Southwestern University announces the search for a Vice President of University Relations

Southwestern University (SU), a distinctive, national liberal arts college, announces a search for its next Vice President of University Relations (VPUR). Under the leadership of recently appointed President Edward B. Burger, Southwestern is seeking to continue its ascent among the top 75 liberal arts colleges in the United States. Southwestern will select a new VPUR who will lead the development of fiscal resources and leverage the impact of SU’s dynamic and innovative new president to take the University to a new level of fundraising achievement.

The VPUR reports directly to the president and engages as a member of the senior leadership team, while directing the University Relations team—a professional staff of 19. Poised to build on its distinguished reputation and newly acquired momentum, Southwestern offers the new VPUR an uncommon opportunity for professional achievement.

What Others Are Saying About Southwestern

“One of the 100 top values in liberal arts colleges”
— Kiplinger’s

“1st in Texas liberal arts colleges on contributions to the public good”
— Washington Monthly

“8th in the country for Career Services”
— Princeton Review

“7th in Texas, America’s Top Colleges; and Rated ‘A-‘ for Financial Health”
— Forbes

“One of 40 Colleges that Change Lives”
— Colleges That Change Lives (newest edition)

“Strong in Business and Strong in Art or Design”
— Fiske Guide to Colleges

“Number 65 of the Best National Liberal Arts Colleges”
— US News & World Report
About Southwestern University

Southwestern is Texas’ oldest institution of higher learning, originally chartered under the Republic of Texas in 1840. Located in Georgetown, where the quality of life is exceptional, Southwestern is just 25 miles north of Austin, the state capital and one of the nation’s most vibrant cultural and hi-tech centers. Georgetown is located in Williamson County, where employment has increased by 73 percent since 2000, the third highest rate in the country.

Southwestern is a community of learning grounded in meaningful human relationships. SU’s small size and independent character afford a distinctive and humane way of engaging broader worlds of social and political life. Participants in this community are ‘global’ citizens. Each has a stake in the whole and all play parts in the decisions that shape the common life. SU’s Core Purpose, ‘to foster a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions toward the well-being of humanity,’ reflects the University’s values and underscores its historic connection with the United Methodist Church.

Academics

Southwestern is comprised of the Brown College of Arts and Sciences and the Sarofim School of Fine Arts. The University offers 38 majors that lead to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. Small class sizes, close interaction with faculty known for their teaching, scholarly and artistic abilities, and an emphasis on experiential learning coalesce to form the extraordinary academic character of the University.

The University’s 1,536 students have a passion for intellectual, creative and personal growth, and enjoy an 11:1 student-faculty ratio, experience classes with an average size of 15, and engage with their teachers, 100 percent of whom (tenured or tenure-track) hold the highest degree in their field. Of the entering first-year students in fall 2013, 75 percent ranked in the top quarter of their high school classes. More than half of all Southwestern students complete at least one internship experience and roughly 90 percent find employment or are accepted to graduate/professional schools within 10 months of graduation.

Southwestern has created a dynamic and evolving academic environment. The faculty recently enacted the most sweeping curricular changes in Southwestern’s history, with two initiatives reshaping the way students engage with global challenges:

Paideia (www.southwestern.edu/paideia) is a directed learning experience designed to integrate knowledge, methodologies, and philosophies from various fields of study across the curriculum. Paideia centers around topical themes in clustered courses, and instills in students the expectations for creative, critical ways of thinking that enrich students’ entire academic careers and promote a life of integrative learning.

Inquiry Initiative (www.southwestern.edu/departments/hhmi) Funded by a $1.3 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Inquiry Initiative is an innovative move to implement inquiry-based problem solving across the spectrum of the science and mathematics division and at every level of coursework from beginning to advanced study. Its success is manifested in summer student-faculty research opportunities, which have doubled to more than 40 annually, and the project is meeting its target of recruiting one-third of student summer researchers from underrepresented groups.
Student Life

Many factors combine to create a lifelong Southwestern Experience. Students at Southwestern enjoy and sustain a vibrant program of campus life activities. More than a third of all students study abroad and most take advantage of leadership and service opportunities by participating in Southwestern’s 90+ student organizations. Student-athletes compete on one or more of 20 NCAA Division III varsity teams, with football and women’s lacrosse being the most recent additions to the intercollegiate program.

Largely due to student initiative, Southwestern was the second university in Texas to sign the Talloires Declaration, a formal commitment to sustainability in higher education. Beyond the campus, students are civically engaged and volunteer in the community at more than twice the national average.

Campus Facilities

Southwestern’s campus is stunningly handsome with an extraordinary “curb appeal” for visitors and prospective students. This beautiful tree-shaded campus provides the quintessential residential college environment. In the past two decades, Southwestern has dedicated substantial effort and resources to expanding and modernizing its facilities for energy efficiency, while several older structures have been replaced. New additions since 1995 include: three new academic buildings; significant changes in the Sarofim School of Fine Arts including the renovated Alma Thomas Theater, a second live-performance theater, an art gallery, four art studios and music offices; a three-story much-used campus center; numerous apartment-style residence halls; and an attractive Admissions Center. Southwestern’s newest buildings are LEED-certified, and the grounds are maintained by computer-controlled watering systems employing environmentally sensitive reuse of water.

When completed, Southwestern’s new science center will bring together all the science disciplines under one roof and fully support students and faculty in the shared endeavor of discovery-based learning. At an estimated cost of $24 million, the 100,000+ square-foot facility will incorporate new construction and completely renovated existing space. The process is carefully sequenced to ensure that science education at Southwestern can continue uninterrupted as construction moves forward. In April 2014, ground was broken on the first stage—a new wing housing innovative laboratory spaces supporting introductory courses in physics, chemistry and biology, along with state-of-the-art facilities for student-faculty collaborative research. The University is now moving forward with fundraising for the next stage, a $16 million redesign and reconstruction of the existing building.

The Environs and Cultural Landscape

An integral part of Central Texas’ dynamic and diverse culture, in 1997 the welcoming community of Georgetown was the first in Texas to be named a “Great American Main Street City,” the highest honor bestowed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Austin, just 25 miles away, is a center of research activity and is in close proximity to San Antonio, Dallas and Houston, all of which are in the top 10 centers of growth and economic diversity in the U.S.

The Central Texas cultural scene offers many opportunities for artistic and literary enrichment, including the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin Museum of Art, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, the Harry Ransom Center, Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and the LBJ Presidential Library. Austin is also home to the Austin Lyric Opera, Austin Symphony, Ballet Austin, and the Zachary Scott Theatre, among many others. The annual South by Southwest (SXS) and Austin City Limits (ACL) events attract national audiences and popular musicians.
Qualitative Growth Through Resource Development

With an endowment of $253M and an annual budget of $50M, Southwestern enjoys an enviable financial position. Yet the lingering economic challenges of the past several years will require continued strategic and creative thinking and aggressive steps to enhance our resource base. In the past decade, enrollment has grown from around 1,250 to 1,500, providing some favorable economies of scale, but the costs of supporting curricular and academic programs, co-curricular activities, and comprehensive student services continue to increase. The University has instituted wise deficit-reduction initiatives that will provide for a sustainable and strong future, but new revenue from sources such as annual giving and increases in endowment will continue to be essential. More importantly, such increases are believed to be imminently achievable during the tenure of a new VPUR.

Positive indicators include alumni and parent constituencies who show encouraging potential for increased philanthropy. These traditional donor bases have not been thoroughly tapped in recent history and show few signs of donor fatigue. Moreover, the opportunity for building new relationships with a significant number of major first-time donors is within the energetic and genuine reach of a new VPUR, working with Southwestern’s recently appointed President Burger.

The new Vice President of University Relations will lead an operation that includes the Offices of Development, University Events, and Alumni and Parent Relations. An Office of Communications is free-standing within a new SUI organizational structure, and the VPUR and the Chief Marketing Officer will be expected to maintain a close and effective working relationship.

The following page provides a summary of the current base and emerging platform from which the Vice President can build the development and engagement programs.
The Office of Gift Programs

The Office of Gift Programs works to sustain Southwestern’s strengths and build new capacities for the future.

- Total gifts increased from $5.1M in fiscal year 2003 to $13.7M in fiscal year 2013. The total gifts received each year from 2009 to 2013 exceeded $10.3M.
- Total gifts received annually to the Southwestern Fund (the unrestricted annual fund) increased annually from 2009 to 2012 from $1.3M to $1.9M. The only downturn in this string of consecutive increases occurred in 2013 with a total of $1.6M.
- Membership in the President’s Council ($1,000+ donors) grew from 274 in 2003 to 516 in 2013.
- Alumni giving participation decreased from 33 percent in 2003 to 20 percent in 2013, but had an encouraging increase to 22 percent in 2014. Parent giving in 2014 hit a new high at 25 percent.
- The last comprehensive capital campaign (2002 – 2013) ended with gifts and pledges totaling just over $150M. The campaign goal was increased from $125M, and the timeline extended in 2010. Gifts and pledges were directed as follows:
  1. $19.7M to the Southwestern Fund
  2. $22.5M to the endowment
  3. $51.4M to the physical plant
  4. $45M to current restricted funds (program support)
  5. $11.4M from planned gift expectancies
- SU currently has 129 members in its 1840 Society (planned gift recognition society) with a documented inventory of more than $26M in planned gift expectancies.
- Recent research has provided a thoughtful analysis of the availability and potential of Southwestern alumni/donors in Texas’ major metropolitan areas.

The Office of University Events

The Office of University Events provides logistical support for special events sponsored by the Office of the President, Development, Alumni and Parent Relations, Provost, and other departments across campus. Special programs such as Commencement, Honors Convocation, Matriculation, and the Roy and Margaret Shilling Lecture Series are included in the range of events. In addition, the office is responsible for summer conferences and oversight of the University’s scheduling system.

The Office of Alumni and Parent Relations

The Association of Southwestern University Alumni (The Association) was established in 2003. Membership is free and for life.

- 15,000+ living Southwestern alumni are identified in Alumni Office records.
- The strength and engagement of The Association’s leadership has grown in recent years.
- SU alumni live in 50 states and more than 50 countries.
- Alumni engagement in Homecoming and Reunion Weekends has increased steadily since 2006 with a record 1,860 alumni attending Homecoming 2013.
- Alumni participate in 14 local associations across the U.S. and serve in more than 700 volunteer roles annually.
- Current parents total roughly 2,500; a formal Parent Leadership Gift Council was established in 2013 as a collaboration between Parent Relations and Development.
- A five-year strategic plan has been designed to engage alumni and parents through new volunteer opportunities; to develop a tracking system for alumni and parent engagement; to incorporate more fundraising elements into The Association; and to establish a communication plan for keeping constituencies informed.
- The office enjoys strong collaboration with the Offices of Admission, Athletics, Career Services, Communications, Information Services, Provost, Student Life, and University Events.
The Agenda for the New Vice President

The next VPUR is expected to be an energetic advancement leader with an affinity for higher education and a background of meaningful accomplishments in capital drives, success in major gift fundraising, and evidence of effective management of an advancement team. The successful candidate will be motivated by the opportunity to strengthen Southwestern’s culture of philanthropy through measurable increases in annual, capital and deferred giving. The specific expectations for the new VPUR include:

**Enhancing Southwestern’s Culture of Philanthropy.** There is recognition at Southwestern of the existing need and opportunity to expand the University’s resource base. Whether focusing on the annual fund, nurturing prospects for major and planned gifts, or initiating the next capital campaign, the VPUR is expected to have a direct impact on improving Southwestern’s overall philanthropic culture, while expanding its network of friends and donors. SU’s trustee and alumni leadership have pledged their full support and involvement. Engaging external constituencies, setting expectations, and establishing priorities on which future fundraising will be based are all elements in the enhancement of Southwestern’s philanthropic culture.

**Partnering with the President.** With a new VPUR working closely with Southwestern’s energetic new president, the university relations team is poised to take a major step forward, thereby matching the optimism and momentum being experienced in other programs of the University’s. The vice president will be a successful “boots on the ground” fundraiser who knows how to tell the Southwestern story, how to ask for gift support, and when to encourage the president to do the asking. President Burger holds the University’s future fundraising success among his highest priorities, and intends to be an active partner in the fundraising program. He will expect the VPUR to involve, guide and counsel him strategically and effectively in soliciting philanthropic support for the University.

**Preparing for the Next Campaign.** Southwestern’s current long-range plan (2009–2019) is at its mid-point, with an upcoming strategic review led by President Burger this fall. Mid-course adjustments to the plan are expected, likely raising new opportunities for fundraising at SU and providing a roadmap for the next campaign. Working with the president and the Board of Trustees, the vice president will play a central role in every phase of the planning and initiation of that campaign. Advice on messaging, preparing volunteer leadership, and the engagement of lead gifts are activities that Southwestern expects from the new VPUR.

**Setting the Bar (appropriately) High.** Establishing optimistic challenges and high expectations across all elements of the program will be important. The vice president will be expected to bring aggressive vision and strategic thinking to the establishment of challenging future goals. Encouragement of staff, delegation of responsibilities, careful evaluation of professional performance, and oversight of effective working relationships are essential to the development of a productive and successful University Relations program. The understanding and trust that grows from good management practices will enable Southwestern to achieve desired outcomes for the entire division.

**Engaging the Leadership Team.** The VPUR will join a senior administrative team that recognizes the need to work together to strengthen Southwestern’s prominence and financial position. The vice president will be expected to communicate clearly and openly with administrative colleagues, maintain transparency, and build trust. As a member of this team, the VPUR will bring a critical perspective to the consideration of issues that affect the entire institution. An ability to combine a strong advocacy for the University Relations program while working as a collaborative part of the senior administration will greatly enhance the VPUR’s effectiveness.

**Encouraging Campus-Wide Engagement.** Many areas of campus have an interest in establishing closer connections to the fundraising efforts at SU. In many cases, there are no better people to bring the detail and vibrancy of opportunities for gift support than the faculty and administrators who engage directly in the delivery of Southwestern’s educational program. The campus community provides a resource that can add value and expertise to the advancement effort.
An Uncommon Opportunity

In summary, Southwestern presents a distinctive leadership opportunity in sharp contrast to many others in the advancement/development market at this time.

- The collaboration with dynamic and fresh presidential leadership is uplifting.
- The excitement generated by President Burger is energizing.
- The potential for moving SU’s development program ahead a quantum step is clear.
- The faculty’s creativity and openness to change is genuine.
- The personal and professional appeal of geographic location is a bonus.
- The chance to make a significant difference in the life of the University is palpable.
- The Southwestern Experience truly engages minds and transforms lives.

How to Apply

The Southwestern University Search Committee will be accepting nominations and evaluating application materials on a rolling basis throughout the fall of 2014, and will begin to narrow the candidate pool in mid-November. Although applications will be accepted until the time a new vice president is selected, candidates should submit materials by Friday, November 14 for most favorable consideration. Final selection will be made early in 2015, and the new VPUR will be invited to begin work no later than July 1, 2015.

Thomas B. Courtice of AGB Search is assisting with this search. Nominators and prospective candidates may contact him at tbc@agbsearch.com or at 614.395.3229. Application materials should be submitted to: Daryl M. Allen, Chair, VPUR Search Committee at SouthwesternVP@agbsearch.com.

Materials should include a letter of candidacy responding to The Agenda for the New Vice President, a complete CV or resume, and the names and contact information (phone and email) for three references, none of whom will be contacted until later in the search nor without formal permission of the candidate. All inquiries and applications will be received and evaluated in full confidence.

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