



SEARCH PROFILE: PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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Eastern Michigan University (EMU) invites nominations, applications, and expressions of interest in its search for an accomplished and visionary academic leader to serve as its next Provost and Executive Vice President.

EMU is a student-centered public university recognized for academic excellence, experiential learning, and opportunity. As Michigan's second-oldest public university, Eastern is in a time of transformation. It is an institution that combines rigorous academics with connection and community rooted in engaged faculty and strong community partnerships to prepare graduates for meaningful careers and lives of purpose.

As President Brendan Kelly leads a laser-focused vision to establish EMU as Michigan's first-choice comprehensive public university organized around applied learning, technical fluency, employer/industry partnerships, and career-connected student success, the Provost will have a unique opportunity to shape the University's academic future and position in Michigan's economy. Leading the partnership of faculty, deans, staff, students, and industry/community partners, the Provost will elevate EMU's academic profile, grow enrollment and elevate student success, **greatly** expand and embed experiential learning, and lead the curation of educational experiences that students choose, remember, and carry with them long after graduation.



ABOUT EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1849, [Eastern Michigan University](#) (EMU) is a public, doctoral-granting institution located in Ypsilanti, Michigan, with a long-standing history of preparing students for success in a broad range of fields. The University recently celebrated its 175th anniversary, highlighting its enduring commitment to access, opportunity, and community engagement.

Today, EMU serves more than 12,000 students across 300 majors, minors, and concentrations in undergraduate, graduate, specialist, doctoral, and certificate programs. [Academic offerings](#) are housed in the University's Colleges of Arts and Sciences; Business; Education; Engineering and Technology; Health and Human Services; and the Graduate School. With an emphasis on academic excellence, student success, and experiential learning, EMU combines rigorous academics with transformative educational experiences across all disciplines. EMU has been named a Best of the Midwest university by The Princeton Review for the 19th consecutive year, and the College of Business has been recognized among the nation's best by The Princeton Review for 18 consecutive years.

The University is classified as an "R2: High Research Activity" institution by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, placing it among the top 6% of U.S. universities in terms of externally funded research activity. EMU is also recognized as a Carnegie Engaged Campus, reflecting the University's deep commitment to civic engagement and public impact.

EMU's mission—to enrich lives through a distinctly supportive, intellectually dynamic, and diverse community—guides its approach to teaching, learning, and service.

POINTS OF PRIDE

- Named Among the Nation's Best Colleges for 2026 (*The Princeton Review*)
- #84 in the U.S. – Graduate Education Programs (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- #3 in the U.S. – Master's in Educational Psychology (*Intelligent.com*)
- #23 in the U.S. – Simulation, Animation, and Gaming (*Animation Career Review*)
- #60 in the U.S. – Undergraduate Engineering Programs (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- #1 in Michigan – Online Dietetics BS+MS Program
- Top 20% Nationwide — Bachelor of Science in Nursing (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- Among the Nation's Best - College of Business for 21 Years (*The Princeton Review*)
- One of Michigan's Most LGBTQ+ Friendly Universities (*Campus Pride Index*)
- Ranked the Top Military Friendly School in Michigan (*Military Times Best for Vets and Military Friendly Schools*)

ABOUT EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY CONTINUED

Faculty are committed educators and scholars who bring research and industry knowledge into the classroom while mentoring students for academic, personal, and professional growth. Signature programs, such as the annual Undergraduate Symposium, offer students the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and present original research, creative projects, and applied work across disciplines.

Eastern Michigan University continues to invest in the future through major capital improvements. More than \$170 million has been invested in recent years to renovate core academic buildings, modernize classrooms and laboratories, and enhance learning environments. The GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology, for example, has expanded its footprint with facilities that support engineering, cybersecurity, aviation, and applied sciences.

EMU has also transformed its residential experience through one of the most significant [housing renewal efforts](#) in the University's history. The addition of Lakeview and Westview, two new apartment-style residential complexes, along with the renovation of existing residence halls, has created one of the most modern and student-centered housing portfolios in the state.

EMU is located in [Ypsilanti, Michigan](#), a historic and culturally rich city in the heart of southeastern Michigan. Ranked by Zillow as one of the top five college towns in the nation, Ypsilanti offers a mix of historic charm, artistic energy, and strong community ties. The city is just minutes from Ann Arbor and less than an hour from Detroit, providing access to two major economic, cultural, and innovation hubs. The [800-acre campus](#) features a blend of natural beauty, walkable green spaces, and modern facilities, including Eagle Crest Golf Course, a top-rated collegiate course located along the scenic Ford Lake shoreline.

PRESIDENT BRENDAN KELLY, PH.D.

[Dr. Brendan Kelly](#) began his tenure as the 24th president of Eastern Michigan University on April 1, 2026, marking a significant new chapter for the institution. Dr. Kelly's appointment is a homecoming for both him and his wife, Dr. Tressa Kelly, both two-time alumni of EMU.



Before assuming the presidency at EMU, Dr. Kelly served as president of the Arkansas State University System, where he led a multi-institution system to significant enrollment growth, bolstered financial stability, and strengthened community partnerships across the state. Prior to his appointment there, he served in a number of executive leadership roles, including as President of the University of West Georgia, Interim President of the University of South Carolina, and Chancellor of the University of South Carolina Upstate. Early in his career, Dr. Kelly served at EMU as Assistant Director of Forensics and a Lecturer in the Department of Communication and Theatre Arts.

Video Clips: [A New Era at EMU](#); [EMU president discusses university finances, enrollment and the student experience](#)





OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

The Provost and Executive Vice President of Eastern Michigan University will be expected to advance the following priorities, among others:

Ensure Relevance in the Academic Portfolio and Elevate the Academic Profile. In support of President Kelly's vision, the Provost will play the lead role in strengthening the University's academic reputation and elevating the relevance, quality, and distinctiveness of its programs. This leader will champion an academic environment that emphasizes experiential learning as a point of institutional distinctiveness while ensuring teaching, scholarship and creative activity, and integrated student learning reinforce one another.

The Provost will ensure that academic programs remain rigorous, responsive, relevant, and aligned with the evolving needs of students, the career landscape, and society. The Provost will advance interdisciplinary collaboration, thoughtfully lead academic planning, ensure a lean, highly efficient and effective organizational scaffold, and advance initiatives that help EMU attract outstanding students and faculty to produce the talent the marketplace seeks, ensuring EMU creates value for graduates, communities, and industry alike.

Strengthen Enrollment. Through much of the 2000s, EMU averaged a total headcount of more than 20,000 students. The University dropped below 20,000 in 2018 and has seen consistent declines over the last six years, enrolling nearly 13,000 students in fall 2024. Many factors have contributed to the University's enrollment declines—fewer high school graduates in the State of Michigan, declines in the college-going rate, the growth of flagship institutions, the cost of higher education with decreasing state funding, and the state's new community college guarantee. The University is currently undergoing a strategic planning process to ensure EMU leads the transformation of higher education as a sector and positions the institution for growth and resilience. Opportunities exist to build on established relationships in its population-rich immediate community (currently nearly 60% of students come from Washtenaw and Wayne counties), expand the University's reach in the state and region, ensure strong partnerships with community colleges, and more effectively leverage financial aid to attract and support students. EMU's current and prospective students emphasize the importance of tangible career outcomes after graduation, requiring a Provost with the ability to connect educational experiences with successful post-graduation outcomes and enrollment growth.

OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT CONTINUED

Advance Student Success. Every student deserves the opportunity to discover what they're capable of. At Eastern Michigan University, faculty and staff are deeply committed to creating an academic experience that helps students grow intellectually, develop confidence, and graduate prepared to successfully navigate a dynamic career landscape while leading lives of purpose and impact. Those who choose to work at EMU must be deeply committed to helping students thrive through meaningful relationships, individualized support, and transformative educational experiences that emphasize applied learning.

The Provost will build on this foundation by working across the institution with intentional integration of external partners (school districts, community colleges, industry partners in a wide range of fields, etc.) to strengthen student retention and completion. This leader will champion strategies that remove barriers to success, foster a culture of belonging, and ensure that every student has the richest possible opportunity for success during and after their experience at EMU.

Expand Experiential Learning. President Kelly believes an outstanding education must extend beyond the classroom to include a range of career-relevant applied learning experiences. The Provost will play a central role in advancing that vision by embedding experiential and applied learning throughout the fabric of the EMU academic experience in ways that reflect the needs, aspirations, and lived experiences of today's students with an eye to relevance for external partners.

The Provost will champion opportunities for students to apply what they learn through research, creative activity, clinical and field experiences, professional certifications, community partnerships, internships, externships, study abroad, and other high-impact educational practices. These opportunities should not stand apart from the curriculum but strengthen it through integration—helping students develop the knowledge, confidence, relationships, and practical experience to thrive and create value for others after graduation. By making applied learning a defining characteristic of an Eastern education, the Provost will help advance EMU's vision of becoming **Michigan's first-choice applied, career-connected, student-centered public university.**



PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

The next Provost and Executive Vice President of Eastern Michigan University **must**:

- Hold an *earned terminal degree* from an accredited institution;
- Possess a significant and proven *history of academic leadership* appropriate to serve in the role; and
- Have an accomplished record of excellence in research and scholarly/creative activity *eligible for appointment at the rank of tenured full professor* at EMU.

Additionally, the next provost should demonstrate a record of collaboratively setting strategic direction, effectively communicating a vision, and ensuring accountability in the achievement of organizational goals, as well as the ability to create high-functioning teams that represent the University's student body. The successful candidate should demonstrate many of the following qualities and qualifications:

- An understanding of current and future trends impacting higher education and an ability to create an environment that supports innovation, pursues necessary change, adapts to external changes, and ensures the advancement of EMU's mission.
- Exceptionally strong communication and relational skills, including a demonstrated commitment to listening to others; a record of clear, proactive communication; the ability to persuade and advocate on behalf of EMU; and an approachable, authentic demeanor that builds enduring relationships and trust with a wide range of constituents.
- A record of building high-performing teams with individuals from varied lived experiences, empowering individuals at all levels to contribute to the advancement of an organization's strategy, and celebrating the achievements of others.
- Experience cultivating a sense of belonging and inclusion within an organization comprised of individuals from diverse backgrounds and a proven record of addressing gaps in student outcomes and leadership representation.
- A commitment to shared governance and the ability to build productive relationships with

faculty and staff unions. Prior experience in a collective bargaining environment is preferred.

- Strong financial acumen and the ability to ensure the effective prioritization of an organization's resources in the pursuit of its strategic goals. Experience with public-private partnerships is preferred.
- Demonstrated success in attracting and retaining students and the ability to shape marketing and recruiting strategies that effectively communicate an institution's value proposition and points of differentiation.
- A student-centered orientation, a record of success enhancing student outcomes, and a passion for the transformative impact of higher education on a diverse student population.
- The ability to effectively engage alumni, donors, and other partners outside of the University and develop mutually beneficial relationships that impact the University and the region, including a record of success in fundraising and the ability to advocate for the University at the state and federal levels.
- An understanding of the role of athletics in higher education and the ability to effectively navigate changes in collegiate athletics.





APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Eastern Michigan University is being assisted by Academic Search. Confidential discussions about this opportunity may be arranged with consultants Dr. Margaret Venable by clicking [here](#) or with Andrea Cowsert by emailing Andrea.Cowsert@academicsearch.org. Nominations, inquiries, and expressions of interest can be submitted in confidence to EMUProvost@academicsearch.org.

Applications can be submitted electronically, and in confidence, at www.academicsearch.org/EMUProvostApply. Applications must include a:

- Current curriculum vitae;
- Letter of application that ties the candidate's experience specifically to the needs of EMU and the needs outlined in this position description. *Note: The cover letter should not simply repeat the accomplishments outlined in the CV. Please limit this letter to four (4) pages;*
- List of five professional references with full contact information and a note indicating the nature of the candidate's working relationship with each. No references will be contacted without the explicit permission of the candidate.

The position is open until filled but only applications received by **Thursday, August 27, 2026**, can be assured full consideration.

Eastern Michigan University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, ancestry, disability, military status, veteran status or other non-merit reasons, in admissions, educational programs or activities and employment and complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting Eastern Michigan University in this work. For 50 years Academic Search has offered executive search services to higher education institutions, associations, and related organizations. Academic Search was founded by higher education leaders on the principle that we provide the most value to partner institutions by combining best practices with our deep knowledge and experience. Our mission today is to enhance institutional capacity by providing outstanding executive recruitment services, executive coaching, and transition support, in partnership with our parent organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute.

