

SEARCH PROFILE:

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT



WILLIAM
PATERSON
UNIVERSITY

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William Paterson University seeks an experienced, visionary, and student-centered leader to serve as its next Vice President for Student Development (VPSD). The ideal candidate will bring strategic, data-centric, compassionate, and forward-thinking leadership to a large and multifaceted division that plays a central role in the University's mission of access, opportunity, engagement, and student success. The VPSD will partner closely with the President, Cabinet, faculty, staff, and student leaders to advance a transformative, holistic, and equity-driven experience for a diverse student population.

The next VPSD should be an emotionally intelligent leader with deep experience across diverse student populations, strong strategic and collaborative capacity, exceptional communication skills, and the ability to drive innovation and change with limited resources. They must bring a macro-level perspective while staying highly visible, approachable, and engaged with students, faculty, staff, and the extended William Paterson community. The role requires someone who can bring an institution-wide lens, integrating the large and complex division into broader university goals.

The expected start date is July 1, 2026.



ABOUT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

William Paterson University is a public regional university located in suburban Wayne, New Jersey. One of the largest universities in the state, with more than 12,500 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students, the University has nearly 92,000 alumni, more than 70 percent of whom reside in New Jersey. Richard J. Helldobler, PhD, became the University's eighth president in 2018.

The University is among the most diverse universities in New Jersey and the region and approximately 40 percent of its students are the first in their families to attend college. The University is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, with approximately 30 percent of students indicating Hispanic heritage, and a Minority-Serving Institution with 59 percent students of color.



PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

Under President Helldobler, the University has advanced its external recognition, especially in the key area of social mobility. William Paterson is among the national leaders in helping to prepare economically disadvantaged students for good paying jobs. It ranks no. 54 out of more than 1398 institutions in the country in the 2024 Social Mobility Index and no. 22 for social mobility in the Regional Universities North category of U.S. News & World Report's 2025 edition of Best Colleges.

In 2020, the University launched WP Online, an online platform now offering 57 fully online degree programs. A School of Nursing, established in 2023, reflects the growth and impact of its nursing program. Nursing enrollment is

currently the largest on any single New Jersey campus. A College of Adult and Professional Studies was established in 2024 to meet the needs of adult learners. In 2024 the University awarded more MBA degrees than any other New Jersey institution.

President Helldobler led the implementation of an innovative new First-Year Experience program in fall 2019 for all incoming students designed to support their transition to college as they balance school, family responsibilities, and often a job. The program provides wraparound structured academic and student support services. A required two-semester foundational course, Will. Power. 101 and 102, provides personal direction to help first-year students navigate college. All first-year students have an assigned Student Success Team with a financial aid counselor, professional advisor, academic coach, and career coach, to guide and support them through graduation. As sophomores, their success team expands to include a faculty mentor from their intended major.

RANKINGS

William Paterson University is among the top-ranked schools in its region, ranked no. 60 of 165 institutions in the Best Regional Universities-North category in U.S. News & World Report's 2025 edition of Best Colleges. It is also a U.S. News

For the second year in a row, William Paterson University has been named to Forbes' prestigious "Best-In-State Employers" list, recognizing the institution as one of the highest-rated employers in New Jersey based on nationwide surveys. [Link to press release](#) Additionally, the University was named a "Great College to Work For" by ModernThink in the Chronicle of Higher Education. [Link to press release](#)

ABOUT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY (CONT.)

Best Value School and a Best College for Veterans. William Paterson's undergraduate nursing degree program is ranked no. 254 out of 686 BSN programs nationwide, placing it in the top 37 percent of programs. Other William Paterson undergraduate programs ranked nationally by U.S. News & World Report include business, ranked no. 353 out of 522 schools nationally, and psychology, ranked no. 355 out of 542 programs. In January 2026, WP's online programs were also named to the "best of" list by US. and News World Report.

[Link to press release](#)

ACADEMICS AND CAMPUS LIFE

The University offers more than 150 bachelor's degree, master's degree, and undergraduate and graduate certificate programs, and three doctoral programs—the doctor of nursing practice, the doctorate in clinical psychology, and the doctor of education in leadership. Programs are offered through four colleges: Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the Cotsakos College of Business, Education, and Science and Health. An Honors College provides academically motivated students with a rigorous curriculum.

The University's full-time faculty members are highly distinguished and diverse scholars and teachers. They include Fulbright scholars and recipients of Grammy Awards, Guggenheim Fellowships, Woodrow Wilson Fellowships, and grants and research awards from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and more.

Committed to providing an outstanding and affordable education for its students, the University awards more than 2,000 scholarships totaling \$7 million each year. WP's Pledge 4 Success program, launched in 2019, provides grants for unmet need to students eligible for full New Jersey TAG and federal PELL grants. It served as the model for the New Jersey Garden State Guarantee launched in 2022. Together, these programs offer a four-year funding path that enables low-income students to attend WP tuition-free or at a greatly reduced cost.

An active campus life includes residential housing for more than 1,500 students. Social, cultural, civic engagement, and recreational activities include more than 100 campus clubs and organizations, 13 NCAA Division III intercollegiate sports teams, as well as club sport teams and intramural sports. Cultural events take place throughout the year, featuring William Paterson's own talent and renowned professional artists and include concerts presenting jazz, classical, and contemporary music; theater productions; gallery exhibits; and the acclaimed Distinguished Lecturer Series, entering in its 43rd season.

The University's many accreditations include the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, Commission on the Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, National Association of Schools of Art and Design, National

Association of Schools of Music, and the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation, among others.

William Paterson provides learning opportunities in its classrooms, laboratories, and studios, and throughout the campus, as well as at various off-campus locations, including the adjacent High Mountain Park Preserve. Its state-of-the-art facilities include an expanded and renovated Science Complex, dedicated in 2012, and an 80,000-square-foot, \$40 million academic building, University Hall, which opened in 2016 and was funded in part by \$30 million from New Jersey's "Building Our Future" Bond Act. An initiative to modernize the academic core of the campus has continued with the renovation of two academic buildings, Barbara M. Grant Hall, formerly Preakness Hall, which reopened in fall 2017, and Hunziker Hall, completed in 2018. In May 2025, the University launched a \$40 million state-funded transformation of its existing Sports and Recreation into a hub for the academic programs offered by the institution's Department of Kinesiology along with construction of a new wellness center and a natatorium, which is scheduled for completion in June 2027.

In 2011, the University became the first public New Jersey college or university to require new undergraduates to take a course on civic engagement. William Paterson is an active leader in civic engagement through the American Democracy Project and Engage NJ.

The University is committed to sustainability and is a charter signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. Its solar panel installation, dedicated in 2010, ranks among the largest university installations in the United States.



ABOUT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY (CONT.)

LOCATION

Located on a 407-acre hilly, wooded campus, the University offers the best of all worlds. Bordering on High Mountain Park Preserve, nearly 1,200 acres of wetlands and woodlands, it is just three miles from the historic Great Falls National Park in Paterson and just 20 miles from the rich cultural, artistic, and commercial life of New York City.

The third oldest public institution in New Jersey, the University was founded in 1855 as a normal school in the city of Paterson dedicated to the professional preparation of teachers. The institution continued to expand and evolve, and in 1967, by state mandate, was transformed into a multipurpose liberal arts institution. In 1971, the institution was named after William Paterson (1745-1806), the New Jersey patriot who was a signer of the Constitution, New Jersey's second governor, and a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.



DIVISION OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The Division of Student Development creates a climate conducive to engaging and building formal and informal mentoring relationships with students. By extending the learning environment beyond the classroom through experiential, extracurricular, and co-curricular opportunities, we cultivate students' educational growth, personal and professional development, and the quality of their university life experience.

We empower students to apply this learning in their current roles and everyday lives, to participate actively in and affect

constructive change in their communities, and to function engaged as citizens in a multi-cultural, global society.

The Division of Student Development is committed to comprehensive assessment activities to ensure that programs and services are responsive to the current and future needs of our students.

Additional information about the division and an organizational chart are available at the following links.

[Division of Student Development Organizational Chart](#)





VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE

Reporting to the President, the Vice President for Student Development is responsible for the planning, development, and administration of the following student-centric departments and services: Residence Life, Career Development Center, Accessibility Resource Center, Counseling, Health and Wellness Center, Athletics and Recreation (Div. III), Student Conduct, University Commons, Parent and Family Relations, new student orientation programs, Campus Activities, Service and Leadership, Veteran and Military Services, University Police, Educational Opportunity Fund program, academic achievement/advisement, TRIO Student Support Services, Academic Success Center, Social Worker for Student Support and Resources, Testing, First Year Foundations and Commencement ceremonies. The Vice President works collaboratively with the Provost to ensure student academic progress and timely graduation, and to ensure that co- and extra-curricular experiences will enhance career opportunities and/or graduate work.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provides innovative leadership, vision and direction for University's student-centered policies and programs including program development, implementation and quality, program innovation and currency, staff development, and outcomes assessment.
- Leads and directs all areas of the Student Development Division.
- Serves as a member of the President's Cabinet; participates actively at all University-wide meetings; represents the University at regional and national conferences and events.
- Works in coordination with other vice presidents on matters pertaining to enrollment management, student services, finance and budgeting, facilities and construction maintenance, human resources, policies and legal matters.
- Advances student development and engagement programs aligned with the University's mission, values, and strategic plans and enhances the effectiveness and prominence of student development and campus life initiatives.
- Leads continuous, strategic improvement efforts; works with all stakeholders to assure measurable positive results, and enhances student engagement and participation in University life, organizations and events.
- Evaluates student development programs and makes appropriate recommendations to the President.
- Develops the overall Student Development Division budget. Manages the allocation and monitoring of resources; operating budgets, personnel, space, and expenditures.
- Manages the recruitment, development and evaluation of excellent and diverse full-time administrators and staff within the Student Development division.
- Ensures that all strategic plan goals aligned with the Division are attained.
- Works collaboratively with the Provost, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Chief Financial Officer to ensure achievement of University Key Performance Indicator goals for retention, persistence, graduation and post-graduation career outcomes.
- Builds and maintains a diverse and inclusive working environment that emphasizes integrity and professionalism, promotes excellence and espouses integrity and collaboration.
- Ensures Division compliance with regional accreditation standards and accreditation standards of those programs subject to other external accreditations.
- Assures adherence to state and federal regulations, and University policies.
- Performs other duties as assigned that are appropriate for the position.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Leadership Agenda provides a focused, high-level view of the critical challenges and strategic opportunities shaping the broad and complex divisional portfolio. The division continues to navigate increasing pressures, including student wellness and mental health needs, resource constraints, retention imperatives, and the operational demands inherent in a multifaceted organization. Concurrently, the next VPSD will be positioned to capitalize on significant opportunities to strengthen the student experience through strategic housing investments, expanded online engagement, enhanced first-generation support, scaled grant-funded initiatives, and innovative approaches to support student well-being.

MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES

- **Capitalizing on a diverse, growing, and resilient student body** creates opportunities to develop innovative and holistic nationally recognized student success models.
- **Harnessing a dedicated division team** characterized by commitment, talent, collaboration, and a growth mindset—creating a strong foundation for new leadership to accelerate progress. Ongoing professional development for the division will further optimize outcomes.
- **Student housing as a strategic lever**—to enhance student experience and improve university finances.
- **Strengthening engagement for increasing numbers of online learners and graduate students** who often have less access to communication and campus experiences.
- **Advancing cross-divisional collaboration**, especially with Academic Affairs and Finance and Administration in support of high-impact practices and student success initiatives.
- **Scaling grant-supported access programs**, including recent TRIO grant opportunities referenced as a pathway to expand support for underserved students.

- **Expanding innovative student well-being supports**, including models such as drop-in services, embedded counseling, food insecurity resources and initiatives, and wellness/relaxation spaces.

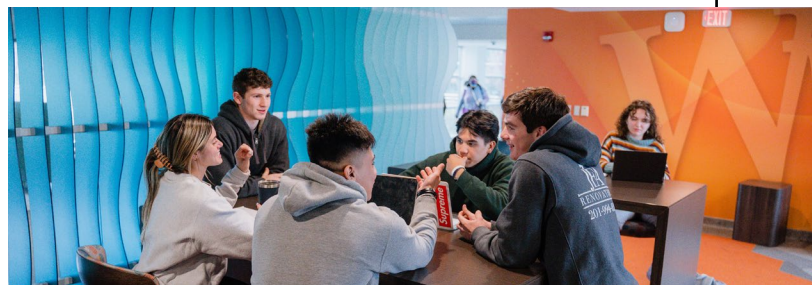
MAJOR CHALLENGES

- **Retention, persistence, and graduation pressures**, particularly amid a large commuter population with work and life obligations. For some students, academic underpreparedness and financial strain also contribute to retention challenges.
- **Student mental health, basic needs, and well-being**, including increased demand and complexity, alongside concerns about the well-being of staff as requirements to meet these demands increase.
- **Residence life and housing pressures**, including increasing costs and challenges related to ongoing/deferred maintenance and contemporization of aging facilities and a challenge to grow the residential student population. The need to increase residential student participation. A lack of vibrant weekend programming impacts student belonging and overall retention.
- **Meeting evolving student needs with limited financial and staff resources**, requiring careful triage, creativity, and a disciplined approach to prioritization. Demand for support among neurodivergent, first-generation, disabled, low income, and international students continues to increase.
- **A broad and complex divisional portfolio**, which can make alignment, cohesion, and resource distribution challenging.
- **Regulatory and policy complexity**, including Title IX, immigration, and federal grant requirements—managed without compromising institutional values.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

To be effective in the role, the successful candidate for Vice President for Student Development must demonstrate all required qualifications:

- Earned doctorate degree from an accredited institution.
- At least seven to ten completed years of progressively responsible student development leadership experience in higher education.
- Demonstrated commitment to academic excellence.
- Experience managing residence halls or supervising residence life.
- Demonstrated evidence of analytical expertise and technological savvy for data-supported decisions and results.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and articulate constructive plans to support and advance the University's Mission and Vision statements and Strategic Plan.
- Demonstrated success in the creation and implementation



of programs and services to support and nurture a diverse student body.

- Demonstrated record of providing leadership in the formulation of strategic plans and in driving data-based results.
- Experience with NCAA Division III (or above) athletic programs is preferred.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with proven ability to work collaboratively with faculty, students, staff, and other administrators.



APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND SEARCH TIMELINE

Academic Search is assisting William Paterson University in this search. Maria Thompson, managing director, and Amy Bonsiero, search manager, are facilitating the search. Inquiries should be sent to WPUVPSD@academicsearch.org.

APPLICATIONS

Applicants should send these documents (three separate PDFs) and only these documents to WPUVPSD@academicsearch.org:

- A detailed **cover letter**, addressed to the search committee, expressing your interest in this position and addressing how you meet the specific qualifications and expectations outlined in this profile.
- A current **curriculum vitae** that includes relevant responsibilities and accomplishments.
- A **list of five professional references**, including their names, titles, organizations, phone numbers, email addresses; indicate the perspective on your work that each reference could provide.

References will not be contacted until later in the search process and only with the candidate's permission.

NOMINATIONS

Although nominations are not required to be considered for this position, leaders who know of outstanding candidates are welcome to submit confidential nominations in an email to WPUVPSD@academicsearch.org. Be sure to include the nominee's name, position, employer, and email address. Academic Search will notify people of their nomination, provide details about the position, and encourage them to apply.

SEARCH TIMELINE

Acceptance of applications will continue through **April 13, 2026**.

The search timeline plans for screening and interviews in Spring 2026, with an expected start date for the new Vice President for Student Development on July 1, 2026.

SALARY RANGE

The salary range for the position is \$192,000 to \$230,000.

EEO STATEMENT

William Paterson University is dedicated to providing equal opportunities and equal access to all individuals regardless of race or ethnicity, sex/gender (including pregnancy), gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, civil union status, familial status, religion, national origin or citizenship, military service status, or any other category protected by law. William Paterson University does not discriminate on the basis of any category stated above or as prohibited by applicable law. Individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

For more information, visit [University Facts](#) and [Division of Student Development](#)

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting William Paterson University in this work. For more than four decades, 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.

