



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Position Specification

Wayne State University
Dean, Law School

Private and Confidential

Russell Reynolds ASSOCIATES

Wayne State University seeks a dean to lead the Law School. Building upon its longstanding reputation for academic excellence, innovation, and public service, Wayne Law offers its next Dean a rare opportunity to shape the future of one of the country's leading urban public law schools, strengthening its impact in Detroit, across Michigan, and throughout the legal profession. At a time when higher education and the legal profession are undergoing profound change, this is an opportunity for an imaginative, collaborative leader to help define what a leading public law school can become. With Detroit's continued transformation, the strength of a major urban research university, and a deep commitment to access and excellence, Wayne Law offers an exceptional platform for innovation and impact.

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 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 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
- School of Public Health (Emerging)
- Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
- School of Social Work

The University approved the launch of the emerging School of Public Health, merging public health bachelor's degree programming from CLAS, 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 in the health sciences, basic sciences such as chemistry, physics, and psychology, urban studies, and cutting-edge 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 its commitment to access, U.S. News also ranks Wayne State No. 1 in Michigan and No. 62 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, 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.

The Law School

Located in the heart of Detroit, Wayne State University Law School is a well-respected public law school dedicated to expanding access to legal education, advancing academic excellence, and preparing lawyers who lead with purpose. For nearly a century, Wayne Law has served as a gateway to opportunity, educating generations of attorneys, judges, public servants, business leaders, and advocates who have shaped the legal landscape of Michigan and beyond. Guided by a mission rooted in access, affordability, and public service, the Law School combines rigorous legal scholarship with an unwavering commitment to community impact.

Detroit is Wayne Law's defining strength. More than its location, the city serves as an extension of the classroom, offering unparalleled opportunities for experiential learning, civic engagement, and legal practice. A city experiencing remarkable growth and national momentum, Detroit provides students and faculty with direct access to major law firms, corporations, courts, government agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations, all within minutes of campus. Rich in history, culture, and entrepreneurial energy, Detroit offers a uniquely dynamic environment for preparing lawyers equipped to address society's most pressing legal and public policy challenges. Continued investment in Detroit's downtown, neighborhoods, and riverfront makes this an especially exciting time to lead a law school deeply connected to the city's future.

Wayne Law is ranked in the top 65 law schools in the nation by U.S. News & World Report and number 2 in Michigan. The School is recognized for delivering exceptional value and outcomes, as it combines affordability with academic rigor, consistently achieving strong bar passage rates and outstanding employment outcomes. As Michigan's most affordable law, Wayne Law is a destination for first-generation students, working professionals, and individuals seeking flexible pathways into the legal profession. The School is distinguished by a collaborative, student-centered culture where faculty, staff, and students share a deep commitment to each other's success.

The Law School's academic portfolio continues to evolve to meet the changing demands of the legal profession. In addition to its full and part-time J.D. programs, Wayne Law offers thriving graduate and undergraduate legal education programs, including a Bachelor of Arts in Law, a Master of Laws (LL.M.), and a Master of Studies in Law (M.S.L.). Students benefit from an innovative curriculum that integrates doctrinal instruction with experiential learning through clinics, externships, advocacy competitions, and practical skills training. Nationally recognized centers, including the **Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights**, the **Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy**, and the emerging **Access to Justice Center**, provide distinctive opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarship, public engagement, and policy leadership that are uncommon among law schools.

Expanding academic programs, strong institutional support, sound financial stewardship, and significant investments in new facilities, including $30 million from the state of Michigan slated for a new classroom building, have positioned the School for continued growth and national prominence. The School is in the first part of a two-phase project that will begin with a new approximately $46 million plan to rebuild the 1996 Classroom Building that will break ground in Fall 2027 and will connect the entire law complex into a seamless whole. Phase two of the School's capital plan will include renovations and enhancements to the remaining buildings in the coming years.

Wayne Law's influence extends well beyond its campus through a powerful and highly engaged alumni network. More than 12,000 graduates serve as leaders throughout Michigan and across the nation, holding prominent positions in government, the judiciary, private practice, business, higher education, and public interest organizations. A significant percentage of graduates remain in Michigan, reinforcing Wayne Law's reputation as one of the state's most influential contributors to the legal profession and public life.

The Role

The Dean serves as the chief academic and administrative officer of Wayne State University Law School, providing strategic leadership to advance the School's mission. Reporting to the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and working closely with University leadership, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the broader legal community, the Dean is responsible for shaping the School's strategic direction. The Dean will work closely with fellow deans, vice provosts, and other university partners to advance shared academic priorities.

The next Dean will lead during a period of significant transformation in higher education and the legal profession. Changing student expectations, affordability and financial pressures, technological disruption, and evolving approaches to legal practice will require an agile leader who sees opportunities to innovate while working collaboratively with faculty and staff.

Overseeing academic programs, enrollment, faculty affairs, student success, operations, communications, budget and finance, advancement, and external relations, the Dean leads an accomplished leadership team and works collaboratively with faculty and staff to ensure Wayne Law continues to distinguish itself as one of the nation's premier public law schools. As the School enters a period of growth and transformation, including a significant facilities expansion, continued programmatic innovation, and a rapidly evolving legal education landscape, the Dean will build upon Wayne Law's momentum while positioning the School for continued national prominence.

As a member of the University's academic leadership team, the Dean will serve as an advocate for the Law School while fostering interdisciplinary collaboration across Wayne State University. The Dean will also represent Wayne Law throughout Detroit, the State of Michigan, and the national legal community, strengthening partnerships that enhance the School's impact and visibility.

Key Priorities

- **Develop and articulate a compelling strategic vision** that builds upon Wayne Law's strengths, reinforces its identity as a premier public law school, and positions the School for continued success. This vision should be forward-thinking, adaptable, and responsive to the changing needs of students, the legal profession, and higher education.
- **Lead a comprehensive fundraising strategy** to secure philanthropic support for the next phase of the Law School's new facilities, student scholarships, faculty excellence, and strategic initiatives.
- **Successfully oversee the Law School's transformational facilities project**, ensuring the new academic spaces enhance teaching, learning, collaboration, and community while advancing the long-term campus master plan. The Dean will oversee the completion of a new building and the subsequent renovations.
- **Elevate the visibility, reputation, and national profile of Wayne Law** by communicating a compelling institutional narrative, showcasing faculty scholarship, innovative academic programs, and the School's distinctive contributions to legal education and public service.
- **Strengthen Wayne Law's connection to Detroit** by cultivating meaningful partnerships with the legal profession, government, business leaders, community organizations, alumni, and civic institutions, leveraging the city's unique assets as a living classroom for legal education and public impact.
- **Foster a collaborative, transparent, and inclusive culture** that strengthens relationships among faculty, staff, students, and alumni, promotes shared governance, and creates an environment where every member of the community feels valued and empowered to contribute. The Dean will lead with empathy, integrity, and respect, engaging faculty and staff meaningfully in decisions consistent with shared governance.

- **Advance the Law School's dual commitment to teaching and research excellence** by continuing a culture of excellence and supporting, fostering, and celebrating strong and high-quality scholarship, innovative and effective pedagogical methods.
- **Enhance the student experience** by advancing student success, expanding support services, strengthening bar exam and career preparation, building public interest pathways, improving accessibility, and ensuring graduates are prepared for the bar admissions process and the evolving legal profession.
- **Lead innovation in legal education** by embracing new modes of delivery of legal education (including potentially online delivery) and supporting new academic programs, interdisciplinary collaboration, and experiential learning, particularly in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, technology, and alternative pathways into the legal profession. Working with faculty and staff, the Dean will assess and adapt existing offerings and develop new programs and credentials that respond to emerging needs, including the implications of artificial intelligence for legal education and practice. The Dean will leverage Wayne State's strengths in fields such as health, business, engineering, and public policy to expand interdisciplinary learning and scholarship.
- **Recruit, support, and retain an outstanding and diverse faculty and staff**, while fostering a culture of academic excellence, innovation, collegiality, and continuous professional development.
- **Ensure the Law School's long-term financial sustainability** through sound fiscal stewardship, strategic resource allocation, enrollment growth and other revenue-generation strategies, and effective partnership with University leadership. Decisions should be informed by reliable data, scenario analysis, and an understanding of the financial and academic implications of alternative approaches.

Candidate Profile

The Search Committee seeks candidates with the following experience, abilities, and professional and personal attributes:

Executive Leadership

The next Dean will be an accomplished and collaborative executive with demonstrated success leading complex academic organizations through periods of growth and change. The successful candidate will possess the strategic perspective, sound judgment, and organizational leadership necessary to articulate a compelling vision, build consensus, and successfully execute ambitious institutional priorities. They will have experience managing multiple complex initiatives simultaneously while balancing strategic opportunities with operational realities.

Academic Leadership & Scholarly Credibility

Candidates should possess a J.D. degree and scholarly accomplishments that merit appointment as a tenured full professor. The Dean will understand and value the full breadth of legal education, including doctrinal instruction, experiential learning, clinical education, interdisciplinary programs, centers and institutes, and legal scholarship. Experience as a dean, associate dean, or other senior academic leader is strongly preferred.

Fundraising & External Relations

The successful candidate will bring demonstrated success in fundraising, relationship development, and external engagement. They will be an accomplished ambassador capable of inspiring philanthropic investment while cultivating strong partnerships with alumni, donors, the bench and bar, corporations, foundations, government leaders, and the broader legal community. Experience leading or supporting major capital campaigns is highly desirable.

Strategic Vision & Innovation

The Dean will be a creative, entrepreneurial, and forward-looking leader who understands the rapidly changing landscape of legal education. They will possess the ability to anticipate emerging trends, embrace innovation, and develop strategies that strengthen Wayne State Law's competitive position while preserving its commitment to academic excellence, access, and public service. The successful candidate will demonstrate intellectual curiosity,

creativity, adaptability, and the ability to lead through uncertainty, challenge conventional approaches when appropriate, and translate promising ideas into meaningful results.

Community Engagement

Candidates should demonstrate a genuine appreciation for Wayne State Law's unique role within Detroit and embrace the opportunity to build meaningful relationships throughout the city and state. The Dean will recognize Detroit as one of the School's defining strengths and actively leverage partnerships that enrich student learning, scholarship, research, and community impact.

Administrative & Financial Leadership

The successful candidate will possess strong operational and financial management experience, including budgeting, strategic planning, enrollment management, and organizational leadership. They will have experience overseeing complex organizations, allocating resources strategically, managing change effectively, and successfully delivering large institutional initiatives. The Dean must be able to use data to inform decisions, understand financial and enrollment models and their assumptions, and work effectively with experts to evaluate scenarios, tradeoffs, and long-term implications.

Collaborative Leadership & Shared Governance

The Dean will be an approachable, visible, and highly collaborative leader who values shared governance and fosters open communication across the School. The Dean will partner with the established unions and demonstrate the ability to build trust with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and University leadership by listening thoughtfully, engaging diverse perspectives, making principled decisions, and communicating transparently. The successful candidate will demonstrate respect for meaningful faculty and staff participation in shaping change.

Commitment to Students, Diversity & Inclusion

Candidates should demonstrate a deep commitment to student success, access, affordability, and educational opportunity. The Dean will champion an inclusive and welcoming environment that values diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences while strengthening support for first-generation students, public interest pathways, and initiatives that promote belonging and equitable opportunity across the Law School community.

Personal Qualities

The ideal candidate will be a visionary, authentic, and relationship-oriented leader with exceptional interpersonal and communication skills. They will possess high emotional intelligence, integrity, resilience, political acumen, intellectual curiosity, and the courage to lead through change. The next Dean will be visible, approachable, decisive, and inspiring—someone who brings people together around a shared vision while honoring Wayne Law's longstanding commitment to academic excellence, public service, and the City of Detroit. The Dean will demonstrate kindness, empathy, ethical leadership, and a genuine respect for others, including when navigating difficult decisions. The successful candidate will have the confidence to make difficult decisions, the humility to listen and learn, and the interpersonal skills to build trust while leading meaningful change.

Nomination and Application Procedure

Wayne State University invites inquiries, nominations, and applications for the position of Dean of the Law School. Interested candidates should confidentially submit a curriculum vitae and letter of interest (PDF files preferred) to WayneState.Law@russellreynolds.com.

For full consideration, materials should be received as soon as possible and preferably by December 15, 2026.

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