



PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

THE OPPORTUNITY

Aurora University (AU), a private university located in Aurora, Illinois, invites nominations and applications for the position of Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost).

Aurora University, a comprehensive independent university with its campus in the second largest city in the state of Illinois, is known for its singular commitment to students and their success. AU blends its reputation for preparing graduates for lives of personal fulfillment and professional achievement with a distinguished tradition of community collaboration, academic excellence, cocurricular engagement, and effective management. The university is forward-looking and entrepreneurial. It promotes these future-oriented traits with a deep commitment to putting students first.

The university presents an unmatched opportunity for an enterprising, service-oriented, creative academic leader to guide this community. In June of 2023, the university welcomed Dr. Susana Rivera-Mills as the institution's 14th and first Latina President. As president, Dr. Rivera-Mills is building on the momentum of AU's achievements and innovations to ensure that the university remains united in its dedication to the transformative power of learning. AU's Provost will enjoy the support of a president who has served in academic leadership roles across diverse public institutions and is ready to partner to move the university forward.

The new Provost will report to President Rivera-Mills as a member of the President's Cabinet and will lead the academic affairs team as they continue AU's rich history of serving a diverse undergraduate and graduate/professional student body. They will oversee AU's office of Academic Affairs, three colleges (College of Education and Social Work, College of Health and Sciences, and College of Liberal Arts and Business), the School of Nursing, the library, AU Online, the registrar, and global affairs. The new Provost is expected to take office in summer 2024.

ABOUT AURORA UNIVERSITY

Aurora University is a four-year, private, nonprofit, accredited higher education institution offering students an excellent education that will prepare them for success beyond AU. The university was founded in 1893 in Mendota, Illinois, as a seminary college before moving to Aurora in 1912. Aurora is the second largest city in Illinois, located approximately 45 miles west of Chicago.

Aurora University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission to award degrees at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. The university, which was designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution in 2018, enrolls approximately 5,900 degree-seeking students. AU students participate in a wide range of on- and off-campus learning experiences. They can join more than 50 musical, literary, religious, social, and service organizations and play active roles in campus governance. In addition, the university fields 24 NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletic teams.

AU is a relationship-intensive institution, fostering a culture of collaboration and partnership among faculty, staff, and students. We believe this encourages engagement both in and out of the classroom; creates a culture of connections leading to mentorships, internships, and job opportunities; promotes personal and professional growth; and cultivates a sense of belonging.

Also central to our identity is our active engagement with the community. Whether responding to evolving academic needs, addressing workforce demands, providing enriching cultural experiences for our neighbors, or participating in acts of service throughout the Fox River Valley, community interaction is at the heart of what we do.

Aurora University is proud to be a “private university with a public purpose” and to work at the intersection of need and hope to pioneer sustainable solutions to complex social problems. As one of the lowest-cost private institutions in Illinois, we offer our students the opportunity to have an outstanding educational experience at an affordable price. Additionally, we are committed to welcoming new populations to higher education by supporting a wide range of programs essential for serving diverse learners. Most recently for example, AU has become one of a limited number of colleges and universities across the country offering a program for neurodiverse students to garner the support and guidance needed to adjust to campus life, earn their university degree, and make a successful transition to the workplace.

Our success can be attributed to our innovative culture — where we prioritize critical thinking, creativity, and a mindset of lifelong learning.

ACADEMICS

Today, AU enrolls over 4,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students and is home to 400 faculty and staff. The university awards degrees at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels and offers more than 50 undergraduate majors and minors. Large enrollments are concentrated in nursing, social work, business, education psychology, health sciences, and criminal justice. The graduate level program offerings include athletic training, business, education, criminal justice, nursing, and social work.

There are three colleges: the College of Education and Social Work, the College of Health and Sciences, and the College of Liberal Arts and Business, and a School of Nursing; each entity is headed by a dean who works closely with school and department leaders and with the Provost.

College of Education and Social Work

George Williams School of Social Work

School of Education

College of Health and Sciences

School of Health Sciences

School of Natural Sciences, Technology, and Math

College of Liberal Arts and Business

Dunham School of Business

School of Humanities

School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

School of Nursing

In addition to its regional accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (reaffirmation was completed in 2023), AU maintains a number of professional program accreditations. The university also has a growing number of articulation agreements with area graduate and professional institutions, which facilitate vibrant pathways for faculty collaboration and student advancement.

FACULTY

AU has 123 full-time faculty at the lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor ranks in addition to a large and dedicated cohort of adjunct faculty. At present, 46% of full-time faculty have tenure or long-term clinical appointments.

The faculty at Aurora is a robust mix of full- and part-time professionals, many of whom have been active at Aurora for many years. This blend provides enough full-time faculty to enact the governance and student support functions of the university, as well as a strong cadre of part-time individuals who bring their scholarship and experience to the classroom. The university has a Faculty Senate with seven committees. The Senate considers all proposals affecting academic programs, academic policies, and faculty personnel policies. The Provost is an ex-officio member of, and reports regularly to, the Senate.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Aurora University is a federally designated Minority-Serving Institution. A significant percentage of the 4,000 undergraduates are the first in their families to enroll in a college or university. Latina/o students comprised 38% of the institution's undergraduate population in the fall of 2022, with white students accounting for 43%. Black, Asian, and international students constituted the remainder of the full-time enrollment. Women outnumber men at Aurora University by a margin of 2:1.

One hundred percent of this year's full-time, first-time AU freshmen received some form of financial aid. Overall, 96% of all undergraduates are aid recipients, while 67% of graduate

students also receive assistance. A significant majority of Aurora University undergraduates commute to the campus from home or live in rental units scattered throughout the city. Approximately 700 students live in campus housing.

Intercollegiate and club athletic programs are an especially important part of campus life at Aurora University. The Spartans compete in Division III of the NCAA in 24 sports. AU is a dominant force in the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference and participates in the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association and the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin.

The institution also recently added men's wrestling and women's wrestling. AU continues to climb the rankings in the prestigious Learfield Cup competition. Recent years saw the Spartans boast 77 conference titles and 96 appearances in post-season NCAA tournaments. Individual student-athletes continue to contend for national recognition among their peers as players and as scholars.

Approximately 70% of students participate in internships, study abroad, research, and service projects. Students participate in more than 50 musical, literary, religious, social, and service organizations and play active roles in campus governance. Service is a defining characteristic of AU. Participation in volunteer and mission activities continues to grow in the aftermath of the pandemic.

PRESIDENT

Dr. Susana Rivera-Mills is Aurora University's 14th president and the first Latina president in AU's history. She earned her doctorate in Romance Languages from the University of New Mexico and has served in several leadership roles in higher education. Most recently, before taking office at AU, she served as provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at Ball State University. Prior to Ball State, she served in numerous administrative roles at Oregon State University.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND CABINET

Aurora University is governed by a 22-member self-perpetuating Board of Trustees that meets four times a year and relies upon four standing committees (Audit, Educational Affairs, Finance and Administration, and Trustee) to discharge its responsibilities.

Under the leadership of the President, Aurora University's eight Cabinet members oversee the strategic vision of the university, ensuring that students always come first and that our mission — an inclusive community dedicated to the transformative power of education — is prevalent in all we do.

FINANCES

Aurora University relies upon disciplined enrollment management strategies and thoughtful stewardship to manage its financial profile. The institution pairs its comparatively low tuition level (\$10,000 less than private university competitors) with a carefully managed financial aid policy

to produce the annual growth in net revenue necessary to fund annual operations and regular increases in compensation. The combination of a disciplined operating budget philosophy, a discerning advancement strategy, and a judicious use of debt allows the university to provide continuous support for the educational purposes of its current and future student bodies.

The university boasts 15 consecutive years of budget surpluses and unqualified audit opinions with no internal control findings. AU does not rely upon short-term credit to meet operational needs and has a sustained record of comfortably meeting its debt covenants.

AU's operating budget is approximately \$95 million. The university budget is constructed on a cash basis that incorporates conservatism and robust contingencies. Each annual budget earmarks funds for debt service, to include principal amortization and funding for facility reinvestment. Because of the high reliance on tuition to fund its operations, conservative estimates paired with budgeted contingency are paramount to preserving the flexibility to respond to changing conditions. At the direction of the Board of Trustees, university administration consistently delivers a balanced budget by the final iteration of the budget.

The institution's current federal health index score is 3.0, the highest score achievable.

The university's endowment has grown in recent years through the introduction of a number of programmatic restricted funds. For example, seven new donor-funded distinguished professorships have been introduced in the last decade. Earnings from such sources also support some of AU's most distinctive student learning opportunities. At the close of FY23, the endowment was approximately \$50 million.

CAMPUS FACILITIES

Through a combination of budget surpluses, fundraising, government appropriations, and foundation grants, AU has invested over \$252 million in new construction, renovation, and campus improvements, including nine new buildings, over the past two decades. The newest facility, opened in August 2022, is Don and Betty Tucker Hall, which houses AU's pioneering neurodiversity center. To support the development of the hall, AU raised over \$8.8 million from major donors, businesses, and government sources.

The Kimberly and James Hill Student Success Center houses the Office of Career Services. Furthermore, there is a new multi-purpose building at the Spartan Athletic Park that contains a practice facility for our new men's and women's wrestling programs, an additional weight room, and classroom and lab space for our exercise science, athletic training, and sport management programs. This expansion has been a continuation of campus improvements in recent years that have included renovation of campus dining, a new parking garage, and an upgrade to the Parolini Music Center.

In early 2024, Aurora University's board of trustees approved funding to design the university's newest building, a Learning Commons, intended to house academic and career education programming to prepare students for success in a rapidly evolving world. The building is planned for completion in the Fall of 2026 and will be financed through a combination of fundraising and government appropriations.

LOCAL AREA

Aurora University is located on a tree-lined campus of 37 acres, nestled in a residential neighborhood in Aurora, Illinois. The Spartan Athletic Park, located about 1 mile from campus, is a 70+ acre multisport athletic park.

With a population of nearly 200,000 residents, Aurora blends the benefits of a small city with close proximity to the Illinois Technology and Research Corridor along Interstate 88 and easy access to Chicago via Metra train or car. Aurora's downtown is located on the Fox River and is enjoying a period of revitalization as new commercial, residential, dining, and entertainment venues open their doors.

ABOUT THE PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POSITION

The Provost role at AU is an opportunity for candidates who seek to make a difference in the lives of students. The next Provost must lead with vision, empathy, and care for the intellectual growth and personal well-being of AU's students. In this position, the Provost will guide, support, and celebrate interdisciplinary programs and opportunities and will be instrumental in designing ways for AU to serve the surrounding communities.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced, authentic, and relationship-oriented academic leader, with demonstrated success in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion; fostering connections across the institution and with those external partners with a vested interest; and bridging gaps to promote student success. Outstanding leadership, exemplary interpersonal skills, and expert strategic planning experience are essential, as are financial acumen and the ability to promote a culture of mutual trust and respect, collaboration, and transparency. The ideal candidate will have an inclusive leadership style and will partner with the president and her Cabinet to foster a culture of trust, openness, transparency, and innovation.

LEADERSHIP AGENDA

The Provost provides executive-level leadership and strategic vision for the academic mission of AU. The Provost will oversee the creation and implementation of programs in consonance with the university's strategic plan. The university is currently developing a new five-year strategic plan that will be implemented in fall 2024. The Provost will guide the colleges and schools considering the highly collaborative nature of the AU campus and will promote the institution's shared values of integrity, citizenship, continuous learning, and excellence. As the chief academic officer, the Provost maintains operating authority over the academic budget of the university.

The leadership agenda includes the following priorities:

- Developing an innovative vision and strategy for academic excellence, including unique and relevant programs that boost enrollment and provide financial stability.
- Embracing and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within all aspects of academic affairs.

- Building a strong sense of community by recognizing and supporting dedicated faculty and staff.
- Ensuring the high quality of academic programs through effective use of assessment, accreditation, grant writing, and innovative modalities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Provost, in coordination with upper administration, is responsible for managing the following colleges, centers, and divisions:

- College of Education and Social Work
- College of Health and Sciences
- College of Liberal Arts and Business
- School of Nursing
- Phillips Library
- AU Online
- Global Affairs
- Registrar

The Provost will play a key leadership role in guiding the advancement of several strategic priorities that exemplify the university's mission of education and service. The Provost will also engage with a wide range of community members across the university and serve as a champion and active participant in facilitating the success of faculty, staff, and students. With this in mind, the Provost will be well-positioned to address the following opportunities and challenges:

- Communication and transparency
- Commitment to shared governance
- Fostering a dynamic and collaborative environment
- Support student learning and success
- Supporting student development and contemporary trends
- Working with a dynamic leadership group
- Promoting the university's role in Illinois

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION

The position of Provost at Aurora University requires certain talents, skills, and experiences that will enable continuing growth and development of the academic programs and the university, including the following:

Required Qualifications:

- An earned doctorate or terminal degree from a nationally accredited university and a record of teaching, scholarly growth and professional development, and service is required.
- Candidate must qualify for rank at full professor status in one of AU's academic departments.

- Successful and progressively responsible experience in academic administration at a college or university.

Preferred skills and experience of the ideal candidate:

- Exhibit strong communication and active listening skills with a transparent approach to leadership that inspires trust and the ability to work effectively with multiple constituencies, including students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, donors, community partners, and corporate partners.
- A forward-thinking leader capable of formulating and implementing annual academic goals for the institution within a shared governance environment, collaboratively incorporating objectives and strategies into operational plans, and driving outcomes through a data-informed approach.
- Exhibit the ability to motivate and support the implementation of innovative teaching technologies, methodologies, and interdisciplinary approaches and to elevate the overall learning experience.
- Intellectual curiosity about and sensitivity to a wide range of academic disciplines, interests, and constituencies represented at AU.
- Demonstrated success in planning, leading, and implementing strategic goals within complex organizations, including a record of bringing ideas and projects to fruition, working with and supervising faculty and staff, working effectively with colleagues across academic areas and other university leadership, and making decisive, difficult decisions when necessary.
- Broad administrative and academic experience that supports the diverse mission of a comprehensive university and the ability to lead multiple colleges and schools that comprise diverse academic programs.
- A successful record of creative leadership in generating externally derived resources, including successful grant development, partnership development, and philanthropy.
- Experience with fine-tuning the academic portfolio to reflect a commitment to both the liberal arts and sciences and workforce development.
- Success with the development of infrastructure and evaluation of appropriate online instruction.
- Success with shared governance as a transparent communicator.
- Effective budget management expertise. This includes working closely with the Academic Leadership team to develop and manage the budget to support academic programs, faculty development, and student success initiatives as well as identifying opportunities for revenue generation and cost-saving measures.
- Demonstrated commitment to supporting faculty professional development in pedagogical skills in the changing landscape of higher education.
- Success with a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in the academy. This includes responding to the changing pedagogical and academic needs of students and faculty.
- Capacity to lead the academic community through cultural change.
- Strong ethical values and integrity.
- Dynamic agent of change that moves at a fast pace.

HOW TO APPLY

The search for Aurora University's next Provost and Executive Vice President is being assisted by Maya Ranchod Kirkhope at Academic Search. Applications, nominations, and expressions of interest can be submitted in confidence to AuroraProvost@academicsearch.org.

Applications should consist of a detailed letter of interest that describes the candidate's interest and alignment with the agenda for leadership, and a current curriculum vitae, sent as separate PDFs.

The Search Committee will begin reviewing applications in early April and will review applications as they are received. Though applications continue to be accepted until the position is filled, only those materials received by **April 15, 2024**, are assured full consideration.

Aurora University is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

AURORA UNIVERSITY

FAST FACTS

4,098

total number of
undergraduate students

1,837

total number of
graduate students

36%

of undergraduates are
first-generation students

17%

of undergraduates are
student-athletes

88%

of full-time undergraduate
students hail from Illinois

95%

of undergraduate students
receive financial aid

49%

of first-year students are
eligible for Pell Grants

19:1

student-to-faculty
ratio



82%

of Class of 2022 graduates
are employed or attending
graduate school



#42

in top national university performers on social mobility
(U.S. News & World Report)



88%

of Class of 2022 graduates
are living in Illinois



largest majors by enrollment (fall 2023) and
starting salaries (Class of 2022)

	AU graduates	Nationally
Nursing	\$69,287	\$59,532
Business Administration	\$59,720	\$56,391
Social Work	\$44,981	\$36,375
Psychology	\$41,643	\$39,882
Criminal Justice	\$48,418	\$45,403



37,905

total number of alumni



Class of 2023 awarded degrees

1,209

Bachelor's

924

Master's

61

Doctoral