



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
W A S H I N G T O N , D C

Search for the Provost
American University
Washington, D.C

[American University](#) (AU or the University) seeks a strategic and transformative leader to serve as its next Provost. The Provost will have an extraordinary opportunity to build on the University's strengths and continue its trajectory as a premier institution with excellence in teaching, research, and social impact. The next leader will be a scholar of distinction and seasoned academic administrator with a record of resourceful and creative problem-solving, effective execution, and a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

American University is a dynamic institution in the heart of Washington, DC, with a history of catalyzing impact-driven scholarship and teaching, fostering intellectual curiosity, supporting student thriving, and empowering lives of purpose, service, and leadership. [In the last five years](#), AU has doubled research funding, engaged in innovative cross-disciplinary scholarship, and developed advanced and applied learning opportunities for students. Through the successful completion of the Change Can't Wait campaign in 2024, the University established nine newly endowed faculty positions and launched or named four distinctive centers and institutes that showcase the strengths of the AU community and incubate innovative ideas. At the foundation of this remarkable upward trajectory is a community of passionate leaders who thrive on tackling the world's most pressing challenges.

At a time of renewed energy with the naming of President Jonathan Alger as AU's 16th president and the anticipated reclassification as an R1 institution, the University is looking for a Provost who will seize the opportunity to galvanize the community around a bold academic vision; strengthen the value proposition for students; ensure effective use of resources; balance an emphasis on teaching with growth in research activity; and inspire trust and support for shared governance.

The successful leader will be an accomplished academic, a respected manager with team- and community-building skills, a persuasive and authentic communicator with a sense of urgency about academic transformation, and a talent for approaching all strategic decisions with empathy and an inclusive excellence lens.

President Jonathan Alger has appointed a search committee to conduct this confidential search in partnership with Keight Tucker Kennedy, Pam Pezzoli, and Berlinda Mojica of the national executive

search firm [Isaacson, Miller](#). Confidential nominations, inquiries, and applications may be directed to the search team, as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

[Chartered by Congress in 1893](#), American University is a private, student-centered research institution located on a 90-acre campus in a residential neighborhood only a few miles from downtown Washington, DC, with prestigious schools and colleges, internationally-renowned faculty, and a reputation for creating meaningful change in the world. Students distinguish themselves for their service, leadership, and ability to rethink global and domestic challenges and opportunities.

At AU, passion becomes action based on values such as integrity, excellence, human dignity, community, diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusive excellence, free inquiry, seeking truth, and impact. Students actively engage in the world around them, and the leaders of today train the leaders of tomorrow. AU was founded to respond to the needs of a changing world, and in today's climate on campus and around the nation, the need to live up to those values has only become more important.

American University is one of the largest private employers in Washington, DC, and consistently ranks among the nation's leading universities. Throughout its history, the engagement, inclusiveness, and diversity of AU's community have been hallmarks of the University. Due to its extraordinary faculty and staff, cutting-edge facilities, and focus on teaching, research, engagement, and action that address today's most difficult challenges, U.S. News and World Report recognizes AU as among the most innovative universities. AU is also proud to be the first urban campus, the first research university, and the largest higher education institution in the United States to achieve carbon neutrality, a goal they achieved in 2018, two years ahead of an ambitious target.

ACADEMIC PROFILE & STUDENT SUCCESS

American University offers students a solid foundation in the liberal arts and the opportunity to pursue in-depth study in their chosen field. In fall 2024, AU's enrollment was approximately 12,300 students, with 7,200 degree-seeking undergraduates, 3,300 degree-seeking graduate students, 1,450 degree-seeking law students, and 350 students in non-degree certificate programs. As of the most recent Fall census, AU's undergraduate first-year retention rate was 88 percent, and 76 percent of students graduated from AU within six years. The University offers a comprehensive financial aid program that recognizes both academic excellence and demonstrated financial need. 80 percent of incoming students receive aid, and nearly \$100 million per year is awarded to undergraduates.

With seven schools and over 170 programs, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, AU students choose a personalized curriculum of theoretical study and experiential learning taught by internationally recognized faculty in courses that take them from the classroom to the nation's capital,

and all around the globe. Face-to-face courses run on a 15-week semester basis in fall and spring, with shorter summer term classes. AU boasts an 11:1 student-to-faculty ratio.

The U.S. News and World Report 2025 ranked American University number four in Study Abroad, number 23 in Undergraduate Research & Creative Projects, and number 26 in undergraduate teaching. As a student-centered research institution, AU offers distinct and enriching experiences to all as early as their first year. Faculty collaborate with students to research topics like young people in democracy, the environmental impacts of microplastics, and the influence of colorism in pursuing a career in criminal justice. Students, far ahead of their peers, are afforded opportunities to publish and contribute to influential scholarship. 89 percent of undergraduates participate in at least one internship during their time at AU, and 52 percent of students participate in study abroad. AU alum thrive in all economic sectors and in graduate schools. Nearly 91 percent of students graduate from AU with jobs and/or admission to a graduate program. At the graduate level, more than 131 programs, including doctoral programs (PhD, JD, SJD, and EdD) and masters' programs, are delivered in residential, hybrid, and online modalities.

AU's annual [research](#) funding and influential research [centers](#) are an impressive testament to the caliber and scholarship of the University's faculty. AU nearly doubled yearly award totals between 2019 and 2023. AU is classified R2, ranked "Doctoral: Higher Research Activity" by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The University anticipates it will be designated R1 when the next rankings are released in 2025. Given the breadth of scholarship and excellence of faculty, opportunities remain for new funding and interdisciplinary partnerships across research and practice throughout the world.

Notable and recent awards include assistant professor Brandyn Churchill's \$1.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to lead a project studying the effects of federal funding on reducing the prevalence of obesity and obesity-related health conditions. The Center for Media & Social Impact (SOC), directed by provost associate professor Caty Borum, cultivated and secured nearly \$1.6 million in external grants (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Perspective Fund, Open Society Foundations, and the Pop Culture Collaborative) to support research and creative production in the topic of entertainment media and human rights. AU is also well-known for its collaborative and interdisciplinary efforts by faculty, such as the recent award of a \$5.7 million cooperative research agreement from the U.S. National Science Foundation's Accelerating Research Translation program. The award will help AU foster greater use of evidence in the public and private sectors by producing new knowledge on best practices in research translation, training scholars in the effective conduct of research translation, and supporting the dissemination of research findings that have the potential to benefit society.

COMMUNITY BY THE NUMBERS

AU's student body is globally diverse, representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and more than 100 countries. 11 percent of graduate students and 10.6 percent of undergraduate students are international. Approximately 37 percent identify as male, and 63 percent identify as female. Demographically, the total student population is 51 percent White, 12 percent Hispanic/Latino, 10 percent

Black or African American, 6 percent Asian, 5 percent two or more races or ethnicities, and less than 1 percent American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander.¹

The University's mission is advanced by 960 full-time faculty, of which 548 hold the ranks of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor. Of those tenured or on the tenure track, approximately 47 percent self-identify as women, 8 percent as Black or African American, 4 percent as Hispanic or Latino, and 11 percent as Asian. 94 percent of full-time faculty hold the highest degree in their field. Among AU's more than 800 adjunct faculty are policymakers, diplomats, journalists, artists, writers, scientists, and business leaders. The University also employs term and continuing appointment faculty who teach, mentor, and may be research-active and/or hold administrative positions.

Essential to all University activities and initiatives are the employees who tirelessly support and advance the institution's mission and deliver a transformative student experience at AU. The University employs approximately 2,708 full-time and part-time staff members in a variety of non-faculty roles. As of 2024, 58 percent of AU staff self-identify as women, 24 percent as Black or African American, 8 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 9 percent as Asian, and 1 percent as American Indian or Alaska Native.

FINANCES, BUDGET, AND FUNDRAISING

American University has a budget of approximately \$860 million for fiscal year 2025. The university also maintains financial resources, which include several reserve contingencies to manage unanticipated enrollment revenue losses, infrastructure needs, strategic initiatives, and compensation matters. For fiscal year 2024, the university's total change in net assets without donor restrictions totaled \$55 million. This measure is based on Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and represents the total net income of the university that is not based on donor-imposed stipulations.

AU has robust operating revenue sources, including 80 percent from tuition and fees, 8 percent from room and board, 4 percent from endowment, and 8 percent from other sources. These resources provide the foundation for our ongoing and growing investments in academic programs and research, student thriving, plant assets, and strategic initiatives. They also provide a sound basis for the institution's risk mitigation in an increasingly competitive higher education environment. AU's growing endowment provides the foundation to advance the university's change-making mission for generations to come through its scholarships, professorships, and programmatic and operating funding. As of June 30, 2024, the endowment was valued at approximately \$1 billion. There were 640 endowed funds, which include both donor-restricted endowment funds and funds designated by the Board of Trustees to function as endowments. The endowment funds support students, faculty, research, and the programs that set AU apart. Of these funds, 410 are endowed scholarship and fellowship funds that provided \$4.58 million in student support. The university's total endowment noted a return of 10.65% during fiscal year 2024.

¹ Six percent chose not to report and ten percent typed international rather than a race.

The most recent comprehensive campaign, Change Can't Wait, was fueled by the momentum gained in the campaign's silent phase, which began in 2017 alongside the university's strategic plan process. In June 2024, the campaign surpassed its \$500 million goal, marking a historic milestone as the most successful fundraising effort in the university's history. Through the campaign, AU created or expanded 180 scholarships, endowed 9 faculty positions, and raised \$34 million for strategic capital projects. More than 24,000 alumni in all 50 states and 81 countries, 9,000 faculty and staff, and 12,000 students and families contributed to the campaign.

LEADERSHIP

President Jonathan Alger

Jonathan (Jon) Alger, a nationally renowned scholar of higher education policy, was named American University's 16th president and began his tenure on July 1, 2024. Alger, who served for 12 years as president of James Madison University (JMU), increased external research funding by 92 percent from 2019 to 2023 and attained the R2 national research university designation under the Carnegie Classifications. JMU's endowment more than doubled during his presidency, and the university exceeded the fundraising goal in its recent comprehensive campaign. Since joining AU, President Alger has recommitted the university to free expression and productive dialogue with the launch of the [Civic Life initiative](#) that aims to help community members discover and discuss disagreements and also learn how to identify and develop common ground.

A Harvard-educated lawyer, Alger—who also holds a bachelor's in political science from Swarthmore College—previously served as senior vice president and general counsel at Rutgers University. As assistant general counsel at the University of Michigan, he played a leading role in two landmark cases on diversity and admissions before the U.S. Supreme Court. Alger has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership, law, higher education, public policy, and diversity at JMU, Rutgers, and Michigan.

Earlier in his career, the Rochester, New York native worked for the American Association of University Professors and the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, where he spearheaded the development and implementation of national policies on race-conscious financial aid, racial harassment, and free expression.

Alger's scholarly work has appeared in the *Journal of College and University Law*, *the Law of Higher Education*, and other publications. He currently serves as vice chair of the national board of directors for the American Association of Colleges and Universities and chair of the Association of Governing Boards' Council of Presidents. Alger—winner of ACE's Council of Fellows/Fidelity Investments 2021 Mentor Award—is also a member of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.

Governance

The Board of Trustees is currently comprised of 29 members, including two representatives from the United Methodist Church and the university president, all of whom serve ex officio, two faculty trustees, and one student trustee. Eighteen members are AU alums.

The president's cabinet comprises senior university administrators who serve as the University's officers and report directly to the president. They work closely with the president, trustees, and academic leadership to provide advice, develop and implement university-wide initiatives, and oversee the University's operations.

The president's council comprises the president's cabinet, senior academic leaders, college and school deans, the librarian, and other senior administrative leaders. This broader leadership team ensures that the institution's strategic goals are operationalized in consistent ways throughout the institution.

American University embraces a strong shared-governance model, in which academic success is facilitated by fostering an empowering institutional culture and broad leadership for innovation among senior leaders, administrators, staff, faculty, and students.

THE ROLE

The next Provost will serve as the chief academic officer and President Alger's key partner in enhancing the university's prominence and commitment to inclusive excellence. They will collaborate in long-range strategic planning and implementation. They have the primary responsibility for advancing AU's mission in the areas of teaching, research, and service.

The Provost has direct management oversight of a \$400 million Academic Affairs division budget, which accounts for 50 percent of the total operating budget. They will lead and be supported by a seasoned team of 15 senior leaders: academic unit deans and librarian; deputy Provost and dean of faculty; dean of undergraduate education and academic student services; dean of graduate education; vice Provost for academic administration; vice Provost for research and innovation; associate director for institutional research and assessment; and executive director of abroad programs.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PROVOST

Develop a distinctive academic vision that centers student success and inspires innovation.

A new strategic plan will be developed in 2025, and President Alger expects a creative and courageous partner to forge a bold academic vision that reflects American University's forward-thinking aspirations. The Provost will collaborate with President Alger, faculty, students, and staff to establish an aligned academic vision and strategy with clear and specific priorities that move AU forward in pursuit of the key

values of knowledge, service, and inclusive excellence. The next Provost must continue to leverage and highlight the institution's strengths in teaching and research across all disciplines while ensuring academic programs remain relevant and responsive to the changing world.

Strengthen the AU value proposition while ensuring effective allocation of resources.

With a keen awareness of the challenges facing higher education today, including the evolving nature of student learning, expanding opportunities for global engagement, affordability, and the uncertainty regarding AI, the next Provost must be committed to honoring the distinct identity and rich intellectual environment AU offers students from around the world: a laboratory to pursue their purpose. To sustain a competitive edge as a tuition-dependent university, the pragmatic leader will utilize data to define AU's market position, which will help identify areas needing intentional investment and others to reallocate resources for programmatic innovation. The Provost will be a strong steward of financial resources, prioritizing the academic mission and gracefully making tradeoffs in the face of constraints in collaboration with faculty and shared governance processes. They will work closely with academic deans to align academic planning with financial planning, helping them secure resources, primarily through relevant academic programs, supporting faculty-sponsored grant-seeking, and private philanthropy.

Honor the University's deep commitment to teaching and facilitate the continued growth of research and scholarship.

The anticipated reclassification of the University as an R1 is a testament to the growth and innovation already taking place at AU. Collectively, the Provost and the broader community will continue to drive an emphasis on teaching, recognizing that it is inextricably linked to high-quality research. This work will require new approaches to pedagogy and regular investments in the academic enterprise, including growing financial capacity to offer competitive startup packages and salaries and improving support structures to increase student recruitment and retention. The Provost will also inspire growth and innovation among academic deans, empowering them to serve as decision-makers, negotiators, and advocates. They will strengthen the deans' ability to establish and deepen partnerships with external funders, expand opportunities for undergraduate participation in research, and recruit the next generation of researchers with competitive doctoral programs.

Cultivate a culture of trust and foster a deeper commitment to shared governance.

AU must continue to balance shared input and decision-making with speed and efficiency. Remaining nimble and tapping into the excellence of its faculty, staff, and students are critical to the University's success. This next leader has the opportunity to foster a best-in-class system of shared governance by collaboratively enhancing policies and procedures. As the University looks to the future under the vision of a new president, the provost must develop strong relationships with the various representative bodies to cultivate genuine buy-in for initiatives. They must ensure that all faculty and staff are heard, valued, respected, and recognized and continue to build a culture of collaboration and academic excellence.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will bring many of the following professional experiences and qualifications:

- A distinguished career as a scholar/researcher/creative artist and teacher, in addition to university service commensurate with appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure;
- A seasoned administrator and manager with experience operationalizing a shared vision and deploying resources, with a thoughtful but not rigid view of the role of AU in a changing world;
- A fair, collegial, and transparent leadership style that will engender trust among all members of the AU community;
- A bridge-builder across academic disciplines, with a commitment to facilitating collaborative activities across institutional and disciplinary boundaries;
- Substantial and successful experience in the development, leadership, and management of academic programs, projects, committees, and/or departments;
- Exceptional academic judgment and high standards, including a history of recruiting, developing, and retaining a world-class faculty;
- Experienced coalition builder with the ability to mobilize faculty with an understanding of shared governance structures;
- A lived commitment to inclusive excellence, including a demonstrated track record of inspirational leadership advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies;
- Financial astuteness, including the ability to analyze and evaluate the consequences of decisions;
- The dedication and the capacity to play an important role in the planning of the University's next comprehensive fundraising campaign, with demonstrated success in securing external funding;
- Superb communication skills, both oral and written. An active listener, facilitator, convener, and mediator, equally effective in learning from others, translating thoughts for broader consideration, being transparent and open, managing by example and influence, building unity around difficult and divisive issues, and explaining one's own views clearly and convincingly;
- The highest integrity, wisdom, humor, emotional intelligence, and can-do attitude; adept at conflict management; even-keeled and calm when leading through challenges and capable of exercising a high degree of diplomacy and strict discretion.

COMPENSATION

The salary range for this position is \$525,000 to \$575,000. The President and Board of Trustees reserve the final determination of the selected candidate's actual pay considering their experience and qualifications for the role.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller

website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/american-university/provost>.
Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Keight Tucker Kennedy, Partner
Pam Pezzoli, Partner
Berlinda Mojica, Senior Associate
Alexis Scott, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

American University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment (including sexual harassment and sexual violence) against any AU community member on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases under federal or local laws (collectively "Protected Bases").