Vice President for Student Life

Leadership Profile

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October 2019

This Leadership Profile is intended to provide information about the University of Michigan and the position of vice president for student life. It is designed to assist qualified individuals in assessing their interest.
The Opportunity

The University of Michigan (U-M), the state’s public flagship university and one of the world’s preeminent research universities, invites inquiries, nominations and applications for the position of vice president for student life to succeed the retiring incumbent.

Now operating in the beginning of its third century, U-M continues its mission to develop leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future. Currently, the main campus in Ann Arbor has an enrollment of 46,000 students, about a third of whom are in graduate and professional studies. U-M is consistently ranked among the top institutions of higher education globally with 263 degree programs, a 97 percent first-year student retention rate and 102 graduate programs ranked in the top 10 nationally.

The vice president for student life is a position of broad leadership for the Ann Arbor campus, serving as an executive officer reporting to the University’s president. The role serves as the point person on student life and oversees the many offices and service functions that support students’ education, needs and aspirations beyond the classroom.

The University of Michigan: An Overview

The University of Michigan is one of the great public research universities in the nation and the world. Since the nineteenth century, it has served as a national model of a complex, diverse and comprehensive public institution of higher learning that supports excellence in research, provides outstanding undergraduate, graduate and professional education and demonstrates commitment to public service and engagement.

The university was chartered in 1817 by the Michigan territorial legislature and was initially located in Detroit. In 1837, after Michigan had been admitted to the Union, the State of Michigan renewed the charter and relocated the university to Ann Arbor, where classes were first held in 1841. Today, the main campus is located in Ann Arbor, 35 miles west of Detroit, with regional campuses located in the cities of Dearborn and Flint. In 2017, the university held a year-long celebration of its bicentennial marked with special curricular offerings, major academic colloquia and commemorative arts performances and festivals.

The university is governed by the Regents of the university, consisting of eight members elected at large in the biennial state elections, and the president of the university, who serves as an ex officio member. The Regents serve without compensation for overlapping terms of eight years. According to the Michigan Constitution of 1963, the Regents are responsible for “general supervision” of the institution and “the control and direction of all expenditures from the institution’s funds.” The Regents meet periodically in formal public sessions as well as in informal sessions. The vice president for student life attends all formal public sessions of the Regents, and relevant informal sessions, and works closely with the Regents throughout the year on a broad range of issues within the scope of their responsibilities.

Since 2014, the university has been led by president Mark S. Schlissel. Dr. Schlissel, a physician scientist, is also Professor of Microbiology and Immunology and Professor of Internal Medicine in the Medical School and Professor of Cell and Development Biology in U-M’s College of
Literature, Science and the Arts. In his first five years at U-M his major focus has been advancing academic excellence at U-M through large scale multi-disciplinary efforts that leverage the academic breadth of the campus; advancing diversity, equity and inclusion; increasing access and affordability to a Michigan education; and promoting public engagement and service. Prior to becoming Michigan’s 14th president, Dr. Schlissel was provost at Brown university and Professor of Biochemistry and dean for the biological sciences at University of California-Berkeley.

Michigan’s position of excellence in higher education rests on the outstanding scholarly and creative contributions of its faculty and on the intellectual quality, vitality and passion of its students — undergraduate, graduate and professional. Its 19 schools and colleges, as well as its centers, institutes and libraries are nationally and internationally recognized. The University of Michigan is a founding member of the Association of American Universities (AAU).

The university sustains top programs in the arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and engineering, and in all of the major professional schools. It is the home of one of the largest academic medical centers in the world. The university is also recognized for its outstanding interdisciplinary institutes and centers, such as the Institute for Social Research, the Life Sciences Institute and the Institute for Health Policy and Innovation. Overall, there are approximately 3,172 tenured and tenure-track faculty on the Ann Arbor campus, and an additional 4,160 individuals in instructional and research faculty roles such as clinical instructional faculty, research faculty, lecturers and supplemental instructional staff.

The Ann Arbor campus currently enrolls approximately 30,000 undergraduates and 16,000 graduate and professional students. Its undergraduate students come from Michigan as well as from every state in the union and from more than a hundred countries. Today, the university has close to 600,000 living alumni around the globe. The campus is supported by approximately 15,000 staff members (not including the medical center staff).

The campus covers about 3,200 acres in and near Ann Arbor. Other holdings include about 18,000 additional acres in regional campuses, field stations and other properties for research and teaching. In addition to classrooms, laboratories and specialized research facilities, the university community makes use of a vast array of resources, including libraries, concert halls, art museums and galleries, an arboretum, botanical gardens and athletic and recreational facilities. The university calendar offers a prodigious diversity of events and activities. Many thousands of conferences, symposia, speeches, workshops, concerts, performances, recitals, films, readings and athletic events take place each year. As well, over 1,000 clubs and organizations provide innumerable opportunities for faculty, staff and students to take part in the university community.

As a public institution, the revenues and expenditures of the University of Michigan are maintained in accordance with the governmental accounting principles of fund accounting. The total operating budget for the Ann Arbor campus is approximately $9.6 billion for fiscal year 2020, including about $5.2 billion for the university Health System. For FY 2020, the budget for the academic operations of the campus totaled approximately $3.9 billion, of which about $2.3 billion is in the General Fund. General Fund revenues for FY 2020 include: $325 million appropriation from the State of Michigan, $1.7 billion in tuition and fees and $277 million in indirect cost recoveries from sponsored research. Other FY 2020 sources of revenue for the academic enterprise include
philanthropy, both gifts and endowment distribution and other investment income which together total $481 million; and sponsored research, projected to exceed $1.3 billion in grant revenue, placing U-M among the top institutions in the nation in terms of competitively awarded funds.

As a public university, Michigan is dedicated to service in the larger world. Faculty research addresses a large range of critical issues — health care, robotics, the environment, social interventions, education reform and improvement, poverty solutions, human mobility and many others. By extending fundamental understandings and advancing technological innovations, university scientists and engineers contribute to remarkable advances that are transforming life and contributing to building the economy of the state, region and nation. University scholars in the humanities and the arts advance societal understanding around the most pressing and challenging problems facing the world today. Students take part in research alongside faculty in research labs, libraries and community-based service and learning projects. The university collaborates with other universities, colleges and K-12 schools, as well as provides research and other services for a variety of state and private agencies.

From its status as one of the first universities in the nation to admit women in 1870, to its historic defense of race-conscious admission policies at the United States Supreme Court in 2003, U-M continues to lead the way in making higher education accessible to all. In the fall of 2016, after a yearlong period of intense planning, U-M launched its five-year strategic plan for diversity, equity and inclusion, which signified the university’s renewed pledge for developing a diverse university community while creating an inclusive and equitable campus climate. In 2018, the University launched the Go Blue Guarantee, a program for in-state students on the Ann Arbor campus that guarantees four years of free tuition for most students from families with annual incomes of $65,000 or less.

**Student Life at The University of Michigan**

The vice president for student life leads an organization of approximately 1,300 staff members across many functional units that together are known as Student Life at the University of Michigan. The Student Life mission provides:

>“Student Life is committed to facilitating student learning and the development of the whole student while cultivating a diverse and inclusive campus community. Through our programs, services, facilities and partnerships, we provide opportunities for students’ transformation and enrich their education.”

Student Life has an annual budget of about $240 million. The organization plays a leadership role in fostering a vibrant and stimulating community for students through support of the organizations, activities and events that contribute to the cultural, intellectual and recreational life of the campus and through the provision of services that promote and enable student well-being and success. Student Life is responsible for ensuring that students have high-quality opportunities for the development of leadership skills in a variety of campus and community settings and for participation in a full range of co-curricular activities. Student Life staff work in partnership and
collaboration with faculty, academic departments and student leaders to enhance the overall quality of the student experience and each student's potential for success.

Student Life consists of the following major units which report to the vice president:

- **Dean of Students Office**;
- **University Housing** (17 undergraduate and 2 graduate student residence halls and the Northwood Apartments and 9 full-service dining halls);
- **University Unions**;
- **University Health Services (UHS)**;
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**;
- **Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC)**;
- **Office of the Ombuds**;
- **Services for Students with Disabilities**;
- **Student Legal Services**;
- **Office of Student Conflict Resolution**;
- **Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs**;
- **Program on Intergroup Relations**;
- **Edward Ginsberg Center for Community Service & Learning**;
- **William Monroe Trotter Multicultural Center**;
- **Spectrum Center**;
- **Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life**;
- **International Center**;
- **University Career Center**; and
- **Recreational Sports**.

The University of Michigan has an engaged and active community of 1,600 student organizations. About 20% of undergraduates participate in fraternity and sorority life, which includes 27 fraternities and 30 sororities. A significant percentage of Michigan's first year students participate in one or more of the university's living/learning communities, which are supported by Student Life, the Office of the Provost and the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. These include the Residential College, the Honors Program, the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program and a variety of Scholars and other programs.

**The Position**

The vice president for student life is responsible for providing vision, leadership and effective management of Student Life units and functions. The vice president for student life is an executive officer of the university and serves as a member of the university's executive team. The position reports to the University president and is a key advisor to the president especially on matters involving students and student life. The vice president works closely with the president, the executive team, deans, faculty, staff, students and the Board of Regents to strengthen a collaborative university-wide effort to support students. The vice president currently has seven direct reports: a senior associate vice president; (3) associate vice presidents; a dean of students; an executive assistant; and an ombudsperson.
Other Key Responsibilities

- Provide vision and direction to the design and implementation of a comprehensive program of services, activities and supports for students and articulate a context for the broader relationship of Student Life to the academic mission of the university and to the total student experience. Establish an expectation of close collaboration with academic affairs in the Provost’s office and the university's schools and colleges.

- Provide effective management of Student Life and its human and financial resources. Allocate resources effectively to achieve Student Life's objectives. Accountable for ensuring that Student Life programs produce measurable results that can inform decisions of university leadership and are appropriately communicated to the campus community.

- Serve as advocate and spokesperson for students to the university administration, advise the president and senior officers of student issues and develop strategies for their resolution. Exercise a visible presence within the university community, with Regents, parents and external constituencies; represent Student Life to the rest of the university; and promote the active involvement and participation of faculty in Student Life programs and in the co-curricular life of students.

- Develop and execute Student Life programs and services in a matter that promotes and is aligned with the University’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Promote opportunities for students to develop and utilize leadership skills to enhance their involvement as citizens of both the campus and the wider community.

- Work with students, faculty and staff to promote an active yet safe and healthy social environment for students that adheres to the regulations of the university and the legal requirements of the State of Michigan. Establish and promote strong working relationships between Student Life and other campus units such as the Department of Public Safety and Security and the office of the Chief Health Officer to promote student safety and well-being.

- Oversee the recruitment, management, development and retention of professional and support staff in the Student Life organization. Evaluate staff, develop a strong sense of teamwork, promote the development of a strong leadership team, establish an environment of mentoring and support and encourage interaction and collaboration across Student Life and with other academic and administrative units within the university.

- Represent Student Life and the university on various university and community boards and committees to facilitate the work of Student Life and build strong and supportive relationships.

- Provide leadership in collecting and disseminating information about student issues, trends and patterns to the university community.
Qualifications and Qualities of the Ideal Candidate

An advanced degree in a relevant discipline and a strong academic orientation are essential. A doctorate is preferred. Demonstrated leadership skills; a record of outstanding achievement as a senior member of the leadership team at a large complex university with a highly regarded Student Life program; and substantial experience working with individuals and groups in a residential academic community are required. Significant leadership and management experience in complex higher education environments, including strong financial and budget management skills, is necessary for success in this position. The ideal candidate will also possess a passionate commitment to the education, development and empowerment of young people and the ability to elicit their trust and regard; a current understanding of student issues and a keen sensitivity to the changing patterns of student experiences and family dynamics; familiarity with legal issues affecting students and the issues, problems and trends that affect the management of Student Life programs; and a demonstrated understanding of and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and demonstrated measurable achievement in addressing the challenges of a diverse student body. Experience with fundraising and the stewardship of university donors would be helpful.

The successful candidate will also possess the following qualities:

- **Personal and professional integrity in the highest degree.**

- **A strong student advocate and compassionate mentor who demonstrates a proactive approach in dealing with student issues and has experience in the handling and resolution of conflict and the willingness to spend time in support of student activities and interests.**

- **Appreciation for and ability to lead effectively within a non-hierarchical, de-centralized and highly collaborative campus community. Good political acumen with a keen sense of how and when to engage the participation of different constituencies and the ability to build productive alliances. Skill in working with administrators, faculty, staff and students in a climate of openness and transparency, integrity, trust, mutual respect and collaborative problem solving.**

- **Understanding of and commitment to the academic, research and service missions of a residential public university and to enhancing the quality of student learning at the graduate, undergraduate and professional levels.**

- **Strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence; sensitivity to individuals and ability to work effectively with and understand the interests of students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds.**

- **Outstanding oral and written communications skills. Ability to transform ambiguity into clarity; to articulate student and campus needs with persuasion and conviction; and to represent Student Life to the university and the university to the external world. Excellent listening skills; capacity and willingness to engage in intellectual debate and discussion.**
• High degree of energy, initiative and organization. Self-confident, creative and willing to take risks and to pilot and evaluate new programs. Knowledge of national best practices in student life, including the ability to use research, data and assessment to guide decision-making.

• Approachable, optimistic, intellectually curious with personal warmth, generosity of spirit, a can-do attitude, strong resilience in the face of criticism and a good sense of humor.

• Ability to select, develop, motivate and win the respect and loyalty of staff; strong mentoring, coaching and team-building skills with proven success in developing professional staff and creating an effective team.

Procedure for Candidacy

Inquiries, nominations and applications are invited. For fullest consideration, applicant materials should be received by November 9, 2019. Review of applications will continue until the position is filled. Candidates should provide a resume or curriculum vitae and a letter of application that addresses the candidate’s experience and qualifications relative to the responsibilities and requirements described. Candidate confidentiality will be respected to the highest degree allowable under the laws of the State of Michigan. Application materials may be submitted via the Spelman Johnson website at www.spelmanjohnson.com/open-positions. Nominations for this position may be emailed to Mark Hall at mah@spelmanjohnson.com. Applicants needing reasonable accommodation to participate in the application process should contact Spelman Johnson at 413-529-2895.

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