



An Invitation to Apply for

President
Savannah State University
Savannah, GA

THE SEARCH

Savannah State University (SSU) seeks a strategic, transformational, and visionary leader to serve as its next President. Known for its dynamic, familial culture, enduring Tiger Pride, and unique high demand degree programs, SSU, a liberal arts university, is the oldest public historically Black college or university in the state of Georgia and the oldest institution of higher learning in the southeast region of the state. The University has reached an inflection point, where new leadership will secure its institutional future and ensure that SSU provides an essential, contemporary education and career preparation for the 21st century student.

During this seminal moment, the next President will lead the University into an era of renewed stability, sustainability, and growth while preserving the strong traditions and narratives that inform SSU's rich and storied 130-year history. SSU requires visionary, assertive, and innovative leadership to guide the University and bolster community relationships and partnerships in the Savannah region. SSU serves approximately 3,700 students and the President serves as leader of the 161 full-time faculty, 332 full-time staff, and steward of a \$93M general operating budget, as well as other capital resources of the University.

Reporting to the Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, the successful candidate will bring considerable experience in a large, complex enterprise, preferably higher education administration, and keen financial acumen. The next President must have a track record of success and a substantial working knowledge of HBCUs, with a deep respect for the critical role that they play in the U.S. and for historically underrepresented, marginalized students of color. SSU's next leader will have a firm understanding of the existential threats facing higher educational institutions and how those challenges are exacerbated for HBCUs. SSU's next leader must be highly visible, engaging with students, faculty, and staff "on the yard" while deepening relationships with local and global stakeholders alike. The next President of SSU will bring demonstrable faculty, staff, and student recruitment and retention insights and a strong fundraising background. SSU aims to be an institution of choice for families and students in Georgia and

beyond, and the incoming President will maintain a strategic vision for enhancing the institution's academic assets and reputation.

Savannah State University has retained Isaacson, Miller - a national executive search firm - to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY: HISTORY AND IDENTITY

SSU was established in 1890 as a result of the Second Morrill Land Grant Act, which mandated that southern and border states develop land-grant colleges for Black citizens. Later that year, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation creating the Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youths, which served as Georgia's 1890 land-grant institution until 1947. A preliminary session of the Georgia State Industrial College was held in the Baxter Street School Building in Athens, GA, before moving to Savannah in October 1891. Richard R. Wright Sr. was appointed the first President of the institution in 1891, which opened with five faculty members and eight students.

The College awarded its first degree in 1898 to Richard R. Wright Jr., the son of the founding President, who became the ninth President of Wilberforce University. Cyrus G. Wiley of the class of 1902 was the first alumnus to become college President in 1921, the same year the first women were admitted as residential students. In 1928, the College became a four-year, degree-granting institution, ending its high school and normal school programs.

Upon the creation of the University System of Georgia (USG) in 1932, the College became one of the first members of the system and its name was changed to Georgia State College. Its name changed again in 1950 to Savannah State College, and the institution received initial accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 1955. The USG Board of Regents elevated the College to university status in 1996 and renamed the institution Savannah State University.

Savannah State University has embarked upon a new era and its next President will be charged with building upon the rich legacy of academic excellence and community engagement that has defined the institution for the last 130 years.

LOCATION

Savannah is Georgia's first city and is known for its scenic coastal vistas, world-renown examples of regency and neoclassical architecture, and deep, vibrant history. Savannah is an attractive and busy port city, and home to nearly 200,000 residents, making it the 5th largest city in Georgia. The general environment is replete with abundant historic and contemporary attractions, including wildlife refuges, museums, heritage preserves, and numerous others. The cultural history of the region began with early Native American cooperation and was fueled by rich rice and cotton production and a resilient African American culture that supported it. Tourists who visit revel in tales of a lively pirate trade and many believe that Savannah, with its exemplary urban renewal and historic preservation record, is the ultimate hostess city. Historically, these ties to ports and the hospitality industry have created strong career development pipelines for SSU graduates.

Located just five miles from the center of Savannah and 250 miles from Atlanta, Savannah State University's Spanish moss-draped, 201-acre campus sits adjacent to a maritime live oak forest and a saltwater estuary, offering a lush and biodiverse landscape for learning and discovery. The campus and its historic Hill Hall have been designated historical sites by the Georgia Historical Commission and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The next President will thoughtfully steward and preserve the campus and invest in the University's development and growth.

ACADEMICS

Savannah State University's academic programs are organized into four colleges: (1) The College of Business Administration (COBA); (2) The College of Liberal Arts & Social Studies (CLASS); (3) The College of Sciences & Technology (COST); and (4) The College of Education (COE) which collectively offer 30 baccalaureate majors and degrees and five graduate degrees.

The University fosters a student-centric learning environment by promoting the intellectual curiosity, personal growth, accountability, and global involvement of its scholars. Robust academic support, faculty mentoring, and professional advising guide students to gain experiences that invite them to build and create their own leadership opportunities and be uniquely affirmed in their pursuit of self-discovery.

SSU sits on the cutting edge of academic innovation, having launched many of Savannah's pioneering degree programs, including the first master's degree program in elementary education in 1968. The University boasts a robust Department of Naval Science (NROTC) which leads to commissions in the Navy and Marine Corps. The Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit Savannah State University (NROTCU SSU) was established in 1971 with 41 Midshipmen enrolled. Since its inception, the NROTCU SSU program has produced 387 high-ranking graduates. The institution also launched and continues to expand an innovative, renowned, and interdisciplinary marine sciences program, which is nationally recognized as a top producer of degrees and an essential resource for Georgia's coastal area. SSU was the first institution of higher education in Georgia to offer a bachelor's degree in homeland security and emergency management and the second in the state to offer a bachelor's degree in forensic science.

Savannah State University continues to engage in groundbreaking research. SSU sent cutting-edge genetic material from campus laboratories to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2014 and earned two patents. One, awarded to Associate Professor of Marine and Environmental Sciences Dr. Christopher Hintz, allows for the collection and harvest of organic material necessary for long-distance space travel. The other, awarded to Dr. Karla-Sue Marriott, Associate Professor of Chemistry and Forensic Science, is a new chemical that has implications for treating Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

SSU expanded its facilities with two new science and technology buildings. A new 17,000 square foot marine sciences research laboratory and deep-water dock were built just one mile from the main campus while a modern two-story, 30,000 square foot building now houses engineering technology and chemistry laboratories.

SSU is accredited by the Commission of Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and has earned specialized accreditations in social work, chemistry, civil engineering technology, business administration, electronics engineering technology, mass communications, education, naval science, and public administration.

STUDENTS

Savannah State University attracts a diverse student population through its focus on high quality instruction, scholarship, research, service, and community involvement. The University enrolls approximately 3,700 students (2,993 undergraduate students, and 186 graduate students) who participate in more than 75 clubs, organizations, publications, sororities, fraternities, and intramural sports. Eighty-one percent of SSU students are Georgia residents and 79% identify as Black/African American. SSU's dynamic Greek life includes all nine of the National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations, helping students build lasting and meaningful bonds that will benefit them far into their personal and professional lives.

Athletics are a vital component of the SSU student experience, and the University holds membership in the NCAA Division II (as members of the SIAC). Swathed in orange and blue, the Savannah State University Tigers and Lady Tigers boldly compete in the following sports: Baseball (men), Basketball (men and women), Cross Country (men and women), Football (men), Golf (men and women), Track & Field (men and women), Softball (women), Tennis (women), Volleyball (women), and Cheerleading (women).

Foundational to a sense of belonging and familial well-being, the University's many traditions including first-year programming are viewed as rites of passage by the passionate and thoughtfully engaged student body. Athletics invigorates the entire SSU community; student-athletes, athletics directors and staff, the student body, and alumni. The engendered "Tiger Pride" boosts SSU's climate and draws recognition and support from a wide circle of observers.

Students feel that they can, "get anywhere" from SSU and are supported in their ambitions by faculty and a variety of counseling, mentoring, and training supports which complement the classroom experience and further prepare students for success in the job and post-graduate markets.

FACULTY AND STAFF

Savannah State University's 161 faculty members and 332 staff members are devoted and talented, supporting the development, advising, counseling, and mentoring of SSU students and contributing to the University's familial, personalized approach to student enrichment and development. Many members of the dedicated and skilled staff have long, distinguished service records at the University and are deeply committed to the wellbeing of the students and the University's future. Beyond their work in the classroom and campus, SSU faculty and staff are committed to supporting the institution through the Annual Faculty/Staff Giving Campaign, which supports need based and merit scholarships, academic and student support programs, and

community outreach programs. SSU's faculty and staff are actively engaged in the community, thoughtfully stewarding civic engagement and volunteerism efforts in the city and beyond.

ALUMNI

Savannah State University alumni are thoughtful and engaged stewards of the traditions and history of the university, working to position the institution for future growth, sustainability, and success. SSU's alumni organization was nationally chartered in 1949 as the Alumni Association of Savannah State. Now named the Savannah State University National Alumni Association (SSUNAA), the association represents 22,000 members worldwide.

SSU's alumni are instrumental in sustaining the legacy of the university through their active support for and contributions towards annual Founder's Day and Homecoming events, and leadership around a variety of fundraising and scholarship initiatives to bolster financial and community support for the school. SSU alumni contribute north of \$1M annually and SSUNAA's recent Rise Up Campaign successfully raised \$202,000 in 130 days, significantly exceeding the campaign's goal of \$130,000. Funds from the campaign supported need and merit-based, marching band, and athletic scholarships to honor Savannah State University's 130th anniversary.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCES

Savannah State University is one of the University System of Georgia's 26 higher education institutions. USG is governed by a 19-member Board of Regents, five of whom are appointed by the governor from the state-at-large, and one from each of the state's 14 congressional districts. The board elected Dr. Steve Wrigley as Chancellor in 2017. He serves as the system's chief executive officer and the chief administrative officer of the system.

The policies of the Board of Regents are for the governance, management, and control of the university system. The administrative actions of the Chancellor provide autonomy for each institution. The executive head of each institution is the President, whose appointment is recommended by the Chancellor and approved by the Board.

As a public institution, SSU receives funds from the state of Georgia. The university has a general operating budget of over \$93M including approximately \$17M from admissions revenue and \$22M from state appropriations.

The Savannah State University Foundation, Inc. is a Georgia non-profit corporation with the purpose of receiving, investing, and administering the private support of the University. The next President will work in partnership with the Foundation to oversee and execute an efficient fundraising operation that secures novel and stewards existing regional, national, and international corporate and philanthropic support for the University.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

The President is the chief executive officer of the University and reports directly to the System Chancellor. The President is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the University, strategic institutional leadership, promoting the educational and administrative effectiveness of the

institution, building community and professional relationships, fundraising, and securing new opportunities.

Reporting directly to the President are the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Vice President of Student Affairs; Vice President of Business & Financial Affairs; Vice President of Enrollment Management; Vice President of Marketing and Communications; and the Vice President of University Advancement. The President will harness their talents and those of the dedicated staff in crafting and implementing a bold agenda which elevates the stature of the University. In doing so, a firm and sustainable financial infrastructure and market position will be established. Championing service to students, the President will exhibit a laser focus on student success.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

To successfully lead Savannah State University, the new President will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Lead the University in setting a vision and strategy with an inclusive and transparent style.

Savannah State University aims to be the institution of choice in Georgia and the surrounding region by offering its students a diverse array of degree and career development opportunities, a rich and dynamic campus culture, and engaged leadership that is reflective of the students served. The next President will coalesce a clear vision for the university by promoting open communication, breaking down inter-college siloes, and inviting all stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the design of SSU's next chapter.

The next leader must have a track record of creating and sustaining stability and must be dedicated to preserving SSU's distinctive history and rich legacy while leading the institution into the future. The next President must be willing to take the thoughtful, calculated risks that bolster innovation. An adroit leader will manage the competing internal and external interests, while maintaining SSU's unique voice and representing the University among its peers at the system level.

Savannah State University has remained resilient in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its students, faculty, and staff have remained ardently supportive of the school and its future. The next President will celebrate and support this resilience, while strategically building up the institution for a more sustainable future.

Support successful Academic Affairs and Faculty outcomes by reviewing and broadening program offerings.

In pursuit of new knowledge which produces a compelling array of new programs and courses, SSU must cultivate the scholarly aspirations of faculty, not limited to faculty in STEM, business, education, or liberal and social sciences. SSU must infuse its curriculum with contemporary, knowledge-based information to educate students with skills and insights for a 21st century career or graduate school. The President and their team must aid faculty as they review and introduce innovative instructional techniques, materials, and technology which advances student learning. Faculty must have time and tools to create new interdisciplinary programs, courses, and certificates

which align with current and emerging career and job demands in local, regional, state, national, and global economies.

Plan for SSU's financial future by strengthening external relationships and securing resources through fundraising.

The next President must bring a strong financial background with an innovative and strategic approach to strengthening external relationships and securing resources to stabilize the university's future. SSU is well situated within an urban setting with access to a wide variety of businesses in the hospitality, logistics, healthcare, and marine and maritime shipping industries. As an adept leader, the President will seek to leverage existing relationships, create novel corporate partnerships, and identify anchor programs and offerings that will sustain career development pipelines for students.

The next President must have a deep understanding of the local, regional, and national landscape of higher education and SSU's aspirant place within it. SSU faces the same challenges confronting other HBCUs, including stress on finite resources caused by decreasing enrollment, concerns about costs for students and parents, deferred maintenance of facilities, and competition with public and private colleges and universities.

SSU's next leader must be a visible and persuasive brand ambassador, masterfully sharing the University's compelling story through face-to-face meetings, as well as through sophisticated use of social media to connect with families, students, community partners, and supporters. To fuel the University's transformation and growth, the President must marshal significant philanthropic resources from alumni, industry partners, foundations, and philanthropic donors.

SSU's passionate and proud alumni are poised to support SSU through material and nonmaterial contributions. They yearn for inclusion in planning, with student interaction, and community engagement. The President must target new alumni donors, galvanizing disengaged alumni to support and nurture the growth of SSU's next generation.

Embrace and strengthen the partnerships between the University and the surrounding community.

The University is primed to build upon its connection and engagement within the greater community. The next President will lead conversations with state and local leadership and will develop relationships that will raise the profile of the University. To parlay relationships which spur new partnerships, the President must proactively seek strategic partners where mutual benefits accrue to each party.

Leveraging groups like the Savannah State University Board of Visitors, a voluntary 11-member body of business and community leaders, will be valuable. The Board of Visitors offer counsel and leadership on initiatives that can enhance the stature and contributions of SSU in the region, state, and nation. The next President will oversee the strategic scaffolding of community and business partnerships, seeking to create novel and strengthen existing initiatives and programming to advance the University.

Increase enrollment with innovative and effective recruitment and retention strategies.

The new President will partner with the enrollment management, marketing, and communications teams to devise a comprehensive strategy to boost student enrollment and retention. The next leader must work across the institution to learn more about potential barriers to retention and to raise the regional, state, and national profile of luminary programs such as business, NROTC, marine sciences, forensics, and homeland security and emergency management to attract a wider array of scholars.

SSU's next leader will identify opportunities to serve a wide sweep of learners so as to prepare high school students for college and drive an increase in dual enrollment; leverage technology to expand delivery and content of online education; develop programs to assist adults seeking degree completion; provide creative new coursework for upskill credentialing in alignment with the needs of Savannah and the surrounding region; and educate a pipeline of teachers to support and sustain these efforts. SSU should be positioned as the academic provider of choice for a contemporary workforce in a competitive and shifting regional higher education landscape.

Provide a dynamic and familial student life experience.

SSU prides itself in attracting a thoughtful, curious, and engaged student population. From current students to the many alumni that return to campus to work, educate, and lead the University, Tiger Pride abounds. The new President will work closely with students, administrators, community stakeholders, and the security personnel to ensure that the campus is inviting, accessible, welcoming, and safe for all, while employing a responsive customer service experience. A climate which encourages and supports students in the face of hurdles, aids them to persevere through challenges, celebrates them when they achieve, and inspires them to serve the greater good will abound. SSU's next leader will remind students that they are rising and will implement and sustain a network of supports to lift them should they fall.

Today's students demand not only a first-rate education, but an engaging and meaningful social experience. By reviewing and broadening academic program offerings and continuing to resource the wide array of extracurricular activities, SSU's next President will promote a culture of wellbeing and continue to attract the earnest, intellectual, and passionate student who has historically thrived at the institution.

Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse and talented faculty and staff.

The next President must remain committed to exemplary educational outcomes for SSU's diverse student population by recruiting and retaining a diverse, talented, and multi-faceted faculty and staff that is reflective of the students and surrounding population demographics.

SSU has experienced some recent transitions as faculty and staff have sought out additional research opportunities and career development resources. The next President will be dedicated to supporting the provision of robust mentoring, training, and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff and for cultivating resources for faculty to support their research interests and productivity.

The next President will help maintain open communication across the University, creating opportunities for faculty and staff to connect with one another and share ideas and resources, contributing to a rich ecosystem of development and advancement for all stakeholders.

THE QUALITIES AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT

Savannah State University seeks an exceptional leader whose personal commitment to its mission and proven experience will inspire all members of the community. The Presidential Search and Screen Committee and Regents Special Committee understand that no single candidate will have all of the qualifications, but seeks candidates with the following experiences and abilities:

- An earned doctorate or terminal degree is preferred;
- An appreciation for the unique culture and histories of HBCUs is a must;
- Experience in crafting a strategic plan through comprehensive input of stakeholders;
- Demonstrated skills in generating financial resources including public and private funding; adroitness as a fiscal manager; and an ability to develop and execute a long-range financial plan;
- Committed to a shared-governance style of decision-making;
- Management experience and an administrative style that is personable, consensus-building, and inclusive; personal qualities that ensure transparency in governance and the highest standards of honesty and integrity;
- Experience leading administratively within a large, complex system such as the University System of Georgia;
- A record of building and maintaining external relations, innovative community programs, and advancing an organization's profile and reputation regionally, nationally, and internationally;
- A firm commitment to diversity in all forms;
- A fair, collaborative, collegial, and transparent leadership style;
- Energy, passion, flexibility, and an abiding sense of humor.

TO APPLY

Savannah State University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be directed in confidence to:

Monroe "Bud" Moseley, Vice President
Donna Cramer, Principal
Afi Tettey-Fio, Associate
617-933-1868

To apply or share a nomination, please visit this site:

www.imsearch.com/7752

Electronic submission of application materials is strongly encouraged.

Savannah State University is committed to excellence through diversity and ensuring nondiscrimination in the workplace. Per federal regulations, SSU will take affirmative action to ensure equal employment opportunities for all qualified applicants and employees regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or veteran status.