

SEARCH PROFILE:

PRESIDENT



WILLIAM PENN

UNIVERSITY



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William Penn University (WPU) announces the search for its next president. President John Ottosson ('84) will retire in June 2027 after more than a decade of leadership, leaving William Penn poised for further growth and advancement. This is a significant moment for this values-driven institution with plans for enrollment growth, recent investments in campus infrastructure, and a clear-eyed recognition that the road ahead will require bold, disciplined leadership. The Board of Trustees seeks an innovative, collaborative leader who will steward the University's strongly held Quaker heritage of access and inclusion while making the strategic choices necessary to guide future success.



ABOUT WILLIAM PENN

William Penn University, a liberal arts institution with many career-focused academic programs, was founded by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1873 to provide a quality education to all interested men and women, regardless of race, creed, or socioeconomic status. One hundred and fifty-three years later, William Penn remains firmly rooted in its Quaker heritage and devoted to its values and ideals, welcoming faculty, staff, and students from all faiths.

WPU originally opened its doors as Penn College, graduating its first class in 1875. The first graduate was a woman — a groundbreaking achievement for the era and a marker of the University's commitment to access. William Penn continued to show acceptance and appreciation of diversity by graduating its first African American in 1902 and hiring the first African American professor in 1945, who was a female teaching in the sciences. The University's enduring commitment to access continues today as William Penn welcomes students from around the world. With such a diverse student body, the University presents rich opportunities for cultural exchange and global learning.

William Penn's campus, located in Oskaloosa, Iowa, offers a blend of historic charm with modern innovation and sits on roughly 75 acres. A 1916 fire destroyed the original campus, but the University rebuilt, and Penn Hall remains the heart of campus today. The Penn College Historic District, anchored by Penn Hall, Lewis Hall, and the Spencer Memorial Chapel, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

MISSION

William Penn University's mission is to provide an educational experience with a focus on leadership, technology, and the Quaker principles of simplicity, peace-making, integrity, community, and equality. The University describes this mission as core to its identity rather than an aspiration: a belief that every individual has value and deserves access to a quality education, and that differences make the community stronger. Those Quaker principles frame a campus that welcomes students and staff of all faiths and backgrounds.

CORE VALUES

Leadership: We will influence others to worthy action.

Technology: We will master relevant technology.

Simplicity: We will focus on essential ideas and values.

Peacemaking: We will understand various viewpoints and be able to respectfully and peaceably embrace, negotiate, or decline those views.

Integrity: We will create new and relevant knowledge and methods.

Community: We will cooperate, communicate, and coordinate our efforts. We will also participate in communities beyond the University.

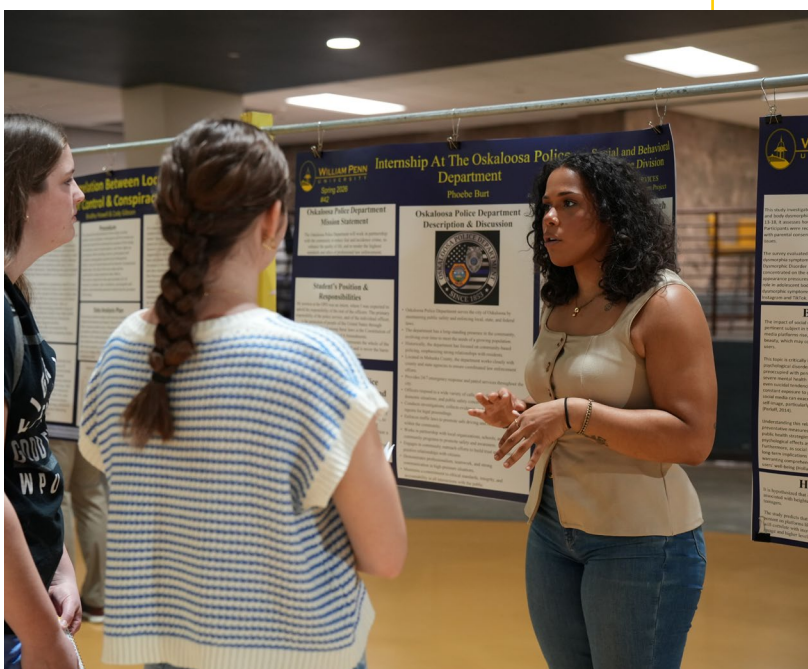
Equality: We will create the opportunity for all to learn and share their experience.

ABOUT WILLIAM PENN (CONTINUED)

Guided by its Quaker heritage, the University actively embraces the value of every human being and is committed to fostering a holistic, student-centered environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and personally and are emboldened to reach their full potential. The William Penn experience encourages students to develop and strengthen their mind, body, and spirit. WPU is a home away from home for its students, fostering a strong sense of community where students feel welcomed and supported by their peers and faculty. With dedicated staff providing personalized attention and a diverse, inclusive culture, every student has the opportunity to be successful and feel valued.

William Penn is addressing many challenges that private universities face today by implementing its strategic plan, a document that will guide operations through the 2028-2029 academic year. The strategic plan's core objective is to ensure financial sustainability while delivering a strong, student-centered experience. The plan organizes institutional priorities in six areas: Enrollment, Academic Portfolio, Student Success and Support, Technology (a student information system conversion), Marketing & Recruitment, and Advancement. It also includes a multi-year Financial Plan and a Capital Projects roadmap.

Enrollment growth and a focus on retention are key components of financial health. The enrollment target calls for growing total headcount for the traditional campus from 1,003 (Census Day fall 2026) to 1,238 by fall 2028, largely driven by targeted athletics roster growth, including a new Women's Flag Football team; a restructured Fine Arts recruiting model, including a new Show Choir; and stabilized Distance Learning enrollment.





ACADEMICS

William Penn offers more than 30 undergraduate majors across eight [academic divisions](#): Applied Technology; Business Administration; Education; Humanities; Kinesiology & Life Sciences; New Media; Nursing; and Social & Behavioral Sciences, along with Interdisciplinary Studies and an online Leadership major. A 15:1 student-to-faculty ratio supports small class sizes. In addition to traditional campus classes, William Penn offers some Online and Distance Learning programs. Undergraduate programs offered online include Business Management, Human Resource Management, Leadership, Psychology, and Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management. William Penn's Distance Learning offerings are designed for non-traditional students who wish to earn their teaching degrees in either Elementary Education (K-6) or P.E/Health (K-12).

Hallmarks of the traditional undergraduate program include the Student Success Center, Career Services, the Penn Leadership Core, and Educational Partnerships:

The *Student Success Center (SSC)*'s mission is to promote independent learning within a secure and welcoming environment, meeting the diverse needs of all William Penn students. Services available include peer tutoring, 1:1 private tutoring with SSC staff on a drop-in or scheduled basis, and CLEP testing.

Career Services offers a variety of career development and job search assistance. Starting with career planning, the services continue with career counseling, career information and exploration, job search strategies, outreach programming, part-time and summer job information, internships, and more. Assistance is available regarding resumes, cover letters, credential files, interviewing, company profiles, and a host of other resources. Graduate school information is also available in Career Services, and all services are extended to William Penn alumni.

The Penn Leadership Core is a set of required courses that all students must complete to be eligible for graduation. It consists of two areas of study: 1) the Mission Core and 2) the Liberal Arts Core. Through these courses, students develop leadership skills and gain knowledge grounded in the liberal arts. The Mission Core consists of 21 credit hours of coursework (8 courses) intentionally selected to support the three components of the William Penn University Mission statement: leadership, technology, and Quaker values. Mission Core coursework emphasizes communication, aesthetic awareness and appreciation, technology, values, and the practice of self-assessment, self-reflection and critical thinking. The Liberal Arts Core consists of 18-21 credit hours of coursework (6 courses). These courses provide a diverse program of study necessary for liberal arts education and include mathematics, natural science, humanities, social and behavioral science, history, and religion.

Educational Partnerships include a 3+2 Engineering program (Mechanical, Civil, Industrial) with Iowa State University; a 3+3 program with Drake University's School of Law; and a 3+1 Program with Palmer College of Chiropractic.

In addition, William Penn offers a Master of Organizational Leadership (MOL) and a Master of Sport Management (MSM), both offered online. The University has researched possible new graduate programs to meet market needs.

William Penn University is institutionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The next reaffirmation of accreditation is 2027-2028. Its baccalaureate nursing program carries specialized accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the education program is accredited by the Iowa Department of Education.

STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

As of Census Day fall 2026, William Penn enrolls 1,265 students in the following classifications: 1,003 on the traditional campus, 146 in Distance Learning, 30 Online, 61 in the Graduate Program, and 25 in Education Endorsement coursework. Distance Learning, aimed largely at paraeducators pursuing teaching licensure, surged during a since-expired state grant period and is normalizing toward a stabilized headcount.

Undergraduate students represent 40 states plus Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands, as well as 38 foreign countries. Iowa residents make up 45% of the student body, with 55% coming from outside the state. The

entire student body is approximately 40% non-Caucasian (roughly 60% White, 21% Black or African American, 9% Hispanic, and 5% two or more races). The male/female distribution is 60% male and 40% female. Approximately 99% of students receive some form of financial assistance.

Roughly 53% of all William Penn alumni and former students live in Iowa. Reestablished in 2009 with a renewed focus on service, the Alumni Association is committed to supporting William Penn's mission through engagement, communication, and connection. The Alumni Association works to create meaningful opportunities that unite graduates across generations.



STUDENT LIFE AND ATHLETICS

William Penn offers students more than 40 [student clubs and organizations](#), including athletic bands (pep band, marching band, color guard, and percussion line), visual and fine arts groups spanning vocal and instrumental music and theater, student government, academic focused clubs, Greek life, honor societies, campus ministry, and more. Campus traditions, including Welcome Week, Greek Week, Homecoming, among others, anchor a close-knit residential community. Student groups and clubs connect with local non-profit agencies to provide needed services, and students organize campus beautification days each year.

A major component of student life at William Penn is [athletics](#), with roughly 80% of students receiving an athletic scholarship. A member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), William Penn's Statesmen compete in 27 sports and activities across men's, women's, and co-ed programs and participate in the NAIA Champions of Character program. This program is built upon five core values, including respect, responsibility, integrity, servant leadership, and sportsmanship. WPU athletic teams demonstrate each of these values during the season, including performing at least one community service project per team each school year. The William Penn University Association of Student-Athletes was recently recognized for its tremendous efforts on campus and in the community as it was named a 2025-2026 Heart of America Athletic Conference Chapter of the Year.

Athletic facilities include the Penn Activity Center (PAC), with two full-size basketball/volleyball courts, an indoor three-lane track, weight room, fitness center, and 50 yards of turf used for practices and other activities. The football, baseball, softball, lacrosse, soccer, flag football, and track & field teams utilize the Lacey Recreation Complex that includes artificial turf and natural grass fields, as well as an 8-lane all-weather competition track. In the fall of 2011, Statesmen Community Stadium opened as a part of this Complex and became the new home of the William Penn football and track and field teams, and the lacrosse team began competing at the facility in 2020.

Women's Sports

- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cross Country
- Flag Football
- Golf
- Soccer
- Softball
- Track & Field
- Volleyball
- Wrestling

Men's Sports

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cross Country
- Football
- Golf
- Lacrosse
- Soccer
- Track & Field
- Volleyball
- Wrestling

Co-Ed Sports

- Cheer & Dance
- Esports
- Shotgun Sports



CAMPUS FACILITIES

Three buildings — Penn Hall, Lewis Hall, and the heating plant — were constructed in 1916 and 1917, following a devastating fire that destroyed the original campus. Spencer Chapel was added in 1923. Several other buildings were constructed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The Ron Randleman Fitness Center was added in 1995, and the Twin Towers residence hall was completed in 2000. Two additional buildings opened in 2008, the Musco Technology Center and the Penn Activity Center (PAC), and Market Street Hall, a co-ed dormitory, opened in 2013.

Recently completed capital projects include the Boiler House renovation to establish a multi-use space for student gatherings, alumni meetings, and banquet space;

updates to the Dana M. Atkins Memorial Union to create modern spaces for students to study and gather as well as a new Esports Lab; new HVAC control units in several buildings across campus; a new Women's Wrestling Room on the second floor of the PAC; new turf in the PAC; an ongoing Lewis Hall project to install more energy efficient windows; as well as various classroom upgrades, including new science and nursing labs.

The Spencer Chapel renovation project will conclude this fall and provide a state-of-the-art theater for performances as well as much-needed classroom spaces.

To learn more about the campus, a virtual map is available at this [link](#).

OSKALOOSA, IOWA

William Penn's campus in [Oskaloosa, Iowa](#), is about an hour southeast of Des Moines and within a day's drive of Chicago, Minneapolis, Omaha, and Kansas City.

Located in Mahaska County, Oskaloosa offers a close-knit, small-town setting with approximately 11,500 residents, in which the University is tightly woven into community life. Oskaloosa's charming downtown area is filled with unique shops and restaurants, and throughout the year, Oskaloosa presents seasonal festivals, live

performances, and other engaging community events that offer students opportunities to connect with locals and immerse themselves in the vibrant culture of the area. Also, Oskaloosa has a scenic town square, golf courses, nearby lakes, and a bike trail. Recent improvements include new and expanded industries and businesses, new public-school buildings, an expanded public library, a state-of-the-art community auditorium, new recreation facilities, and the latest in communications technology.



LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Board of Trustees is currently composed of 20 individuals who have expertise in a wide array of professional fields and associations, including business, finance, insurance, education, and members of the Religious Society of Friends. William Penn's president serves as a voting member of the Board. Twelve members of the Board are alumni/ae.

President John Ottosson ('84), who joined the administration in 1990 and was named the University's 27th President in 2014, will retire in the summer of 2027. His tenure has been marked by debt reduction, infrastructure reinvestment, and enrollment stabilization through a period of significant headwinds across the

higher education sector. Under his leadership, William Penn reduced institutional debt by more than \$14 million and, upon completion of the Spencer Chapel renovation, will have invested over \$22 million in campus infrastructure.

The President's Cabinet includes the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean, the Vice President for Institutional Research & Retention, the Vice President of Finance, the Vice President of Advancement, the Dean of Students and Director of Residence and Student Life, the Co-Directors of Information Technology, the Director of Athletics, and the Faculty Representative to Cabinet.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

The William Penn community seeks a president who can demonstrate a deep respect for what William Penn already does well — sustaining its family atmosphere, valuing its Quaker heritage, and maintaining a record of opening doors for students who might not otherwise have them opened — and possesses the honesty, business discipline, and fundraising drive needed to secure the institution's future. William Penn desires a leader who will invest in, build, and grow with the community.

The next president will lead the University in addressing the following priorities:

Champion Academic and Athletic Excellence and Innovation. Academic excellence will be enhanced by fostering exceptional teaching, expanding high impact learning opportunities, and continuing to right size the academic portfolio around market demand and viability, as well as completing the student information system

LEADERSHIP AGENDA FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

conversion. Improving athletic excellence will require a focus on optimal squad sizes and supporting resources to sustain competitiveness. It will be important to follow NAIA's potential move to five seasons of competition and plan accordingly if that eligibility rule is changed.

Grow Enrollment. Enrollment is central to William Penn's vitality, and the current strategic plan positions enrollment growth as the University's key financial lever. Thus, the next president will continue to lead the strategic planning process, ensuring its implementation and establishing metrics to assess its outcomes with a major focus on achieving recruitment success and improving retention.

Strengthen Finances, Fundraising, and Resource Management. As the chief steward of the University's resources, the president will ensure that they are wisely managed and aligned with mission. William Penn has been successful in raising funds for campus infrastructure improvements, notably for the Spencer Chapel renovation, and has reduced debt significantly. Yet, additional attention to resources will be required to meet the challenges ahead, including technology and deferred maintenance, especially in the residence halls. Fundraising will play a vital priority, and the next president must lead a differentiated strategy to acquire major gifts and grants; establish additional strategic partnerships; and focus on growing William Penn's modest endowment and deepening donor and alumni involvement.

Enhance Community Building and Engagement. The William Penn community cherishes presidents who immerse themselves in campus life, and the next leader is expected to embody that same spirit of connection and presence. The need to strengthen the bonds of community and communication is especially vital during a presidential transition. The next president will sustain and expand the University's deep ties with Oskaloosa and enhance its visibility across the region and the state.

Promote Inclusive Excellence. William Penn's diversity is a major strength and a historic point of pride. The next president must model the University's longstanding commitment to attract students from across the nation and around the world and ensure that it remains a welcoming destination for first generation and Pell-eligible students.



MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Master's degree from a regionally accredited institution.
- Significant, progressively responsible senior-level leadership in higher education administration or an organization of comparable complexity.

DESIRED LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND EXPERIENCES

The next president of William Penn will be a confident collaborator and dynamic leader who brings a deep commitment to integrating the liberal arts with career-focused programs and a broad understanding of the role of higher education in an increasingly competitive landscape. The following qualities and experiences represent the ideal mix sought in William Penn University's 28th president:

- An accessible, transparent, caring, authentic, and engaging leadership style accompanied by excellent communication skills.
- Strong financial, business, and entrepreneurial acumen, demonstrated through sound fiscal management.
- A proven record of calculated risk-taking and strategic decision-making, with the courage to make decisions and manage change effectively.
- Insight into challenges facing small, private colleges and universities, with demonstrated success in enrollment management, retention, and creative approaches to growth.
- Capacity to represent the university to alumni, donors, community leaders, foundations, and strategic partners to enhance William Penn's visibility.
- Demonstrated success in cultivating philanthropic relationships and leading comprehensive fundraising campaigns.
- An advocate for thoughtfully balancing academics and athletics, able to elevate academic quality and innovation and enhance athletic support and competitiveness. Experience with NAIA is a plus.
- Respect for diversity and Quaker values and heritage. A leader committed to building an environment where every student can thrive, with a record of advancing access, belonging, and student success.
- Appreciation for collaboration with local and regional organizations and the ability to leverage campus resources to enrich the social, cultural, and economic vitality of Oskaloosa.
- Track record of building high-performing teams, setting clear expectations, inspiring a shared purpose, holding people accountable, and celebrating achievements.





APPLICATION AND NOMINATION PROCESS

William Penn University is being assisted by Academic Search. Prospective candidates may arrange a confidential discussion with Dr. Dan DiBiasio by emailing Dan.DiBiasio@academicsearch.org or with Andrea Cowser by emailing Andrea.Cowser@academicsearch.org. Nominations may be sent electronically to WilliamPennPresident@academicsearch.org.

Applications must be submitted online at <https://www.academicsearch.org/WilliamPennPresidentApply> and include the following:

- a cover letter that addresses the responsibilities and qualifications described in this position profile;
- a curriculum vitae; and
- a list of at least five professional references with contact information, including telephone and email, and a note indicating the candidate's working relationship with each. References will not be contacted without the explicit permission of the candidate.

The position will remain open until filled, but only applications received by **January 5, 2027**, can be assured full consideration.

William Penn University is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting William Penn 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.

