influence, and the rise of technology in all aspects of life. Northwestern has the breadth, the expertise, the culture, the interdisciplinary commitments, the resources, and the sheer will to provide the intellectual and technical leadership that the country and the world require to solve its most pressing problems.



Opportunities and Challenges for the President

Further strengthen and innovate Northwestern's academic enterprise

The University's upward ascent has been driven in part by Northwestern's unparalleled breadth and substantial depth across numerous fields of study. Given this breadth and anticipated changes in our world, opportunities exist to establish and transform institutes, centers, and departments. Northwestern fosters a vibrant ecosystem of groundbreaking research and innovation and entrepreneurship across the schools, departments, and programs of the University, building on an unusually robust culture of collaboration and interdisciplinarity. Central to the continued advancement of the academic enterprise is the recruitment and retention of world-class faculty, students, and staff, as well as significant investment in the academic and research infrastructure, including facilities, technologies, and staff, to support exceptional advances in research, innovation, and education.

Collectively articulate and advance a clear and unifying vision for Northwestern

Society is changing at a rapid pace and Northwestern must have the agility to pivot quickly to address disruptive forces, including technologies and other issues. Northwestern's identity among globally preeminent universities is defined, in large part, by its dynamic landscape of excellence in scholarship across a broad array of disciplines and its ongoing commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration. The next President must galvanize the entire Northwestern community around a sense of shared mission and purpose, organized around bold, ambitious, and distinctive University-wide aims and goals.

Demonstrate a powerful commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion

Over the last several decades, Northwestern has made substantial investments in and commitments to enhancing the diversity of the Northwestern community. There is a strong community desire for Northwestern to continue to cultivate a genuinely inclusive institutional culture where all members of the Northwestern community feel welcomed, valued, supported, and fully integrated into the contributions and leadership of the institution. The next President must have an unwavering commitment to championing and investing in diversity, equity, and inclusion and a sophisticated understanding of how diversity improves and enriches the educational experience, scholarly productivity, administrative teams, social impact, and overall climate, culture, and achievements of the entire Northwestern community.

Develop an exemplary academic and shared social experience that solidifies the University's reputation for student success

Northwestern has become an increasingly attractive destination for students. Its enrollment patterns improve consistently as it has expanded access and offered an increasingly rich menu of experiences. In a highly competitive modern economy, and in a society full of dramatic change, students seek an education that prepares them to engage empathetically and knowledgeably with the people and issues of their time, personally and professionally. The finest education will combine student life opportunities with broad academic programs that contain technologically sophisticated offerings and experiential education. Moving forward, Northwestern is well positioned to use its success to develop an even more consistent,



unified, and distinctive student experience. A carefully defined Northwestern experience should follow each student from matriculation to commencement to membership in our alumni community, emphasizing student wellness and encouraging thoughtful experimentation. Northwestern has the foundation to create an unrivaled student experience, drawing on a rare mix of schools and colleges that will appeal to highly motivated students.

Enhance excellence in financial and executive management

The President must set a tone of trust, transparency, and operational excellence, ensuring that budgets, investment priorities, infrastructure, and support services are clearly aligned with institutional mission, vision, and values. Northwestern is in a peer group of extremely well-resourced institutions that are making big bets on the future. The President must be willing to make difficult decisions and prioritize the allocation of finite resources. The University must make strategic choices and use its resource base to maximum impact. Wherever possible, the University must deploy resources where they will support faculty, students, and staff, build on institutional strengths, and enhance the reputation of the University.

Amplify Northwestern's global impact

Northwestern is a private institution that spans three major campuses in Evanston, downtown Chicago, and Qatar. The University strives to make a profound public and social impact. The next President has the opportunity to continue to define Northwestern's presence in the global landscape by developing impactful international collaborations. There is an opportunity to be more systematic in building international relationships and creating a uniquely Northwestern approach in our global strategy.



Qualifications and Traits

- **Track record of significant and successful executive leadership:** Demonstrated judgment to lead a large and complex enterprise; the courage to set clear priorities, make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions, and execute ambitious and strategic resource management; ability to sustain and build an effective leadership team; a record of effectively anticipating and responding to the critical and disruptive academic, political, technological, and business forces, nationally and internationally, facing higher education.
- **Distinguished scholar and demonstrated excellence in advancing academic and research achievement:** Personal record of distinguished scholarly research; track record of recruiting and retaining world class faculty; wide-ranging intellectual curiosity to cultivate collaboration across the full range of academic disciplines; experience in expanding and strengthening graduate and postdoctoral education and funding for the research enterprise.
- **Genuine commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion:** A record of creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community; the ability to create, nurture, and lead a supportive culture and climate for faculty, staff, and students; willingness to listen and respond effectively to diverse viewpoints throughout the community. Ability to build trust among all stakeholders by engaging diverse perspectives in decision making.
- **Track record of building an ecosystem that engages the full community around a shared vision:** A personal commitment to advancing and communicating the institutional mission and values and cultivating the development of an institutional-wide vision; demonstrated advocacy and effective actions for equitable access and the success, safety, and support of all stakeholders: faculty, students, staff, alumni, and community members.
- **Collaborative and transparent leadership style:** Experience working successfully in an academic shared governance environment; a record of inclusive decision-making; respect for the views of others and appreciation for open inquiry, freedom of speech, and diversity of thought.
- **Skilled communicator, relationship-builder, and fundraiser:** An authentic listener and an inspiring communicator who can connect with the community on a personal level and align multiple constituencies behind a common vision; the ability to energize alumni and partners to support the University; the ability to serve as a public leader in higher education and an advocate for its contributions to society. Proven fundraiser who will embrace telling Northwestern's story, cultivating relationships, and inspiring transformational gifts.
- **Understanding of and commitment to the role of collegiate athletics:** Continued support for student athletes and Athletics' role in enriching a full university community; versed in challenges facing collegiate athletics, recent court decisions, and other emerging issues.



- **Demonstrated emotional intelligence and empathy:** Evidence of self-awareness, humility, and the willingness to hear and respond to feedback.
- **Demonstrated energy, stamina, and passion:** The modern research university is an incredibly complex organization to lead, therefore the next President should be someone with very high energy and stamina, and a passion to lead and enhance our research institution.
- **Strong moral compass and uncompromising integrity:** A record of ethical leadership in responding to institutional challenges or crises; demonstrated commitment to the highest ethical standard.



To Apply

Northwestern University has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications should be sent in confidence to:

Isaacson, Miller

www.imsearch.com/8024

John Isaacson, Chair

Cati Mitchell-Crossley, Partner

John Muckle, Partner

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