

# SEARCH PROFILE:

PROVOST AND DEAN OF THE FACULTY



**Warren Wilson**  
**COLLEGE**

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## THE SEARCH

Warren Wilson College (Swannanoa, NC), one of ten federally-designated Work Colleges known for its high-impact, experiential curriculum, commitment to environmental sustainability, and community engagement, invites applications, expressions of interest, and nominations of candidates in the search for a **Provost and Dean of the Faculty**.

Warren Wilson is a national leader for learning in action. The College is singular in promising hands-on, community-

engaged courses, a capstone research or creative project, an internship, project-based learning throughout the curriculum, and on-campus work for every student, in every major. This model ensures that learning is not only theoretical but also connects knowledge, skills, confidence, and purpose—all toward the goal of creating a resumé that writes itself and success after graduation. Beyond traditional learning spaces, students benefit from a 1,000+-acre campus of farms, forests, a river, and gardens that serve as both classroom and laboratory.





## ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Warren Wilson College was founded in 1894 as the Asheville Farm School by the Presbyterian Church to serve youth in remote Appalachian regions. Over time, it became co-ed, a junior college, and then in the mid-1960s transitioned into the four-year liberal arts college it is today—still committed to its progressive, learning-by-doing roots.

Recognition comes from numerous quarters:

- Named by *The Fiske Guide* as one of only 20 “Best Buy” colleges in the nation for several years running;
- Recognized by *The Princeton Review* among the Best South & Green Colleges;
- Honored as the best LGBTQ+ Friendly College in the Nation by Bold.org; and,
- Ranked #2 nationally for “Community Service” by Washington Monthly.

The College’s most popular programs are Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Biology, Conservation Biology, Sustainable Agriculture & Food Studies, Animal Science, Art & Craft, Creative Writing, and Psychology. There are 21 undergraduate majors and two low-residency graduate programs offered: the MFA Program for Writers and a Master of Science in Applied Climate Studies.

### LIFE AT A WORK COLLEGE

At Warren Wilson, everybody does their part to keep the College running. Student work crews become part of a student’s identity, and crew members become like family. Crews include Landscaping, Communications, Chemistry, Farm, Mailroom, Dining, IT, Craft, and many more. Living, working together, and learning to serve one another creates a unique sense of community pride.

Warren Wilson graduates are well prepared to lead meaningful lives and have successful careers. They are praised by employers for their critical thinking and work ethic. And they are accepted into competitive graduate programs, medical schools, veterinary schools, and organizations like Teach for America and the National Park Service.

A member of the Work Colleges Consortium, Warren Wilson receives an annual grant of \$2 million from the U.S. Department of Education that helps support the work experiences students engage in during their time on campus. Students earn a wage that helps offset the cost of attendance.

### LOCATION, COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS & LOCAL CULTURE

Warren Wilson’s location, nestled in the Swannanoa River valley, combines a vibrant metropolitan area with one of the most beautiful and biodiverse campuses in the country. Asheville and Black Mountain, both less than 10 miles from the College, offer opportunities for entertainment, shopping, and cultural enrichment. Explore clubs, coffee houses, funky shops, craft studios, theatres, art galleries, craft breweries, independent bookstores, organic markets, museums, and mountain art/crafts/music festivals. Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy the plethora of opportunities to get out into nature, whether it is hiking the vast trail networks off the Blue Ridge Parkway or enjoying the region’s many rivers, streams, and lakes. The Asheville region is a great place for families with some of the best public and private K-12 schools in the state.

Warren Wilson has strong ties to surrounding communities, organizations, and businesses. Each year, Warren Wilson students contribute more than 50,000 hours of service to the region. From working with community organizations and citizens through service to showcasing their craft at the semi-annual Lake Eden Arts Festival (LEAF), to utilizing alumni

## ABOUT THE COLLEGE (CONT.)

relationships at local farms and businesses for internships and jobs, students and faculty blur the boundary between campus and the Asheville region.

And there is plenty to do on campus. The College offers a robust calendar of events including NCAA athletics, guest speakers, art exhibits, and programs sponsored by Climate Action Now!, the Center for Working Lands, the Kittridge Arts Center, and the Swannanoa Gathering, a five-week folk arts workshop held every summer. For those looking for more, Charlotte, the state's most populous city, is a two-hour drive away. The Charlotte, Asheville, and Greenville airports offer convenient access to destinations worldwide.

### COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

All faculty and staff at Warren Wilson are educators. As such, the College practices a unique and collaborative approach to governance. Open communication is key to building trust, inclusiveness, and effectiveness. Gathering all campus constituencies together—students, staff, and faculty—the College seeks to provide balance to address policy questions, undertake program development, ensure effective communications, and solve problems together. This framework provides a platform for all points of view, fosters unity and pride, and generates sound decisions and advice.

The governance structure consists of the Board of Trustees, the President, Faculty Body, Staff Body, the President's Council, and the Student Government Association, in addition to committees and working groups created as needed.

### INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Warren Wilson College is committed to fostering students' curiosity, empathy, and integrity by providing them with a variety of perspectives, mentors, and role models. The Office of Inclusive Excellence (OIE) supports students through points where their ethnicities, genders, (dis) abilities, ages, sexual orientations, religions, and other identities begin or intersect. The OIE team hosts events, provides support, and education, and works with several student affinity groups and offices.

### ATHLETICS

Warren Wilson joined NCAA Division III in 2024 and is a member of the Coast-to-Coast Athletic Conference. In addition to the 9 intercollegiate athletic teams, the College has club sports in climbing, paddle sports, archery, and various intramurals.

### CAMPUS

- 1140 acres eight miles from Asheville, NC
- 285-acre working farm
- 6 acres of organically managed gardens and orchards
- 650 acres of forests
- 14 miles of hiking trails

### ENROLLMENT – 784 STUDENTS

- Students living on campus: 87%
- Gender makeup: 64% female, 32% male, 4% other
- Percentage of BIPOC students: 19% overall; 26% of new first-year students
- Percentage of first-generation students: 13% of new first-year students
- Percentage of in-state students: 38%
- Percentage of out-of-state students: 58%
- Percentage of international students: 4% (comp. to 2% in 2016, 3% in 2021, 5% in 2022, and 4% in 2023)
- States represented: 45
- Countries represented: 18
- Student athletes: 25%
- 41% Pell Grant; Fin Aid 98%; with work contracts 99%

*Warren Wilson College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Master of Fine Arts degrees. Students are supported in and out of the classroom with their learning through a dedicated and talented faculty; 100% of the full-time faculty hold a doctorate or terminal degree.*





## PRESIDENT, DAMIÁN J. FERNÁNDEZ

Dr. Damián J. Fernández is the 10th president of Warren Wilson College.

A Cuban immigrant raised in Puerto Rico and a first-generation college student, Fernández has over 30 years of teaching and leadership experience from private and public institutions. He served as president of Eckerd College prior to coming to Warren Wilson in June of 2023.

Since his arrival, President Fernández has guided Warren Wilson College through transformative growth and innovation. He developed the strategic action plan “Our Progressive Promise for All: Education in Action for the Common Good” and launched pioneering programs like a low residency Master of Science in Applied Climate Studies and a BA/BS in Animal Science. This year, the College will celebrate the reaffirmation of its 10-year accreditation due, in part, to Fernández’s fiscal discipline, achieving two successive years of balanced budgets. Under his leadership, the College drove a record-breaking fundraising year, raising over \$17M, including a historic \$10M gift. To affirm the College’s commitment to sustainability, President Fernández is working to designate 800 acres of college land as a preserve and conservation easement.

During his time at Eckerd, Fernández raised more than \$38 million, boosted enrollment to its highest point, and saw the annual fund set a record. The Board approved a strategic plan that prioritized innovation in the liberal arts, community engagement, inclusive excellence, and financial and environmental sustainability.



Fernández received his bachelor’s from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, a master’s in Latin American Studies from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Miami. His research centers on Latin American politics and international relations. He authored the book *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*.

A catalytic leader and progressive educator, he is a National Science Foundation grant recipient and sat on the Board of the American Council on Education (ACE) and on the Association of Governing Boards Council of Presidents. ACE profiled him in their series on equity-minded leadership. He serves on the boards of the Newcombe Foundation, the Council for Independent Colleges, and the American Academic Leadership Institute/Academic Search.







## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Warren Wilson College, a national leader among Work Colleges, offers a distinctive model of liberal arts education, integrating academics, work, and community engagement. The Office of Academic Affairs plays a central role in sustaining this mission while advancing innovation and student success.

### **THE PROGRESSIVE PROMISE FOR ALL**

The Progressive Promise for All ensures that every student will:

- Complete at least one community-engaged course;
- Participate in a professional experience such as an internship, clinical placement, or practicum;
- Undertake a faculty-mentored research or creative project; and,
- Conclude with a capstone experience that integrates knowledge and applied learning.

This promise guarantees that all graduates leave with both rigorous academic preparation and a portfolio of experiential learning that equips them for careers, graduate study, and civic leadership.

### **ACADEMIC DISTINCTIVENESS**

- Warren Wilson is the first college in the nation to promise hands-on, community-engaged courses, professional experiences in the Work Program, research, and an internship for every student in every major.
- Work Program: Students contribute 10 hours per week to campus crews, building skills and reinforcing the value of shared responsibility.
- Community Engagement: Service-learning is woven into the curriculum, making engagement a central component of the academic experience.
- Student-to-Faculty Ratio of 11:1. Close mentorship supports student growth and achievement.

### **ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND GROWTH**

- Recent launches include the Master of Science in Applied Climate Studies, an Animal Science major, a neurodiversity initiative, Climate Action Now!, and the Nielsen Student Scholars in the Humanities initiative.
- A new Work Program Strategic Action Plan will foster skill building and career-readiness competencies through work crews, internships, and project-based research.
- The Career Academic Learning Launch will strengthen career outcomes for students through high impact internship reflection courses in every major.
- Strategic focus is placed on areas of institutional strength such as the sciences, social sciences, and creative disciplines.

### **STUDENT ACCESS, SUCCESS, AND OUTCOMES**

- Nearly 90% of graduates secure employment within six months.
- In a 2024 student crew workers' survey, 97% of students said they learned transferable skills on their crews and 94% said they found a sense of belonging on their crews.
- To increase access, the published tuition price was lowered in 2024 by 40% to \$25,500.
- North Carolina undergraduate students who qualify for federal or state need-based aid have access to the NC Free Tuition Plan.





## OVERVIEW OF THE POSITION

The **Provost and Dean of the Faculty** reports to the President and serves on the President's Cabinet.

Other members of the Cabinet include:

- Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Marketing, and Strategic Communication
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Vice President for Student Engagement and Dean of Students
- Controller
- Executive Director of Strategic Ventures
- Executive Director of Operations and Facilities
- Director of Human Resources
- Special Assistant to the President for Grants and Innovation.

### POSITION SUMMARY

At Warren Wilson College, the Provost's role is tied to the College's commitment to sustainability, social responsibility, and experiential education, making the position both traditional in academic leadership and distinctive in its alignment with the College's values.

### ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGY

- Lead academic planning and innovation, ensuring academic quality and alignment with the College's mission of integrating liberal arts education with work and community engagement.
- Oversee academic departments and programs, including curriculum development, assessment, accreditation, and academic standards.
- Support the faculty's scholarly and creative work and foster an environment of academic excellence.



## OVERVIEW OF THE POSITION (CONT.)

### FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- Manage faculty hiring, promotion, and evaluation processes.
- Encourage shared governance and collaborate with committees of the Faculty Body.
- Provide leadership to faculty for professional development, mentorship, and retention.

### CROSS-PROGRAM INTEGRATION

- Ensure integration across the three core areas of the College: Academics, the Work Program, and Community Engagement.
- Oversee the Center for Experiential Learning and Careers, Center for Working Lands, and the Center for Academic Engagement to support all learners and provide experiential learning opportunities that promote student success.

### INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND ACCREDITATION

- Collaborate with the President and senior leadership in strategic planning and institutional effectiveness.
- Lead efforts in regional and disciplinary accreditation, including compliance with SACSCOC standards.

### BUDGETING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- Oversee academic budget planning and resource management, ensuring effective allocation to support academic priorities.
- Pursue grants and external funding in collaboration with Advancement and faculty.

### ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

- Partner with the Offices of Enrollment Management and Student Engagement on student recruitment, retention, and success initiatives.
- Oversee academic support services, advising, and honors programs to enhance the student learning experience.

### EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL REPRESENTATION

- Serve as an advocate and spokesperson for the academic mission to internal and external audiences, including trustees, donors, and accreditation bodies.
- Represent the College in academic consortia and partnerships, including the Council for Independent Colleges, the Work Colleges Consortium, the Appalachian Colleges Association, and the North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities.

## CENTERS

### Center for Experiential Learning and Careers

The CELC coordinates programming to support all aspects of experiential learning including the [work program](#), [community engagement](#), internships, [study abroad](#) as well as international student programs, [career development](#), and the Bonner Leaders Program.

### Center for Working Lands

The CWL manages the College natural resources (fields, forests, river systems) as well as the farm and garden programs. The Center integrates with the academic and work programs to provide students with real-world experiences and research opportunities that focus on climate-forward agriculture, food justice, and land and habitat conservation.

### Center for Academic Engagement

The CAE provides students with the skills they need to be successful learners that includes both group and individualized support. The CAE oversees the College's neurocomplexity initiative, which is designed to meet the needs of all types of learners.



The offices and individuals reporting to the Provost include:

- Associate Provost
- Associate Academic Dean
- Dean for the Center for Working Lands
- Associate Dean of Grants and Sponsored Programs
- Associate Dean of the Center for Experiential Learning and Careers
- Director of the Center for Academic Engagement
- Director of the MFA Program for Writers
- Director of the MS in Applied Climate Studies
- Director of Information Technology
- Director of the Library
- Dean of Academic Administration and College Registrar
- Executive Assistant to the Provost
- Assistant Vice President for Strategic Communications & Program Innovation is a dotted-line report to the Provost.





## LEADERSHIP AGENDA

In partnership with President Fernández, the next Provost has an opportunity to shape the academic program at Warren Wilson College to ensure that all members of the College's unique student body are well prepared for their futures. Leading a new curriculum (adopted in Fall 2024) focused on "learning by doing," that now includes required internships and community-engaged courses in all majors, the Provost is the chief academic affairs officer and second-in-command of the College.

Given the importance of this position, the next Provost will be asked to possess:

- a strong entrepreneurial spirit, with the ability to create community and the confidence to take calculated risks while also maintaining the financial viability of the College;
- an understanding of what is distinctive about the liberal arts in general and Warren Wilson College in particular and how that is influenced by the value-added experience of a work college and a progressive pedagogy that emphasizes "learning by doing;"
- a proven commitment to inclusive excellence in all its forms whether embedded in the curriculum, the student experience, or with student, faculty, and staff recruitment;
- substantial experience with managing a complex budget particularly in times of austerity;
- a collaborative, transparent and open leadership style focused on integrity, clear communication, and advocacy for the faculty and staff in Academic Affairs; and,
- an ability to lead the faculty in honoring and elevating Warren Wilson College's distinctive character as a Work College, developing opportunities to further align academic and work experiences.



# REQUIRED & PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES & CHARACTERISTICS

## REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Earned Ph.D. or equivalent.
- Distinguished record as a scholar and educator, with credentials meriting appointment at the rank of full professor.
- Deep understanding of the liberal arts, with demonstrated commitment to integrating experiential learning throughout the curriculum.
- Substantial, progressive leadership and management experience in higher education and advancing academic excellence and institutional mission.

## PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- A deep commitment to understanding, embracing, and championing the distinctive mission and values of a Warren Wilson College education.
- Skilled at change management with the capacity to make and implement substantial institutional decisions, grounded in compassion, transparency, and meaningful community engagement.
- A strategic visionary, with demonstrated success in developing and executing comprehensive academic initiatives that have transformed institutions from conception to realization.
- An educator at the core, grounded in the liberal arts, who values teaching and scholarship and affirms the vital role of both faculty and professional staff in shaping a grounded, progressive education.
- A consensus builder, skilled at fostering collaboration, building trust, and ensuring inclusive decision-making across constituencies.
- Extensive experience with shared governance, ensuring faculty, staff, and student voices are meaningfully integrated into institutional direction.
- An understanding of the value of experiential education, which includes community engagement and service learning, that encompasses the full student experience in and outside the classroom.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and sustain new programs aligned with the institutional mission and evolving societal needs.
- Ability and excitement to reimagine and elevate the Work Program, aligning it with the College's strategic vision and strengthening its impact on student learning and institutional identity.
- An outcomes-driven academic leader, with expertise in developing student learning outcomes and making evidence-based strategic decisions around enrollment, retention, and graduation.

- A versatile problem-solver, with leadership experience spanning academic program development, faculty advancement, inclusive pedagogy, and even operational oversight such as campus sustainability initiatives.
- A creative, entrepreneurial, and diplomatic leader, capable of inspiring, guiding, and supporting both faculty and staff in pursuit of academic excellence.
- A mindset for curricular creativity, with the vision to reinvigorate the humanities and connect them to enduring themes that lead to a "well-lived life."
- A systems thinker who excels in evaluating complex processes and collaborating with diverse stakeholders to design and implement effective, sustainable solutions.
- A mature understanding of the academy with the wisdom to appreciate the important traditions that should be preserved and the courage to pursue what ought to change.

## QUALITIES & CHARACTERISTICS

- A caring, compassionate, and humble leader and supervisor.
- An active, engaged, and accessible leader on campus.
- A willingness and comfort to serve as a mentor to staff where appropriate.
- Outstanding listening skills with an approach that seeks to understand before acting.
- A strategic thinker who can inspire others around a shared vision.
- Comfort in working with a small, engaged, and relationship-focused community of faculty, staff, and students.
- Unquestioned integrity in their life and work.
- The ability to bring energy into the room that elevates conversation and encourages engagement.







## APPLICATION PROCESS

The application should be submitted as three separate PDFs:

- A detailed letter of interest addressing the candidate's professional experiences given the expectations of the position.
- A current resume or curriculum vitae (CV); and
- A list of five professional references with contact information and a brief description explaining the working relationship of each to the applicant (references will not be contacted until the semi-finalist stage of the search)

Nominations and applications should be sent to [WWCProvost@academicsearch.org](mailto:WWCProvost@academicsearch.org). The position is open until filled and applications received by **October 24, 2025**, will be assured full priority consideration. Assisting Warren Wilson College with this search is Dr. Thomas C. Shandley, Senior Consultant with Academic Search.

*Warren Wilson College is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to developing a campus community that reflects the full diversity of the human experience and, as such, welcomes all applicants. Warren Wilson College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, gender or gender identity, age, marital status, disability, or sexual orientation in the administration of its educational policies, recruitment or admission of students, scholarship, grant or loan programs, athletic or other College administered programs, employment procedures, training programs, promotion policies or other related personnel practices.*

# ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting Warren Wilson College 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.

