

SEARCH PROFILE:

VICE PRESIDENT AND DEAN OF
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Warren Wilson
COLLEGE

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THE SEARCH

Warren Wilson College (Swannanoa, NC), an institution known for its innovative programming and commitment to environmental sustainability, invites applications, expressions of interest, and nominations of candidates in the search for a **Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement**. Situated just outside Asheville, NC, Warren Wilson College is one of only nine federally designated “work colleges” at which student life integrates rigorous academics, on-campus jobs, and meaningful engagement in the surrounding community. Together, these attributes undergird the experiences of Warren Wilson students.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Warren Wilson College’s distinctive approach to education intentionally integrates academics, work, and community engagement to cultivate curiosity, empathy, and integrity, which empowers students to think deeply, challenge themselves, and act on a fierce commitment to their communities. The College empowers graduates to pursue meaningful careers and lead purposeful lives dedicated to a just, equitable, and sustainable world.

Rooted in this mission, Warren Wilson is a liberal arts institution grounded in social responsibility, where hard work and community are more than just words. Students are employed on work crews, which are the life force of the College in its day-to-day operations. A working farm, garden, and forest embody the College’s commitment to environmental sustainability. The 1,100+ acres of land that comprises Warren Wilson provides food for the campus and surrounding community, and its outdoor environment provides a variety of experiential learning opportunities for students across academic disciplines. The landscape helps create a unique ecosystem that fosters community and a lifelong love for learning. Warren Wilson College is consistently one of the Fiske Guide’s top “Best Buy” colleges. The College was recently ranked in College Magazine’s “top 10 greenest campuses” and in the Princeton

Review’s top 10 schools for “LGBTQ Friendly” and “Students Most Engaged in Service.” The College’s most popular programs are Art, Biology, Creative Writing, Conservation Biology, Environmental Studies, Psychology, and Pre-Vet.

ENROLLMENT

- 733 Students
- Students living on campus: 86%
- Sex: 65.2% female, 31.9% male, 2.9% other/not reported
- Pronoun Usage: 52.3% “she”, 32.8% “he”, 11% “they”, 3.9% none provided
- Percentage of first-generation students: 22% of new first-year students
- Percentage of in-state students: 40%
- Percentage of out-of-state students: 56%
- Percentage of international students: 4% (comp. to 2% in 2016, 3% in 2021, and 5% in 2022)
- Percentage of BIPOC students: 18.8%
- States represented: 45
- Countries represented: 24
- Student athletes: 28%
- 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 Arts, and Master of Fine Arts degrees.

Students’ learning is supported in and out of the classroom through a dedicated and talented faculty; 100% of the full-time faculty hold a doctorate or terminal degree.

THE SEARCH (CONT.)

CAMPUS

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

LOCATION, COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS & LOCAL CULTURE.

Warren Wilson College is in the Swannanoa River valley near both Asheville and Black Mountain, North Carolina, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains—the most biodiverse temperate region in the Western Hemisphere. Each year, Warren Wilson students contribute more than 50,000 hours of service to local communities, including Asheville. Warren Wilson students' community engagement alone contributes over \$400,000 annually to the local economy. The total economic impact on Buncombe County is worth over \$35 million dollars per year, equivalent to more than 700 jobs. From engaging with Asheville community organizations and citizens through service, to showcasing their arts and crafts at the semi-annual Lake Eden Arts Festival (LEAF), to utilizing alumni relationships at local farms and businesses for internships and jobs, students blur the line between Asheville and Warren Wilson daily. The successes of Asheville and Warren Wilson have been, and will continue to be, intertwined. The mutual influence is vast and due in part to the loyalty of Warren Wilson alumni to Asheville.

Warren Wilson's location combines the best of both worlds with access to a world-class city while being surrounded by mountains on one of the most beautiful campuses in the country. Asheville combines the progressive flavor of Austin, Boulder, or Portland with the culture and unspoiled beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Entertainment and vibrant culture are a quick 10-minute drive away. Explore clubs, coffee houses, funky shops, craft studios, theaters and venues, galleries, craft breweries, festivals, independent bookstores, organic markets, curious museums, and mountain art/craft/music festivals.





STUDENT LIFE

Warren Wilson students are often characterized as spirited, funky, and authentic. They are hardworking and committed to advancing social justice. They are passionate, driven by interests, and inspired to be a positive and supportive force. While the campus' location is certainly important for many students, it is the tight-knit, open community and vibrant student life that serve as one of the most significant draws to Warren Wilson. The College offers many student clubs, organizations, and activities that supplement the student experience. Weekends on campus are never dull as approximately 90 percent of students live on campus and the City of Asheville, the mountains, and other attractions are just a short drive away.

ATHLETICS

The athletics program at Warren Wilson has grown in the past couple of years as the College is in the process of becoming an NCAA Division III institution. As of this past summer, Warren Wilson is a member of the Coast to Coast Athletic Conference. With this move, the College anticipates being able to attract more student athletes to Warren Wilson. In addition to the 17 intercollegiate athletic teams, we also have club and intramural sports on campus. Owls represent Warren Wilson's mascot and the chant "hootie hoo" can be heard across campus.

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

Warren Wilson College practices a unique and collaborative approach to college governance. Open communication is key to building trust, inclusivity, and effectiveness in the College's governance system. Gathering all campus constituencies together—students, staff, and faculty—the College seeks to provide a balanced structure for addressing policy questions, undertaking program development, ensuring effective communications, and solving problems together. The College's governance framework provides a platform for all

points of view, creates an ideal learning milieu, fosters school unity and pride, and generates sound decisions and advice.

The governance structure of Warren Wilson College consists of the Board of Trustees, the President, Cabinet, President's Council (with student, faculty, and staff representatives), Faculty Body, Staff Body, 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. Utilizing the Shared Equity Leadership model to build capacity across the College, the Office of Inclusive Excellence is methodical about engaging our diversity whether it be within the student work experience or the Board of Trustees. The uniquely high proportion of the student body at Warren Wilson who identify

as LGBTQIA+ is one element of diversity. 56 percent of the student body comes from outside of North Carolina, including students from 45 states and 24 countries. Over a quarter are student athletes and 41 percent are eligible for a Pell grant. Approximately 24 percent of our student body identifies as first-generation college students. 18.8 percent of our students identify as being of African/Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and Asian (ALIA) heritage.

ACADEMICS

The faculty have redesigned the curriculum to ensure high-impact learning experiences *for credit* for every student—a promise that reflects our history as progressive educators and achieves integration of work, academics, and community engagement through experiential learning in the liberal arts. The curricular reform solidifies the College's commitment to experiential learning, deepens student engagement, and

improves outcomes. The scale and scope of the change is extraordinary. Warren Wilson is positioned as a leading college in the country for experiential learning inside and outside the classroom. Every student in every major will have multiple community engagement experiences, work-integrated learning experiences, and project-based and place-based learning experiences through their four-years at Warren Wilson.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement will be fully embedded into the academic curriculum and the corresponding catalog, meaning that students will not be required to complete co-curricular experiences to fulfill the Community Engagement Commitment. This will allow for seamless, integrated community engagement that puts Warren Wilson on the map as an innovator in integrating community engagement into the curriculum to enhance quality, accessibility, and meaningful

learning outcomes for every student. Through the leadership of Student Life and the Community Engagement Office, changes and improvements to the First Year Experience at Warren Wilson are also embedded within the new curriculum. The College will continue to have the First Year Seminar program with a focus on community engagement with local partners. Opportunities exist for teaching assistants with some first year seminars depending on faculty preference.

THE WORK PROGRAM

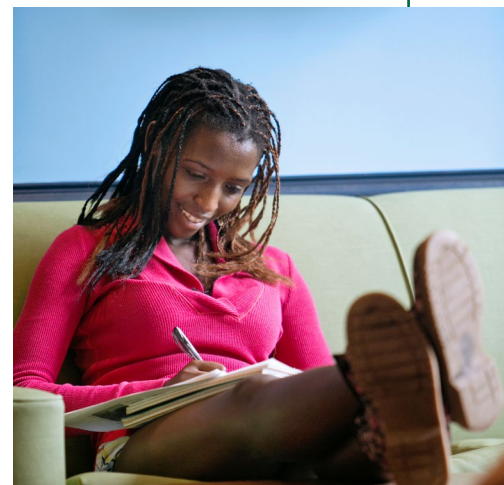
At Warren Wilson, students learn, work, and serve; these three elements are integrated because the College believes that all experiences have something to teach. Every residential Warren Wilson student works, and the Work Program is different from other jobs because of the emphasis on learning by doing.

All work experiences help students develop the skills employers look for and integrate with a student's academic program and with their engagement in the greater community. Students also earn a wage that helps offset the cost of tuition. In addition, before graduating, students undertake and complete a project serving the larger community.

Warren Wilson is a self-reliant community, where everybody does their part to keep the College operating. Work crews become part of a student's identity, and crew members become

family. Living, working together, and learning to serve one another creates a sense of community pride that one cannot quite grasp without seeing it for oneself. Through work crews, research projects, service-learning experiences, and internships, Warren Wilson graduates leave well prepared to lead meaningful lives and careers. They are praised by employers for their ability to work hard and to think critically across disciplines. And they are regularly accepted into graduate programs, medical schools, veterinary schools, and organizations like Teach for America and the National Park Service.

Due to its status as a federally designated work college and as 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 meaningful work experiences Warren Wilson students engage in during their time on campus.





OVERVIEW OF THE POSITION OF VICE PRESIDENT AND DEAN OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement serves on the President's Cabinet with the Controller, Executive Director of Strategic Ventures, Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Dean of Inclusive Excellence, and the Provost and Dean of the Faculty.

POSITION SUMMARY

The Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement is a critical leadership position responsible for fostering a dynamic and inclusive campus environment that enhances the overall student experience. This role involves overseeing and strategically guiding student programming, leadership development, and services to nurture a vibrant campus community. The individual in this position will collaborate with various stakeholders to advocate for student needs and contribute to the holistic development of students. The individual in this role is responsible for policy development, supervision of professional staff, budget development and oversight, and program planning and implementation for Student Life.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Vice President oversees the Student Life Division and is responsible for the strategy, management, and vision of the following programs and services: Athletics, Counseling Center; Health Center; Residence Life and Housing including student conduct oversight; Spiritual Life; Student Activities, First Year Experience (includes Orientation programming); the Center for Student Well-Being. The Director of Public Safety is jointly supervised by the Vice President and Dean for Student Engagement and the Director of Operations.
- Participates with other senior staff in institutional planning, policy development, problem-solving, and emergency response.
- Develops, implements, administers, and evaluates programs, policies, staff, and budgets necessary to accomplish the mission, goals, and objectives of the

Division and College.

- Enhances the educational experience through the development and implementation of policies and programs that promote the personal growth and development of students.
- Develops a competent, productive, and effective division staff by supervising, directly and through delegation, administrative, professional, and student support personnel.
- Implements and enforces policies and college regulations that pertain to campus life and the Student Life Division.
- Facilitates the student life judicial system.
- Oversees Title IX coordination.
- Advises faculty, staff, parents, Board of Trustees, and Alumni Board on issues relating to student life and the Division's activities.
- Supervises the planning, implementation, and coordination of student orientation.
- Maintains an "open door policy" to respond to student concerns and facilitates referrals to appropriate staff and offices.
- Keeps informed on trends in higher education and legal issues that relate to student life. Participates in relevant professional associations and conferences.
- Participates fully in the campus shared governance structure. Serves on committees and task forces.
- Develops, maintains, and works within a realistic budget, with specific attention to contract work for special projects and ongoing department needs.
- The preference is that the VPDSE live on campus in a college-owned house.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

PRESIDENT – DR. DAMIÁN J. FERNÁNDEZ

Dr. Damián J. Fernández was named the 10th president of Warren Wilson College on June 1, 2023.

A Cuban immigrant who grew up in Puerto Rico and a first-generation college student, Fernández comes to Warren Wilson with more than 30 years of experience in teaching and leadership positions at both private and public institutions. Most recently, he served as president of Eckerd College.

Fernández's aspirations for Warren Wilson College include advancing innovative programs that deepen project- and problem-based learning, growing, and diversifying enrollment, addressing facilities and other institutional needs, and rethinking the traditional business model of liberal arts colleges.

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



A catalytic leader and progressive educator, he is a National Science Foundation grant recipient, and he 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. Warren Wilson's values, heritage, and pedagogy resonate deeply with him.

OUR PROGRESSIVE PROMISE: EDUCATION IN ACTION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Our founders would be proud. A 1933 Asheville Farm School report entitled *A New Progressive Educational Program* announced a bold vision—one that rejected the “standard educational procedures,” embraced “the changing conditions” of the students at that time, and promised education that gives “the student the first and last consideration.” The School promoted access and innovation to cultivate the minds and hearts of students who, empowered, would live lives of purpose.

The [Progressive Promise](#) Renewed: Today, 90 years later, Warren Wilson College advances that inspiring tradition. Today we recommit to being a national leader for learning in action for our times. We are rekindling the progressive principles on which our College was built. We will reaffirm our commitment to the liberal arts and sciences for a positive impact on the world. We will be an innovative, inclusive, experiential liberal arts college committed to excellence and access. Through learning by doing—in the classroom, in our work program, and in our communities—our students will gain tools and confidence to advance individual purpose in service to the common good.

Warren Wilson is reimagining liberal arts education for our times by:

- responsible utilization of our 1,100-acre campus, rich with biodiversity in the Swannanoa Valley, and expanding community partnerships across the greater Asheville region for hands-on, action-based education embedded in the real world.
- deepening our strengths in environmental studies, the arts, and human dynamics and social justice.
- empowering student learning in and out of the classroom through experiential learning, meaningful work supporting College operations, and credit-earning community engagement and career relevant courses across all majors.

Our enhanced experiential learning model will provide students engaging ways to address the pressing issues of our times as well as the timeless questions of human existence. Our purpose is to empower our students with skills, purpose, and ethical agency. Our ultimate aspiration is to educate the bold, ethical, entrepreneurial leaders of tomorrow who will usher in a better world for all.



LEADERSHIP AGENDA

A proven collaborative and creative leader within the context of an environment that embraces shared governance. The successful candidate will be an educator at the soul, promote student empowerment and efficacy, be deeply innovative and serve as an integral partner with the academic community. They will advance student engagement, helping to craft shared community values and norms, and articulate the educational philosophy and impact of a residential progressive campus. The leader in this area will empower students through efficacy and resilience.

Sustain a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives for all students and staff. Inclusive Excellence is a campus priority. Therefore, the new Vice President will be someone with a strong understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging frameworks and demonstrable experience implementing campus-based initiatives informed by this body of knowledge. A main focus will be partnering with others in the campus community to make meaningful and measurable progress toward a campus culture of collaboration, trust, and accountability. Warren Wilson desires to be a space of convening and bridge building across differences. Expertise in this area is valuable.

Be adept at applying strategic planning, research, assessment, and communication skills to evaluate and promote divisional needs and College goals. The incoming Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement is expected to provide vision in the leadership of all Student Life functions. A top priority will be implementing a shared vision for the future direction of the Division, including the development of seamless student services. The successful candidate will have the expertise and communication skills to plan strategically, use assessment data, and organize the Division to best utilize resources that are available. The successful candidate will have the experience and judgment to be an innovative and creative change agent who can move the Division to new levels of excellence from day one.

Participate on the President's Senior Leadership team as a strong, knowledgeable, and collaborative leader who is prepared to advocate for the interests of the students and the Division of Student Life while also being an active contributor to discussions and collaborations with institution-wide priorities. Amidst new leadership and institutional change, the College is seeking an experienced

senior leader with strong communication and management skills, knowledge, experience, and energy capable of elevating Student Life and the College to new integrated levels while serving the needs of present and future students.

Enhance strategic partnerships with the Provost's office and faculty to promote student success and retention.

The new Vice President must possess the collaborative skills, credibility, and knowledge to build connections between faculty and student life professionals to maximize the potential for all students at Warren Wilson to engage and thrive. The Vice President must develop a shared understanding of the academic mission and the contributing role of student affairs and academic support. The Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement will be expected to work closely with the President and Provost to strengthen the ties between the curricular and co-curricular areas of the College with the ultimate objective to maximize the success of all students. Demonstrated experience of successful collaborations with academic affairs, particularly as it relates to enhancing measures of student success and retention, is essential.

Provide vision, innovation, and advocacy to strengthen the support of the professional staff of the Division of Student Life. The new Vice President will have exemplary management skills that harness potential, build trust, set high expectations and boost morale of an experienced and talented staff. They will have the skills and attributes to develop and manage a skillful and highly functioning team with a clearly articulated vision and mission. The new Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement must be adept at displaying the understanding, empathy, and vision to recruit, motivate, mobilize, and engage the professional staff to stay and thrive.

Collaborate with Academics, Inclusive Excellence, and other campus partners to strategically lead our efforts to provide mental health support at Warren Wilson College.

We are one of 13 colleges that will receive a portion of \$8.5 million in funding from The Endeavor Foundation for student mental health. This includes a share of \$3.3 million in funding for the first phase of "Enhancing Student Learning and Experience through Campus Wellness, Student Well-being and Mental Health Initiatives." The multi-year collaborative project seeks both to respond to pressing needs and to integrate attention to mental health, wellbeing, and wellness throughout student learning.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND DESIRED SKILLS, EXPERIENCES, AND CHARACTERISTICS

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Robust and increasingly progressive leadership roles in student affairs in higher education of 7 or more years.
- A master's degree in student personnel, higher education administration, or related field.
- Demonstrated commitment to the values and opportunities espoused in a residential progressive education.
- Proven effectiveness in developing and delivering broad initiatives that advance inclusive excellence in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- A doctoral degree in student personnel, higher education administration, or related field.
- A knowledge of and appreciation for the nature of Work Colleges.
- Thorough understanding of student development and learning theories, best practices including expertise in assessment & implementation, and organizational management
- One to two years of experience overseeing Title IX coordination.
- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of current issues in higher education and federal laws impacting college students.
- Proven ability to recruit, retain, and motivate high-performing team members with a demonstrated commitment to supporting the professional development of staff members, setting clear performance expectations, providing constructive feedback, and making timely, transparent decisions.
- Ability to effectively balance high-level strategic thinking with hands-on engagement in daily activities.
- Knowledge of student information relations systems and technology and a demonstrated ability to use data in the analysis and evaluation of programs and services.
- Demonstrated ability to remain calm and effectively manage, plan, and coordinate responses to crisis or emergency situations.
- Experience with athletic administration.
- Extensive experience in policy development with inclusiveness and transparency.
- Senior-level management experience in higher education, including responsibility for personnel and budgeting.

DESIRED KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES

- Honesty, integrity, and openness to an environment that is radically inclusive.
- A generous spirit exhibited by a deep compassion for students.
- Embrace diversity in all its manifestations, a gracious empathy.
- Radical transparency in communications.
- An ability to approach the role with a "light heart" in creating enhanced community engagement.
- A willingness and desire to be fully immersed in the community.
- A deep curiosity about students.
- A transformative mindset in approaching the co-curricular possibilities in a work- and service-connected student experience on the cutting edge of higher education.
- Concerned and focused on the well-being of students.
- An ability to balance leadership expectations and responsibilities with developing an inclusive, vibrant student community.





APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications should consist of:

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

All documents should be submitted in PDF format.

Nominations and applications should be sent to WWCVPSE@academicsearch.org. The position is open until filled, and applications received by **March 22, 2024** will be assured full priority consideration. Assisting Warren Wilson College with this search is Dr. Tom Shandley, a 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.

