Wilkes University

VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE
AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
WILKES UNIVERSITY VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE
AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Wilkes University seeks a strategic financial and business leader to partner with the President, his leadership team and the Board of Trustees in moving forward with the implementation of the University’s strategic plan for both the undergraduate and graduate programs. The individual will have responsibility for setting the high-level direction for all financial and business operations of the University, as well as ensuring effective day to day management of finance, physical plant, information technology, risk/compliance and other campus support operations.

WILKES UNIVERSITY

The institution known today as Wilkes University began in 1933, when Bucknell University established a junior college in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Bucknell University Junior College attracted eager, highly motivated, and able young people; virtually all were the first members of their families to benefit from higher education. In 1947, Wilkes College was chartered as an independent, nondenominational four-year college, with programs in the arts, sciences, and selected professional areas. Designated as a university in 1990, Wilkes offers undergraduate degrees and programs in six schools and colleges: the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; the College of Science and Engineering; the Jay S. Sidhu School of Business and Leadership; the Nesbitt School of Pharmacy; the Passan School of Nursing; and the School of Education.

Mentoring has been a core institutional value and is reflected in the Mission and Vision. The University strives to provide all students, staff, and faculty with rich mentoring experiences and meaningful short- and long-term relationships. This mentoring culture is key to fulfilling Wilkes’ mission by providing a rigorous educational experience that develops students intellectually and personally, engenders a sense of values and civic responsibility, prepares them for careers and graduate study, and encourages them to welcome the opportunities of a constantly evolving and multicultural world.

By charter, Wilkes is nonsectarian and is governed by an active, 29-person Board of Trustees. Its current Carnegie classification is Doctoral/Professional, assigned to institutions awarding at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees and spending less than $5 million on research, or awarding 30 or more professional practice doctoral degrees across at least two academic programs.
MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

MISSION
To continue the Wilkes tradition of liberally educating our students for lifelong learning and success in a constantly evolving and multicultural world through a commitment to individualized attention, exceptional teaching, scholarship and academic excellence, while continuing the university’s commitment to community engagement.

VISION
Wilkes University will provide exceptional educational experiences that transform students and develop innovations through scholarly activities that lead to national recognition and shape the world around us.

VALUES
• Mentorship: Nurturing individuals to understand and act on their abilities while challenging them to achieve great things.
• Scholarship: Advancing knowledge through discovery and research to better educate our constituents.
• Diversity: Embracing differences and uniqueness through sincerity, awareness, inclusion and sensitivity.
• Innovation: Promoting creative scholarly activities, programs, ideas and sustainable practices.
• Community: Appreciating and collaborating with mutual respect to foster a sense of belonging.
The Wilkes campus is located in downtown Wilkes-Barre, a city of 40,000 on the western fringe of the Poconos right on the Susquehanna River. The surrounding region offers considerable natural beauty and recreational opportunities, including numerous ski resorts, concert venues, water parks and state parks, and is a two-hour drive from both Philadelphia and New York City.

The 35-acre campus blends stately mansions with state-of-the-art facilities in a historic downtown neighborhood. The campus includes eight academic buildings, 20 residence halls, nine administrative buildings, the Eugene S. Farley Library, and several other facilities that house student life, auxiliary, and athletic functions. A carefully executed master plan and beautification projects have created an attractive greenway in the center of campus, framed on one side by the Burns Alumni Bell Tower and Carillon, and on the other side by the Cohen Science Center. Some of the older University-owned homes present challenges of deferred maintenance, but add significantly to the charm of the campus. The Sordoni Art Gallery, prominently located at the intersection of campus and community on South Main Street is the top such facility in Luzerne County. The Ralston Athletic Complex is within walking distance across the river, adjacent to Kirby Park. To learn more about the campus, take the virtual campus tour located at this link.
The Vice President of Finance and Chief Operating Officer’s (VPF/COO) strategic priorities will include:

**Strategic planning and analysis:** supporting campus-wide strategic analysis and planning, including advising the President on operational and fiscal impact of planning alternatives, in a complex university setting. Responsibility for capital planning for physical assets and the endowment, as well as operational planning for all parts of the University’s annual budget. Enthusiasm for sharing important financial and operational information and priorities, and the ability to communicate with all members of the Wilkes community, so that they can engage with and support these areas.

**Support for the Board of Trustees:** The VPF/COO serves as the chief financial liaison to the Board of Trustees, and manages all communications with the Finance Committee and other committees as needed. Provides leadership to the Board in achieving strategic financial/operational priorities, using data analytics and other financial tools to set the direction and support institutional efforts.

**Creative/Entrepreneurial leadership:** The VPF/COO will have the opportunity to bring new and creative ideas for improvements at the University in order to drive the institution’s agenda and financial health forward. Innovative practices and metrics for all operations will be expected. This leadership will include all aspects of the day to day operations, as well as the facilities resources and short- and long-term debt obligations, and the University’s investment assets.

**Budget management:** The VPF/COO is responsible for providing oversight for the budget process, ensuring that the budget is aligned with the University’s strategic direction. In addition, the University is moving to a more accountability-based approach for leadership across the campus, and this individual will take the lead in designing a new budget management approach that links responsibility and accountability so that department heads can use the budget process effectively.
Leadership for the Team: Direct reports to the position include the Controller, Director of Treasury and Student Accounts, AVP of Operations and Executive Director of Information Technology. The VPF/COO will lead and develop this team in support of the University’s strategies and systems to improve the quality, efficiency and responsiveness of the organization’s services and operations.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The University places a high priority on support for diversity, equity and inclusion goals and priorities, and this individual will bring these skills and commitments to the leadership of the finance and operations teams.

Represents the Finance and Operations areas: Attends a variety of campus-wide meetings and activities, and ensures effective representation and understanding of the priorities for the finance and operations areas with all constituents. Embraces finance and operations efforts serving in support of the primary mission of the university, and applying their expertise to institution-wide issues, including providing additional background and context for decision-makers.

The ideal candidate will possess:
- Master’s degree in finance or related discipline required
- Ten or more years of demonstrated senior level experience in related areas of responsibility, including finance/institutional planning and strategy in higher education or through work in non-profit or for-profit organizations.
- Advanced financial, operational and administrative knowledge

Attributes
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills with a collaborative leadership style
- Ability to foster a cooperative environment, working with a wide range of constituencies in a diverse community
- Creative thinking skills, ability to think about problems in a new light and with a fresh perspective
- High energy, enthusiasm for the higher education mission and all that it advances
- Ability to organize, coordinate and direct multiple priorities
- Advanced analytical and systems thinking skills
- Understanding of state and federal laws that govern higher education and reporting requirements
- Integrity and a commitment to service leadership by example.
Greg Cant, Ph.D. assumed office as the seventh president of Wilkes University on May 26, 2020. A native of Australia, Dr. Cant has 30 years of experience as an educator and administrator in the United States and abroad. President Cant came to Wilkes from the Feliciano School of Business at Montclair State University, where he served as the dean since July 2015. Under his leadership, the school developed and implemented over two dozen programs that enhanced enrollment and academic quality, leveraged interdisciplinary expertise and addressed critical market needs. Prior to Montclair State University, Cant was the dean of the Offutt School of Business at Concordia College in Minnesota. Cant worked with key constituents to transform Concordia’s business program into a comprehensive business school.

Cant has held positions as a faculty member, administrator, faculty leader, department chair, and academic dean at three research-intensive universities, a regional state university, and a selective private liberal arts college. He also served as a professor in Guangdong, China. He has worked in the United Kingdom, as well as in his native Australia. Cant holds his doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Western Australia and a master’s degree in industrial relations from Queen’s University in Ontario, Canada. He also earned his bachelor’s degree in industrial relations and economics from the University of Western Australia. Cant’s research interests include cross-cultural management, particularly in China, business ethics and business pedagogy.
NOMINATIONS AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE VPF/COO OPPORTUNITY

The Search Committee will begin a review of applications in early September and continue its work until an appointment is made. To assure full consideration, application materials should be received by August 27, 2021. Candidates should provide:

• A letter of interest stating how the candidate’s experiences and qualifications connect with the required/preferred characteristics and priorities expressed in the position profile, and including a statement of contribution to diversity, equity, and inclusion;
• Curriculum vitae/resume;
• Five professional references with emails, telephone numbers, and a description of the candidate’s professional relationship with each reference listed (references will not be contacted without prior written authorization from the applicant);
• Applications and nominations should be sent electronically (PDF or MS Word) to: WilkesVPF@agbsearch.com.

Wilkes University is being assisted by:
• Dr. Margaret “Peggy” Plympton, margaret.plympton@agbsearch.com/(484) 554-4542
• Mr. Larry Ladd, larry.ladd@agbsearch.com/(508) 274-0910

Wilkes University non-discrimination statement

Wilkes University is committed to providing a welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that all educational and employment decisions are based on individuals’ abilities and qualifications. Wilkes University prohibits discrimination in its educational programs, employment, admissions or any activities on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, disability, pregnancy, gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, marital or family status, military or veteran status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local laws.