

SEARCH PROFILE:

DEAN, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



GEORGIA SOUTHWESTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY

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THE OPPORTUNITY

Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) invites applications and nominations for the position of **Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (Dean)**. GSW is a state university serving a diverse population of students, offering a range of strong undergraduate and graduate programs in a vibrant learning environment. It was recently named the fastest growing state university in the University System of Georgia, setting a record enrollment of 4,017 in Fall 2025.

The University is consistently recognized at the state and national level for academic quality, affordability, service, and student-centered programs, both on campus and online. Nestled in the scenic southwest corner of Georgia, the town of Americus is known for its rich history, distinct Southern charm, and natural beauty.

The College of Arts and Sciences (CoAS) is the intellectual center of the University, offering more than 40 undergraduate programs, minors, and certificates across the humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, mathematics, and social and behavioral sciences. The Dean, who reports directly to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, supervises eight academic departments and two areas, Integrated Studies and University College. GSW seeks a leader who is student-centered, collaborative, and forward-thinking—someone who will embrace the university's mission and vision and inspire excellence. The new Dean will assume office in January 2027.



ABOUT GEORGIA SOUTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

A unique blend of tradition and modernity, Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) is a world-class institution that offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees. The campus is located on 400 scenic acres in historic Americus, Georgia, and is teeming with culture, passion, and prestige.

Since 1906, Georgia Southwestern has provided an elevated educational experience for individuals across Georgia, from every corner of the U.S. and from countries around the world. Our small class sizes emphasize faculty and student interaction, and our administration and staff prioritize academic success and a spirited college experience.

- Ranked as one of the most affordable and best value colleges in the nation, GSW has over 4,000 residential, commuter and online students enrolled with a 17:1 student-teacher ratio.
- GSW offers over 85 programs, certificates, and endorsements in arts and sciences, business and computing, and education and nursing (ranked #1 Nursing School in Georgia by nurse.org); graduate degrees in education, business administration, computer science and nursing; a specialist program in education; an associate program in nursing; and pre-professional programs in law, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and various allied health-care professions. GSW also offers Long-Term Care Management, the first-of-its-kind in the nation.
- GSW participates in the Regents' Engineering Pathways Program with Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia Southern University, Kennesaw State University, Mercer University, the University of Georgia, and Auburn University.
- The GSW Hurricanes compete for the NCAA's Division II Peach Belt Conference, and include athletic teams in basketball, baseball, softball, golf, soccer, tennis and cross country.
- GSW has had an economic impact of over one-half billion dollars in the last five years.

Georgia Southwestern State University offers a broad and practical portfolio of academic programs designed to prepare students for in-demand careers and advanced study. With more than 85 undergraduate, graduate, and certificate options, the university spans key disciplines including business, education, health professions, nursing, arts and sciences, and emerging technology fields. Popular majors reflect workforce needs and student interest, with strong enrollment in areas such as business, education, nursing, psychology, and computer science.

The University is experiencing strong momentum, having recently been named the fastest-growing state university in the University System of Georgia and achieving a record enrollment of 4,017 students in Fall 2025. It was also recognized as one of the Top Universities in the South by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2025, underscoring its growing reputation for academic quality and student success. More accolades and points of pride can be found in this recent recap: [LINK TO POINTS OF PRIDE.PDF](#)

MISSION STATEMENT

Georgia Southwestern State University is a state university serving a diverse population of students, offering a range of strong undergraduate and graduate programs in a vibrant learning environment. The University is a collegial community that values collaboration and community engagement with an emphasis on faculty, staff, and student interactions. An active student body and state-of-the-art amenities enhance the learning experience on a visually appealing campus located in historic Americus, Georgia.

VISION STATEMENT

Georgia Southwestern State University aspires to be an engaged, progressive, and inclusive university that serves as a vibrant center of learning, culture, and economic development for Southwest Georgia and beyond.

CORE VALUES

- **People** - We build life-long connections between campus and community members that will promote mutual growth and development.
- **Purpose** - We foster active personal exploration among students and support them as they develop into the people they want to become.
- **Profession** - We provide academic and co-curricular opportunities that allow students to be competitive in the marketplace and graduate fields of study.
- **Service** - We value giving back to the communities in which we live and work.
- **Inclusiveness** - We are committed to a campus that values diversity in a climate of mutual respect.



UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

PROVOST

[Rachel L. Abbott](#), Ph.D. was appointed Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of Georgia Southwestern State University, effective December 1, 2025. Previously, she served as the Dean of the College of Education for the past 11 years.

Abbott joined the faculty at GSW in 2009 as an assistant professor in the College of Education. Since then, she has earned tenure and the rank of professor, serving in positions including the Director of Accreditation, Interim Dean, and the Dean of the College of Education. In February 2025, she joined the Office of Academic Affairs as Interim Provost while serving as the Dean of the College of Education. Under her leadership, the College of Education has strengthened partnerships with school districts across the region, expanded graduate programs and maintained accreditation excellence through rigorous academic standards.

Abbott serves as an accreditation reviewer for the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) and was elected to serve on the Evaluation Review Panel of the GaPSC. In 2018, she was selected to participate as a fellow in the Deans for Impact Academy. She participated in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities 2021-2022 cohort of Becoming a Provost Academy, currently serves on the Ignite College and Career Academy board, served as president of the Georgia Assessment Director's Association, and served on the Georgia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Board.

Abbott holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science from Longwood College, a Master of Science degree in Food and Nutrition from Florida State University, a Master of Education degree in Evaluation, Assessment, Research, and Learning from Georgia Southern University, and a Ph.D. in Health Education and Promotion from The University of Alabama.

PRESIDENT

[Kerry J. Palmer](#), Ph.D. became GSW's president on July 1, 2026, succeeding Michelle R. Johnston, who left to become president of the University of Montevallo in Alabama.

Palmer brings nearly 30 years of experience across higher education, independent school leadership, and K-12 education. Most recently, he served as senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and provost at Troy University in Alabama, where he was chief academic officer and the chancellor's representative to the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee. During his tenure there, he guided Troy's reclassification as a doctoral institution and established the university's first engineering program.

Earlier in his career, Palmer served as founding middle school principal at Trinity Presbyterian School and as a middle school vice principal and director of bands at Montgomery Catholic Preparatory School. He began his career as a high school and junior high school band director in Alabama and Georgia from 1995 to 2004. He has served as president of the Troy Rotary Club, president of the Montgomery Lions Club, and chair of the Alabama Educational Leadership Hall of Fame.

Palmer holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Troy University, a Master of Education in Education and Educational Leadership from Auburn University at Montgomery, and a Ph.D. in Adult Education from Auburn University.



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

Georgia Southwestern State University is one of the 25 higher education institutions within the [University System of Georgia](#) (USG). The USG is governed by a Board of Regents, which oversees the public colleges and universities that comprise the University System of Georgia and has oversight of the Georgia Archives and the Georgia Public Library Service.

The USG is a part of the community in each of Georgia's 159 counties and provides services across the state through four research universities, four comprehensive universities, nine state universities, and eight state colleges. It also includes the Georgia Public Library Service and the Georgia Archives.

The governor appoints members of the Board to a seven-year term and regents may be reappointed to subsequent terms by a sitting governor. Regents donate their time and expertise to serve the state through their governance of the University System of Georgia – the position is a voluntary one without financial remuneration. Today the Board of Regents is composed of 19 members, five of whom are appointed from the state at large, and one from each of the state's 14 congressional districts. The Board elects a chancellor who serves as its chief executive officer and the chief administrative officer of the University System.

USG CORE VALUES

USG Core Values Statement. The University System of Georgia is comprised of our 25 institutions of higher education and learning, as well the System Office. Our USG Statement of Core Values are Integrity, Excellence, Accountability, and Respect. These values serve as the foundation for all that we do as an organization, and each USG community member is responsible for demonstrating and upholding these standards. More details on the USG Statement of Core Values and Code of Conduct are available in [USG Board Policy 08.02.18.01.02](#).

USG FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Additionally, USG supports Freedom of Expression as stated in Board Policy 06.05 Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom.

ABOUT AMERICUS, GEORGIA

[Americus, Georgia](#) is a welcoming and picturesque community of approximately 16,000 residents, nestled in the heart of Southwest Georgia. Known for its rich history and distinct Southern charm, the city boasts a beautifully preserved downtown filled with boutique shops, unique restaurants, and attractive historic architecture. Recognized by [Southern Living](#) as one of the "Prettiest Small Towns in Georgia," Americus offers a vibrant yet relaxed atmosphere full of community pride. Throughout the year, residents enjoy a variety of local events and festivals that bring neighbors together and create a strong sense of belonging.

Americus's location in the center of a triangle formed by Macon, Columbus, and Albany, provides abundant outdoor



recreational opportunities that take advantage of the region's natural beauty, such as biking, hiking, fishing, and boating. Residents enjoy a lower cost of living, shorter commutes, and a strong sense of community. The area is supported by a growing healthcare and education presence, creating opportunities for professional connection and development.



THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The Georgia Southwestern [College of Arts and Sciences \(CoAS\)](#) is the intellectual center of the University, delivering the Core IMPACTS to every GSW student while offering more than 40 undergraduate programs, minors, and certificates across the humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, mathematics, and social and behavioral sciences. Organized into ten academic departments and areas, the CoAS educates students in high-demand fields such as biology, history, political science, psychology, criminal justice, communication, and the performing and visual arts. These programs prepare students for entry into professional programs in medicine, pharmacy, engineering, and law; deliver the coursework that support the Regents'

Engineering Pathways Program with Georgia Tech and its partner institutions; and provide the content preparation for secondary teacher certification candidates in partnership with the College of Education. Alongside these pipelines sit programs found nowhere else in the state or the system: a Southern Studies track in History, a studio art program with the only undergraduate glassblowing concentration in the University System of Georgia, and a Criminal Justice eMajor serving students statewide. Because CoAS faculty teach nearly every student on campus, the College carries University-wide academic reach, shaping the foundational learning experience that underpins every degree GSW awards.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES POINTS OF PRIDE

- **Ten Departments and Areas**
Biology; Chemistry, Geology & Physics; English & Modern Languages; History & Political Science; Mathematics; Music, Communication & Emerging Media; Psychology & Sociology; Visual Arts; Integrated Studies; and University College.
- **The Only Public Glassblowing Program in Georgia**
GSW has embraced the craft since the 1960s and remains the only public university in the state with a glassblowing program—a signature distinction in the Department of Visual Arts.
- **Pre-Professional Pathways**
Structured advising and coursework prepare students for medical, pharmacy, dental, veterinary, allied health, engineering, and law school admission.
- **Regents' Engineering Pathways Program**
Students begin engineering study at GSW and complete their degrees at Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia Southern University, Kennesaw State University, Mercer University, University of Georgia, or Auburn University.
- **Undergraduate Research and Scholarship**
The annual Undergraduate Research Symposium and Fall Humanities Symposium give students a public stage for original scholarly work alongside faculty mentors.
- **A Culture of Creative Practice**
Blue Fire: A Journal of Literature and Art, studio exhibitions, music performances, and emerging media productions connect classroom learning to public audiences.
- **Flexible, Customizable Degrees**
Most Arts and Sciences programs leave room for a minor, certificate, or double major from any other discipline, letting students build distinctive academic profiles.
- **Programs That Keep Growing**
New and expanded offerings—including additional Southern Studies concentration in History, new concentrations in Sociology in research, social work, and general tracks, and a growing certificate portfolio in Communication and Emerging Media.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES (CONT.)

Faculty use evidence-based teaching practices and continuous assessment to ensure academic excellence and student success. Through Hands-On Research and Creative Work—including undergraduate research, studio practice, field study, internships, and study abroad—students graduate with the analytical, communication, and problem-solving skills employers and graduate programs demand.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MISSION

The mission of the College of Arts and Sciences of Georgia Southwestern State University is to provide educational opportunities that emphasize intellectual development, knowledge, leadership, and skills that will allow students to prosper throughout their lives as productive, informed, and involved citizens. The College strives to provide an environment where the free exchange of ideas, high standards of scholarship, and creativity prevail. The College is committed to offering educational opportunities that meet the needs of its students through fundamental coursework for the University and by offering major programs that assist students in achieving their professional and educational goals.

The College of Arts and Sciences supports the mission of Georgia Southwestern by:

- Providing outstanding education in the Core IMPACTS as well as degrees in a wide array of disciplines.
- Ensuring the excellence of its educational programs through evidence-based best practices in instruction and ongoing assessment of student learning.
- Fostering intellectual, personal, and social growth for students, faculty, staff, and the community through active programs of creative and scholarly work.
- Extending learning beyond the classroom through co-curricular opportunities and sustained engagement with the community.





ABOUT THE DEAN'S ROLE

The Dean is the chief academic and administrative leader of the College of Arts and Sciences, reporting directly to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Eight department chairs report to the Dean.

Responsibilities include:

- Manage and supervise college faculty, staff, programs, and events across eight academic departments and two areas, Integrated Studies and University College.
- Direct development and budget management efforts.
- Oversee curriculum development, program review, and accreditation processes, including stewardship of the University Core IMPACTS.
- Foster innovative practices in teaching, research, scholarship, and creative activity.
- Develop short and long-term plans to advance the College's educational objectives within the context of the university's vision.
- Maintain and strengthen strategic relationships with the community, alumni, benefactors and partners on behalf of the college and university.
- Support and plan the ongoing development of chairs, faculty and staff, including faculty evaluations and performance feedback.
- Support faculty through mentoring programs and supporting excellence in teaching, scholarship, research, creative work and service to the university, community and profession.
- Collaborate with colleges, particularly with the College of Education on teacher preparation and with the College of Nursing and Health Sciences on pre-professional preparation.
- Recommend the appointment, promotion and tenure status of faculty.
- Recruit and employ high-quality faculty and staff.
- Work with department chairs to staff all classes.
- Engage in scholarly or creative activities.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA

GSW seeks a leader who is student-centered, collaborative, and forward-thinking—someone who will embrace the university's mission and vision and inspire excellence.

The next Dean will play a pivotal role in advancing the mission of the College of Arts and Sciences by:

- **Fostering a Supportive Academic Community:** Collaborating closely with the Provost to ensure faculty, staff, and students across eight departments have the resources and support needed to thrive.
- **Championing the Liberal Arts Core:** Articulating the value of a broad, rigorous foundation in the arts and sciences to students, families, employers, and the region, and ensuring the Core IMPACTS serves every GSW student well.
- **Leading with Vision and Collaboration:** Contributing to a dynamic leadership team committed to modern, relevant academic programs and student success, and building interdisciplinary connections across the University's four colleges.
- **Increasing Student Success:** Focusing on ensuring students can successfully complete their degrees and obtain their desired professional outcome, including admission to graduate and professional programs.
- **Building Capacity for Online and Hybrid Teaching:** Establishing shared standards and faculty support for online instruction so that expanded access does not come at the cost of quality.



- **Expanding Enrollment:** Strengthening and diversifying the College's academic portfolio—including online and flexible offerings—to grow enrollment, meet workforce needs, and attract students to programs across the humanities, fine arts, sciences, and social sciences.
- **Deepening Partnerships:** Expanding relationships with community organizations, regional employers, cultural institutions, and P-12 schools to create experiential learning opportunities and extend the College's public impact.

QUALIFICATIONS

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Earned doctorate or terminal degree from an accredited university with academic credentials and experience that qualify for appointment as associate or full professor in a discipline within the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Demonstrated experience in administrative leadership and supervision at the level of director, department chair or assistant/associate dean or higher.
- Demonstrated experience in teaching, research or creative activity, and student success.
- Experience with curriculum development, program assessment, and accreditation.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

- Three or more years of senior-level experience in higher education at the level of director, department chair or assistant/associate dean or higher.
- Experience leading a multidisciplinary academic unit spanning the humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, mathematics, and social sciences.
- Knowledge of SACSCOC (or comparable) accreditation policies, procedures, practices, requirements, and reporting structures.

- Understanding of national and regional trends in liberal arts and sciences education.
- Knowledge of University System of Georgia Board of Regents policies, procedures, practices, requirements, and reporting structures.
- Strong communication skills.
- Experience with creating external partnerships with community, cultural, and employer organizations.
- Experience in strategic planning, resource/budget management and fundraising.
- Experience with fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships across the university.
- Experience with high-impact educational practices, including undergraduate research, experiential learning opportunities, internships, and study abroad.
- Experience supporting general education or core curriculum delivery on a large scale.
- Strong problem-solving skills and decision-making experience.



THE NOMINATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Academic Search is assisting Georgia Southwestern State University in this search. Confidential conversations are encouraged and may be arranged directly with senior consultant [Margaret Venable](#), Ph.D. at her [direct booking link](#), or consultant [Disa Mason](#), at her [direct booking link](#).

TIMING:

The next Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will assume office in January 2027. The search committee will review applications as they are received through the preferred application deadline. While applications will continue to be accepted until the position is filled, only those materials received by **Thursday, October 22, 2026**, are assured full consideration.

THE PROCESS:

Nominations, inquiries, and expressions of interest can be submitted in confidence to GSWDeanCAS@academicsearch.org.

Applications should be submitted to Academic Search using this link: <https://www.academicsearch.org/GSWDeanCASApply>. Applications should consist of 1) a detailed letter of interest that describes the candidate's interest and alignment with the leadership agenda, 2) a current curriculum vitae, and 3) a list of five professional references with current email contact information. References will not be contacted without the permission of the candidate, and only for those invited to interview. All documents will be uploaded to the Application Portal and must be submitted in PDF format.

Equal opportunity and decisions based on merit are fundamental values of the University System of Georgia (USG). The Board of Regents prohibits discrimination on the basis of an individual's age, color, disability, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, or veteran status ("protected status"). No individual shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation under, any USG program or activity because of the individual's protected status; nor shall any individual be given preferential treatment because of the individual's protected status, except that preferential treatment may be given on the basis of veteran status when appropriate under federal or state law.

All employment processes and decisions, including but not limited to hiring, promotion, and tenure, shall be free of ideological tests, affirmations, and oaths, including diversity statements. The basis and determining factor for all such decisions should be that the individual possesses the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the role, and is believed to have the ability to successfully perform the essential functions, responsibilities, and duties associated with the position for which the individual is being considered. At the core of any such decision is ensuring the institution's ability to achieve its mission and strategic priorities in support of student success.

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting Georgia Southwestern State 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.

