Position Specification

Wayne State University
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Russell Reynolds ASSOCIATES

Wayne State University

Located in Midtown Detroit, Wayne State University was established in 1868 and has grown into one of the nation's premier urban research universities. Wayne State was originally founded as the Detroit Medical College and has since evolved into a major, Carnegie R1 institution and Michigan's only public urban research university.

Wayne State's mission emphasizes access to a high-quality education, advancement of knowledge through research, and community engagement. The University is strongly committed to educational access, urban revitalization, and the recruitment and graduation of a diverse student body. Its distinctive mission brings together access and opportunity, Carnegie R1 research excellence, and deep community engagement. Wayne State aspires to be the nation's premier urban public research university, demonstrating that broad access to opportunity, academic and research excellence, and deep community engagement are mutually reinforcing strengths. Wayne State is committed not only to opening doors for students, including those who are the first in their families to attend college, but also to helping them persist, graduate, and achieve meaningful career and life outcomes.

Wayne State is home to more than 24,000 students and is the third largest among Michigan's 15 public universities and one of the 50 largest in the nation. The University offers a vibrant student life with over 400 student organizations, NCAA Division II athletics (competing as the Warriors), student media, Greek life, and cultural events. The students at Wayne State experience an academically rigorous, community-centered university and benefit from learning experiences through internships, externships, clinics, and other opportunities to connect with people and institutions throughout the city of Detroit and beyond.

Wayne State is among Detroit's largest employers, with more than 7,000 regular employees and more than 1,700 student employees. The University has 2,396 faculty members — of whom 1,469 are full-time — and nearly 4,700 staff members. Approximately two-thirds of faculty and staff are represented by one of the 12 unions on campus. Wayne State has over 300,000 alumni spread throughout the country and the world, of whom about 75% live in Michigan.

University Leadership

Richard A. Bierschbach was elected the 14th President of Wayne State University by the Board of Governors on February 24, 2026. Since he was appointed interim President in September 2025, Bierschbach has ensured progress, stability, and continued growth and innovation. Under his leadership, Wayne State launched its Institute for AI and Data Science, accelerated advancement of its new Grand Challenges research initiative, and celebrated strong, continued enrollment and record years for both fundraising and research expenditures. Bierschbach has been a member of the Wayne State community for nine years and previously served as dean of Wayne State Law School, where he led the school through a period of unprecedented growth and institutional transformation.

Dr. Christina L Bloebaum assumed the role of Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs in August 2026. As provost, Dr. Bloebaum is the chief academic officer and is responsible for all faculty affairs, matters concerning the instructional mission of the University, student performance and retention, and academic personnel and decisions, among other duties.

Academics and Research

Wayne State offers over 375 academic programs through 13 schools and colleges:

- Mike Ilitch School of Business
- College of Education
- James and Patricia Anderson College of Engineering
- College of Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts
- Graduate School
- Irvin D. Reid Honors College
- School of Information Sciences
- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Law School
- School of Medicine
- College of Nursing
- Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
- School of Public Health (emerging)
- School of Social Work

The University approved the launch of the emerging School of Public Health, merging public health bachelor's degree programming from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Master's in Public Health from the School of Medicine, and community health programming from the College of Education. The current goal is to achieve accreditation in spring 2030.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education considers Wayne State an R1 Doctoral University, placing it among the nation's top research universities. The University has several important research centers and is recognized for its research across the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences and mathematics, as well as in interdisciplinary fields such as health sciences, urban studies, and advanced automotive and manufacturing technologies. Wayne State had total research expenditures of $291.7 million in the 2024 academic year, an increase of 16% from the previous year; it most recently ranked among the top 75 public research institutions in the country. Wayne State plays a key role in the Research Universities for Michigan (RU4M), a collaborative effort to drive innovation and economic development in the state and generate 90% of the state's research. Underscoring the University's commitment to access, *U.S. News and World Report* ranks Wayne State No. 1 in Michigan and No. 57 in the country for social mobility. The University's combination of R1 activity, community engagement, and commitment to access for a diverse undergraduate, graduate, and professional student body defines its identity and differentiates it from many other major public research universities across the country.

More detailed information and data about Wayne State can be found in the University's Living Fact Book.

Strategic Plan

Wayne State University's refreshed strategic plan, *Our Moment Is Now*, was adopted in 2026 to build on the strong foundation established by previous strategic plan, *Our Moment in Time*, while sharpening the University's focus for the years ahead. Developed through a collaborative, year-long process involving faculty, staff, students, and University leadership, the plan provides a clear framework for sustaining institutional momentum through three core strategic priorities supported by cross-cutting themes that emphasize collaboration, accountability, and measurable outcomes. It reinforces Wayne State's commitment to advancing student success, research excellence, community impact, and operational effectiveness in support of its mission as a leading public urban research university.

The University's strategic priorities are supported by continued investment in its campus infrastructure and research enterprise. Recent and ongoing capital projects include the new fieldhouse, the Hilberry Gateway Performance Complex, the comprehensive renovation of M. Roy Wilson State Hall, the Humanities Commons, construction of the new health sciences research building scheduled to open in 2028, and planning for a new Law School classroom building. Together, these investments strengthen Wayne State's capacity to deliver an exceptional student experience, expand research and innovation, and enhance its engagement with the city of Detroit and beyond.

Location

Detroit is a city of extraordinary energy, reinvention, and opportunity. Significant public and private investment continues to reshape its downtown, neighborhoods, riverfront, and innovation economy, creating an exciting environment in which to live, work, and lead. Wayne State's 200-acre urban campus is located in the heart of Midtown Detroit—one of the nation's fastest-growing neighborhoods and a vibrant cultural hub that draws over 2.5 million visitors annually. Just steps from world-renowned institutions such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Public Library, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the campus blends historic architecture with cutting-edge facilities. Detroit's rich musical legacy—home to Motown, Aretha Franklin, and Eminem—continues to thrive through live music venues and festivals like the Detroit Jazz Festival. As a global city on an international border, Detroit is a center of innovation and industry, housing major health care systems, multinational corporations, and a dynamic startup and tech scene. With its celebrated arts scenes, diverse communities, and nationally acclaimed riverfront, Detroit offers an energetic, welcoming environment for leaders ready to shape the future. Detroit's renewed investment and revitalized downtown add to its appeal, with professional football, baseball, basketball, and hockey at Ford Field, Comerica Park, and Little Caesars Arena just minutes from campus. The city's riverfront, restaurants, and entertainment districts offer exceptional opportunities to enjoy life beyond the University.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the largest and most diverse of Wayne State's 13 schools and colleges with 20 departments, five institutes and centers, and more than 120 programs. The College is home to 1,176 employees, 556 of whom are faculty (370 full-time and 186 part-time), as well as 6,960 undergraduates and 1,025 graduate students (one-third of the University's total enrollment) across 13 buildings in Midtown Detroit. In addition, the College houses several public-facing units including one planetarium, three museums (Grosscup Museum of Anthropology, Lowrey Mineral Museum, and Von Berg Museum of Natural History), four professionally accredited and licensed clinics (Speech and Language Clinic, Audiology Clinic, Psychology Clinic, and Dietetics Clinic), and a weather station. It is a very large, complex, locally anchored, and globally engaged college in the context of Detroit's dynamic culture.

CLAS departments and programs offer broad-based undergraduate and graduate instruction, including almost all of the general education and pre-professional curricula at the University. CLAS offers more than 40 graduate programs and awards half of Wayne State's doctoral degrees. As the academic foundation of Wayne State University, CLAS plays a defining role in realizing the University's ambition to become the nation's premier urban public research institution committed to access and excellence. Through its breadth of disciplines, foundational undergraduate education, graduate and doctoral programs, research enterprise, and deep connections to Detroit, the College has an extraordinary opportunity to shape the University's future and extend its impact nationally.

Over the past eight years, CLAS has demonstrated remarkable resilience and innovation in growing enrollment despite demographic challenges and a declining population of traditional-aged college students. Particular attention has been paid to first-to-second-year retention, increasing graduation rates, and expanding master's programs for professional and adult learners. CLAS's enrollment growth has outpaced that of the University as a whole; recent enrollment growth has resulted from the creation of an in-prison education program with Macomb Correctional Facility, dual degree programs, reduced tuition models, and accelerated master's programs. CLAS advocates for both inclusive excellence and recruitment through bridge programming with local afterschool, high school, and camp programs as well as transfer and non-traditional adult learners including veterans and formerly incarcerated individuals.

CLAS has made strong progress in retention and graduation, again outpacing the University, with a first-to-second-year retention rate of 82%, a 6-year graduation rate of 71%, and a 4-year graduation rate near 64%. Since 2023, CLAS has ensured that 100% of undergraduates have access to an internship and/or undergraduate research experience. In 2024, the College adopted a tuition-free, college-wide Undergraduate Research Portfolio Program,

which provides students with another alternative opportunity to engage in research, ultimately reflected on their transcript.

The College places second in the University in research funding after the School of Medicine, securing on average nearly $22 million a year. CLAS also supports its faculty by funding seed research projects and an annual grant writing proposal workshop as a way of investing in the longer-term growth of successful externally-funded research. 63 faculty participated in the annual workshop in its seventh year, led by peers in the College's substantive areas of the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences. 226 proposals were submitted post-workshop, and 57 grants were awarded generating nearly $20 million in external grants. In addition, CLAS secured philanthropic funds to create the Humanities Commons for students and faculty alike to workshop projects and share activities in the humanities, offering parity to activities in the STEM building.

According to Academic Analytics, CLAS's Scholarly Research Index (SRI) in the Physical Sciences is in the 82nd percentile among a comparison group of approximately 350 universities across the United States. CLAS's SRI in the Social Sciences is in the 72nd percentile; in the Humanities and Life Sciences, CLAS's SRI is above the 50th percentile. The College has recruited 15 faculty members through a Mellon-supported initiative focused on strengthening Black Studies across the humanities and social sciences. These faculty contribute to teaching, scholarship, and interdisciplinary engagement, further connecting the College's academic strengths with the history, culture, and communities of Detroit.

CLAS has infused civic and community engagement across the College, reminding Southeast Michigan of its dedication to local communities as an anchor institution. CLAS has created nearly 200 partnerships and 50 MOUs with: Detroit Public Schools; neighboring cultural institutions including the Michigan Science Center, Detroit Institute of Arts, and Detroit Historical Society; Michigan Department of Corrections; Heidelberg Project outdoor art installation; and municipal governments, among others.

The College is home to a distinctive set of nationally visible programs that connect scholarship, public engagement, and emerging fields. These include the Saperstein Summer Symposium in Peace and Conflict Studies, supported by a $5 million gift, and the Department of Sociology's Prison Education Program at the Macomb Correctional Facility. CLAS also demonstrates leadership in environmental science and sustainability through RCE Detroit-Windsor. Officially acknowledged by the United Nations, this joint effort of Wayne State University and the University of Windsor focuses on the U.N. sustainable development goals addressing climate change, economic and health disparities, and social inequity to create a more sustainable future for the two communities that share an international border.

A comprehensive list of CLAS program offerings is available here, and the most recent CLAS strategic plan is available here.

Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences reports to Dr. Christina L. Bloebaum, the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Dean is the chief academic and administrative leader for the College and serves as a key member of the University's leadership team. The next Dean will have an exceptional opportunity to build upon the College's substantial strengths and help shape its next chapter of academic distinction, research excellence, innovation, and community impact. Working collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, and University leadership, the dean will advance a compelling vision that strengthens CLAS's national reputation, expands opportunities for students, and positions the College as a driving force in Wayne State's future. The dean will provide leadership across academic affairs, faculty recruitment and development, research, financial management, strategic planning, and institutional advancement. Under the current organizational structure, the following people report directly to the Dean:

- Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies
- Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies
- Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs and Personnel
- Senior Director, Business Affairs
- Senior Director, Philanthropy and Alumni Relations (dual reporting)
- Director, Human Resources (dual reporting)
- Associate Director, Student Services
- Associate Director, Research Administration
- Associate Director, Marketing & Communications
- 20 department chairs
- Senior Executive Assistant to the Dean

Key Priorities (not in rank order):

- **Provide visionary leadership to advance the College's academic excellence, innovation, and national distinction:** The next dean will work collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, and University leadership to develop and advance a compelling vision for the future of CLAS. Building on the College's strengths across the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences, the dean will identify opportunities to elevate academic quality, expand interdisciplinary collaboration, strengthen research and scholarship, and enhance the College's national reputation. The dean will champion the essential role of the liberal arts and sciences in preparing students not only for successful careers, but also for critical thinking, lifelong learning, informed citizenship, and leadership in a rapidly changing world.
- **Ensure a sustainable financial future for the College:** The next dean will be responsible for maintaining and improving the financial health of the College by growing undergraduate and graduate enrollments and actively raising funds. Building on CLAS's significant success in enrollment growth, the next dean will have opportunities to explore innovative approaches to undergraduate and graduate enrollment, including new academic offerings, flexible delivery models, and online education where academically appropriate and financially sustainable. The University is now in the silent phase of a $1 billion campaign; the official launch will take place in April 2027. Typically, CLAS raises approximately $10 million a year, and the next dean will continue to drive growth in this area. The dean will be supported in this effort by a College-based development lead who oversees a staff of eight. Growth in financial resources will create opportunities for strategic investment in faculty and staff, innovative academic programs, research infrastructure, and facilities, strengthening the College's ability to advance its mission and achieve long-term financial sustainability.
- **Grow annual research expenditures and research awards**: The College places second in the University in research funding after the School of Medicine, securing on average nearly $22 million a year. Building on this strong foundation, the next dean will have a significant opportunity to accelerate research growth, expand the College's national visibility, and strengthen its contributions to Wayne State's R1 research mission. The dean will champion research and scholarship across the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences, while fostering interdisciplinary and cross-school collaboration and supporting faculty in pursuing larger, multidisciplinary grants. In addition to supporting faculty to submit proposals to federal agencies, the next dean will encourage more proposals to be submitted to corporations and foundations. CLAS currently employs a team of five grants management staff.
- **Create strategies to strengthen undergraduate and graduate education, including promoting undergraduate student success**: As Wayne State's largest college and the academic home of much of its undergraduate education, CLAS is uniquely positioned to advance the University's commitment to access, student success, and social mobility. The next dean will champion innovative, rigorous, and engaging educational experiences that help students enter, persist, graduate, and thrive. This includes strengthening interdisciplinary learning, removing unnecessary barriers to student progress, expanding experiential learning and career-connected opportunities, and preparing students to succeed in a rapidly changing world. It will be important to embed in the curriculum how and when to use artificial intelligence responsibly. Of

particular importance is the need to focus on undergraduate student success. While CLAS retention rates have trended upward, more can be done. Many first-generation students do not know how to navigate the University beyond attending classes. In addition, through academic program review, some curriculum barriers that impede student progress have been identified. CLAS seeks to increase undergraduate participation in co-curricular student activities, as these are known best practices to support student retention and completion. The dean will also champion excellence in graduate and doctoral education, strengthening doctoral student recruitment, mentoring, research opportunities, and pathways to successful academic and professional careers. Growing the College's research enterprise will be essential to expanding opportunities for doctoral students and sustaining nationally competitive graduate programs.

- **Continue to build community-engaged partnerships**: CLAS can gain substantial strategic value from deep, sustained relationships with local and regional industry and non-profit organizations. Such relationships will help to create a stronger talent pipeline, increase research funding and sponsored research, accelerate technology commercialization, keep academic programs relevant, provide real-world problems for students, strengthen the College's regional economic development role, improve access to expensive technology and facilities, create executive and professional education opportunities, and build philanthropic support. While CLAS has created nearly 200 partnerships and 50 MOUs with organizations in the surrounding area, continued efforts are needed.

Specific Responsibilities:

Executive Leadership: Provide leadership in establishing the College's strategic objectives and develop and manage all resources essential to the achievement of these objectives. Maintain a leadership team capable of supporting and implementing the College's vision and strategies. Work with faculty, academic leadership, and University leadership in pursuit of broader institutional goals.

Academic Leadership: Serve as a collaborative and decisive leader who empowers others and has an established record of effectively engaging, convening, and supporting diverse disciplines. Support, enhance, and promote faculty research, teaching excellence, and service. Promote a culture of transparency and shared governance. Advocate and lead active collaborations among other Wayne State units and external partners. Recruit and retain top faculty and staff who will further the College's research and academic mission and attain high standards of excellence. Evaluate faculty for appointment, tenure, and promotion. Enhance the student experience by fostering excellence in programs and classroom teaching.

Fundraising: Enthusiastically engage in cultivating and soliciting individual donors, foundations, and corporations to meet the needs of the College and the goals set in the upcoming campaign.

Financial Management: Ensure a strong financial future for the College through revenue growth and alignment with costs. Manage the College's financial resources through effective management of the annual operating budget, long-term financial planning, and harnessing strategic opportunities for revenue growth. Oversee College-wide resource acquisition and utilization.

Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships: Enhance administrative, academic, and research relationships with other entities internal and external to Wayne State. Leverage and enhance relationships through effective communication with internal and external constituencies, including staff, local, regional, and national organizations/associations, members of senior leadership, and academic communities.

Professional Qualifications:

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences seeks the following experience and attributes in the next Dean:

Visionary Leadership: A community-driven culture builder with an established record of strong, collaborative, and forward-looking leadership. Demonstrated success building programs and/or organizations. Experience formulating and articulating a shared vision, persuading a wide range of audiences of its value, and engaging others in its implementation. Success in recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty and staff. Ability to motivate and inspire others to strive continually for academic excellence. A history of developing and promoting shared governance between faculty and administration. Experience in a union environment, while not required, is a plus.

Appreciation of Academic Mission: Significant administrative and management experience, ideally within a research-1 university and/or urban campus environment. Genuine commitment to and support of teaching, scholarship, and research across all disciplines represented within CLAS. Deep understanding of the importance of knowledge production and scholarship, as well as the importance of providing students with the highest quality educational experience. Familiarity with appointment, promotion, and tenure procedures. Evidence of interdisciplinary collaboration. The strongest candidates will understand what makes Wayne State University unique and will want to be part of that environment.

Understanding of the Evolving Academic and Societal Landscape: A comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of liberal arts and sciences education and research, including emerging opportunities and challenges, and the ability to position the College for continued academic excellence, innovation, and national distinction. Demonstrated ability to anticipate and respond to the evolution of academic fields and disciplines in light of societal, cultural, and technological changes, shifting industry priorities, and emerging workforce development needs. Ability to articulate with conviction the enduring and evolving value of a liberal arts and sciences education within an R1 research university.

Focus on Students: Genuine understanding of the teaching mission and the importance of providing undergraduate and graduate students with the highest quality education. Passion for the access mission of Wayne State and for facilitating student success. Must value the importance of the student experience. Authentic appreciation for students of all types.

Fundraising Ability: Appetite and aptitude to engage in fundraising efforts for the College and participate collaboratively in fundraising efforts for the University. Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with various constituents, including alumni, parents, corporate, foundation, and community partners, among others.

Financial Management Experience: A distinguished record of operational leadership demonstrating excellence, growth, and financial effectiveness. Demonstrated experience in fiscal management.

Academic Qualifications: Impressive academic credentials, including a strong record of success in research and a passion for academic excellence. Scholarly accomplishments in one of the disciplines represented in the College. Credentials for appointment at Full Professor level, including a Ph.D.

Personal Qualities: The highest standards of personal and academic integrity and ethical and professional conduct. High emotional intelligence. Strong interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills, with a focus on openness and transparency. Innovative and creative problem-solver, with a willingness to take risks. Ability to have challenging conversations and make difficult decisions while simultaneously fostering a collegial and respectful work and educational environment. Entrepreneurial mindset. The strongest candidates will be collaborative, kind, and optimistic, demonstrating genuine respect for others and the perspectives they bring.

Nomination and Application Process

Inquiries, nominations, and applications are invited. Interested candidates should submit confidentially, in electronic form (Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF files preferred), curriculum vitae and letter of interest to: WayneState.CLAS@russellreynolds.com.

Though all materials received will be reviewed, please submit materials by January 4 for priority consideration.

All materials and inquiries will be held in strict confidence until the final stages of the search, at which time the express permission of the finalists will be obtained before making their candidacy public.

Wayne State University is an equal opportunity employer. No person will be discriminated against in employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status, arrest record, height, weight, sexual orientation, qualified Vietnam era veterans, qualified special disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, and other protected veterans, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal or state law.

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