



VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT AND STRATEGIC VENTURES

Leadership Search Prospectus

2026

ABOUT OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1842 in Delaware, Ohio, Ohio Wesleyan University is a private liberal arts university committed to connecting classroom learning with real-world application. For more than 180 years, OWU has prepared students for meaningful careers and purposeful lives, anchored in the belief that a rigorous liberal arts education is the most powerful foundation a young person can have.

Today, Ohio Wesleyan stands at one of the most consequential and energized moments in its history. Under the leadership of President Dr. Matt vandenBerg, the University has defined an audacious and distinctive market position, America's University for Ambitious Self-Discovery, that addresses one of higher education's most persistent challenges: the pressure placed on 17- and 18-year-olds to have life figured out before it has even started.

OWU's response is bold, structured, gaining national attention, and already producing measurable results.

A University on the Move

Since Dr. vandenBerg took office as OWU's 17th president in 2023, the University has moved with uncommon speed and purpose. In addition to the initiatives highlighted below, Ohio Wesleyan has become the first university in the nation to provide formal constructive dialogue training to every student, faculty member, and staff member. The University's partnership with Claflin University stands as one of the first and most comprehensive agreements between a predominantly white institution and a historically Black university in American higher education. OWU's solar energy initiative will make it Ohio's leading campus for solar production, reducing its carbon footprint by 82 percent. The U.S. Entrepreneurship Competition, hosted on OWU's campus, has grown into the second largest in the nation and the largest in Ohio. And OWU recorded its largest transfer class in its 183-year history, earning national recognition as one of the most transfer-friendly colleges in the country.

This accumulation of results reflects what Dr. vandenBerg calls a rebellion with results: a community-wide commitment to boldness, innovation, and purposeful action that is drawing national and international attention.

A Strategic Plan Built to Win

Ohio Wesleyan's emerging strategic plan operationalizes its market position through five reinforcing pillars:

- **Self-Discovery:** A Four-Year Guarantee that allows students to explore boldly without fear of setback or financial penalty.
- **Pathways:** Flexible, multi-year pathways, from two to six years, that meet students where they are, including industry-leading support for first-generation students.
 - **Experiential Learning:** The OWU Connection, the nation's most fully integrated experiential learning program at a liberal arts university, combining research, internships, study away, service, and entrepreneurship with personal growth and career preparation.
 - **Power Skills:** Independently validated microcredentials and certificate programs in high-impact careers, giving students the intellectual agility of a liberal arts education alongside subject expertise that employers demand.
- **Societal Impact:** OWU as a civic and economic force in Central Ohio and beyond, through FounderU, the Delaware County Promise, ambitious public-private partnerships, and a commitment to making higher education more accessible and affordable.

Momentum That Is Real and Measurable

Ohio Wesleyan's strategic vision is already producing results that speak for themselves:

Enrollment

1,656 students, up from approximately 1,300, a decade high

Retention

84-85% retention rate, consistently achieved

Recognition

Named to U.S. News & World Report's Most Innovative Colleges

First-Year Class

571 students, the largest incoming class in 17 years

Philanthropy

\$69.4M in philanthropic support in FY2025, a record

Consecutive Growth

Three consecutive years of enrollment growth

Ohio Wesleyan is a university in full ascent, executing with discipline and speed on a vision that is proving both distinctive and durable.

Innovation in Action

Several signature initiatives illustrate the ambition and execution capacity that define OWU today:

Conrades School of Engineering: Launched with a \$17 million endowment and industry partnerships, blending liberal arts rigor with engineering innovation and expanding OWU's reach to students drawn to both technical and humanistic ways of thinking.

FounderU and the Delaware Entrepreneurial Center: OWU is building the premier educational ecosystem for emerging founders of all ages and stages. The on-campus incubator is evolving into a national platform, a startup community anchored by a university that understands what it means to build something from nothing.

Delaware County Promise: A landmark public-private partnership with the City of Delaware, Delaware County, private donors, and the Delaware County Foundation that makes an OWU education free for income-eligible Delaware County students, strengthening access, enrollment pipelines, and community bonds simultaneously.

John F. Milligan Library: The nation's first fine-arts-infused main campus library, a \$45 million project that anchors campus transformation, links student experience with academic mission, and signals OWU's commitment to bold, purposeful design.

Smith Center for Faculty Excellence and Palmer Center for First-Generation Student Success: Institutional investments that are rare at liberal arts colleges at any scale, demonstrating OWU's commitment to the full ecosystem of student and faculty excellence.

Campus and Community

Ohio Wesleyan's 200-acre campus sits in the heart of Delaware, Ohio, a growing, vibrant community of approximately 40,000 residents located 25 miles north of Columbus, one of the fastest-growing major cities in the United States. The University is deeply woven into Delaware's civic and economic fabric, and that relationship is a strategic asset that the next VP for Advancement and Strategic Ventures will be expected to deepen and leverage.

OWU's 1,656 students come from across the United States and more than 70 countries. The University fields 24 varsity athletic programs and is a member of the North Coast Athletic Conference (NCAC).

THE OPPORTUNITY

Ohio Wesleyan seeks a Vice President for Advancement and Strategic Ventures who is ready to step into one of the most expansive and consequential advancement roles in liberal arts higher education.

President Dr. Matt vandenBerg, himself a veteran of advancement leadership including service as Vice President for Advancement and External Relations at Alma College, has intentionally redesigned this portfolio to reflect a fundamental conviction: that the boundaries between philanthropy, strategic partnerships, entrepreneurship, and revenue generation are artificial, and that the leader who can move fluidly across all of them will create extraordinary value for the institution and the community it serves.

The VP for Advancement and Strategic Ventures will serve as a senior member of the President's cabinet, reporting directly to the President. This officer will lead a comprehensive portfolio spanning the full breadth of institutional advancement alongside a set of strategic venture responsibilities that reflect the full ambition of OWU's vision.

The timing is extraordinary. OWU enters this search with record philanthropic momentum, enrollment growth, a bold and proven strategic plan, a transformative comprehensive campaign on the horizon, and a pipeline of partnerships and ventures that require exactly the kind of creative, entrepreneurial advancement leadership this role demands.

Why This Role Is Exceptional

A comprehensive campaign of historic scale on the horizon

A president who came from advancement and will be a genuine partner in the work A portfolio spanning philanthropy, P3s, earned revenue, and entrepreneurial ventures A campus community energized and aligned behind a clear, compelling vision A market position, America's University for Ambitious Self-Discovery, that is distinctively compelling to donors, partners, and community

Enrollment and philanthropic momentum that rarely coincide this powerfully

THE ROLE

Title and Reporting

Vice President for Advancement and Strategic Ventures

The Vice President reports directly to President Dr. Matt vandenBerg and serves as a member of the President's senior leadership cabinet. The VP maintains strong working relationships across the full range of Board of Trustees committees, and serves as a primary partner to the volunteer leadership team guiding the University's comprehensive campaign.

Scope of the Role

The Vice President for Advancement and Strategic Ventures holds accountability across five interconnected domains. Together, these domains constitute one of the broadest and most ambitious portfolios in advancement leadership at a liberal arts institution of OWU's size.

PORTFOLIO OF RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Philanthropic Advancement

The philanthropic advancement enterprise is the center of gravity for this role. The VP will provide visionary leadership for all aspects of OWU's fundraising program, with particular emphasis on transformational gifts that reshape institutional capacity and ambition.

- Leadership and execution of OWU's comprehensive campaign, including strategy, principal gift development, volunteer leadership, and campaign communications
- Systematic development of cornerstone and transformative gifts at the seven-, eight-, and nine-figure level, with a structured, disciplined pipeline approach to the most consequential philanthropic relationships
- Annual giving, leadership annual giving, and the pipeline strategy that connects annual donors to major and planned gift engagement
- Major gifts program, including direct management of a select portfolio of the most significant prospects and donors
- Planned giving program, including expectancy management, bequest society stewardship, and blended gift strategies
- Corporate and foundation relations, including the cultivation of corporate partnerships and sponsorships that create meaningful value for both OWU and its partners, from naming and program sponsorships to research collaborations and workforce pipeline arrangements
- Sponsored projects and research development, including identification and pursuit of external funding from federal agencies, private foundations, and corporate partners in support of OWU's academic and programmatic priorities, working in close collaboration with faculty and academic leadership
- Prospect research, prospect management, and advancement analytics, ensuring the enterprise operates with data-driven discipline
- Gift administration, advancement operations, and CRM strategy, maintaining the infrastructure that makes sophisticated fundraising possible
- Donor stewardship and recognition programs that build lifelong relationships and inspire continued investment
- Advancement communications, including case-making materials, campaign collateral, impact reports, and donor correspondence

II. Alumni, Parent, and Community Engagement

Engaged communities are the lifeblood of a liberal arts institution. The VP will lead programs that connect OWU's alumni, parents, and neighbors to the University in ways that create philanthropic, reputational, and enrollment value.

- Alumni engagement strategy, with intentional emphasis on graduating classes that are historically less active, building pipelines that convert engaged alumni into active ambassadors and eventual investors
- Parent and family programs, deepening relationships with current and former OWU families as philanthropic and advocacy partners
- Community engagement in Delaware and Central Ohio, reinforcing OWU's identity as a civic anchor and economic contributor
- Volunteer engagement strategy, identifying, cultivating, training, and deploying a network of high-capacity volunteers who extend the University's reach
- Campus events strategy for advancement purposes, from cultivation gatherings to recognition events to signature annual programming
- Donor relations, including recognition programs, named spaces and endowments, and

multi-year stewardship plans for major investors

III. Strategic Ventures and Revenue Generation

Strategic Ventures is the most distinctive dimension of the VP's portfolio, encompassing the full range of high-margin, mission-aligned revenue and value-creation activities that reflect OWU's entrepreneurial identity.

FounderU and the Delaware Entrepreneurial Center:

- Serve as the University's senior executive champion for OWU's entrepreneurial ecosystem, overseeing and advancing the Delaware Entrepreneurial Center and the FounderU vision
- Cultivate investors, mentors, corporate sponsors, and ecosystem partners who strengthen the incubator and elevate OWU's national profile as the premier educational institution for founders
- Identify philanthropic and earned-revenue opportunities that grow and sustain the entrepreneurial platform

High-Margin Auxiliary Revenue:

- Operational and strategic oversight of high-margin auxiliary enterprises including camps and conferences, the campus bookstore, and other revenue-generating auxiliary activities
- Drive growth in these enterprises through intentional marketing, new partnerships, and entrepreneurial development of new revenue streams
- Evaluate and pursue new auxiliary ventures that are consistent with the institution's mission and revenue goals

Public-Private Partnerships and Strategic Partnerships:

- Develop and steward high-value public-private partnerships that create mutual value for OWU and its civic, governmental, and private partners
- Lead or co-lead complex, multi-party initiatives such as the Delaware County Promise model, structuring agreements that align the interests of government, philanthropy, and community
- Advance partnership discussions with healthcare systems, real estate developers, technology companies, and other sectors where OWU's assets, mission, and relationships create distinctive opportunity
- Manage active partnership opportunities including a potential hotel development and other real estate and civic ventures
- Cultivate relationships with the Columbus Partnership, the region's premier CEO leadership network, and One Columbus, its economic development arm, positioning OWU as a valued civic and educational partner in the region's growth agenda and creating pathways for corporate engagement, workforce development, and institutional opportunity across Central Ohio

IV. Federal and State Government Relations

Ohio Wesleyan's ambitions require engagement at the highest levels of government. The VP for Advancement and Strategic Ventures will serve as the University's senior relationship-holder with state and federal officials and agencies.

- Build and maintain relationships with Ohio's congressional delegation and key federal agency leadership, with particular attention to programs relevant to higher education, rural health, workforce development, and innovation
- Engage the Ohio General Assembly, the Governor's office, and the Ohio Department of Higher Education to advance OWU's interests and position the University as a thought partner on state higher education policy
- Identify and pursue federal and state funding opportunities, including grants, program investments, and legislative appropriations, that align with OWU's strategic priorities •

Serve as a liaison between OWU leadership and government stakeholders in the structuring of public-private partnerships

V. Leadership and Team Building

The Vice President leads a talented and growing advancement and strategic ventures team, and is expected to be an exceptional manager, developer of talent, and builder of culture.

- Cultivate a team culture that is open, merit-based, and welcoming to new talent and new ideas, building an advancement enterprise that reflects the bold, innovative spirit of the institution it serves
- Recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing team across all portfolio areas • Build a culture of ambition, accountability, and excellence within the advancement enterprise
- Serve as a mentor and model for frontline advancement professionals, particularly in the development of major and transformational gift relationships
- Partner effectively with the President's cabinet, academic leadership, and the Board of Trustees to ensure alignment between advancement strategy and institutional priorities • Manage the advancement budget with fiscal discipline, ensuring investments deliver appropriate returns

IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE

The Vice President for Advancement and Strategic Ventures is a rare professional: an exceptional fundraiser and relationship-builder who is also an entrepreneurial thinker and creative deal-maker. This person has built or significantly grown a philanthropic enterprise and has the instinct and track record to operate across its full strategic boundaries.

President Dr. Matt vandenBerg and a search committee chaired by Adam Smith, Vice President for Enrollment, are conducting this search. Dr. vandenBerg is looking for a leader whose profile reflects the full ambition of the role, with the sophistication to excel in each of its dimensions.

Personal Characteristics

Ohio Wesleyan's culture is entrepreneurial, action-oriented, and deeply collaborative. The ideal candidate will bring personal qualities that are a genuine match for that culture:

- A natural innovator who brings creative energy and fresh thinking to challenges others approach conventionally.
- A skilled and instinctive problem solver who moves toward complexity. • A consummate collaborator, both with external partners across sectors and industries and with internal colleagues across the institution, who shares credit freely, lifts those around them, and builds trust through openness and generosity of spirit. • A culture-builder who creates an advancement enterprise that is welcoming, inclusive, and expansive, develops talent at every level, genuinely values new voices, and grows the team stronger by continuously bringing more people in
- A self-starter who takes initiative, sets direction, and builds momentum with confidence. • Genuine comfort operating alongside executives, civic leaders, and decision-makers across industries and sectors as a peer and a thought partner
- A positive, can-do professional whose energy and optimism are contagious and whose attitude elevates the teams and communities around them
- A goal-oriented leader who sets ambitious targets, holds themselves accountable, and finds a way to deliver
- A motivator who brings out the best in a team, builds collective confidence, and inspires

performance well beyond what the org chart might suggest is possible

Required Qualifications

- Demonstrated success in comprehensive campaign leadership, with experience in campaigns of significant scale and complexity, ideally in the range of \$100M or above • A personal track record of cultivating, soliciting, and closing major and transformational gifts, with comfort operating at the seven-figure level and meaningful exposure to eight-figure conversations
- Substantial experience in higher education advancement, with a sophisticated understanding of the full advancement enterprise, from annual giving to planned giving to advancement operations
- A history of creative, entrepreneurial deal-making, including demonstrated ability to identify, structure, and close complex partnerships, sponsorships, P3s, or other innovative arrangements that create mutual value
- Exceptional relationship-building skills across diverse audiences: donors, corporate partners, civic leaders, government officials, alumni, parents, and community members
- Proven management and team-building capability, including experience leading and developing advancement professionals at multiple levels
- An authentic commitment to the liberal arts mission and the value of a residential, liberal arts education
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to represent OWU persuasively in public settings and boardrooms alike

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience in or significant exposure to federal and/or state government relations, including relationship management with elected officials and agencies
- Exposure to revenue-generating auxiliaries, earned income models, or entrepreneurial ventures within a higher education or nonprofit context
- Experience at a residential liberal arts college or university
- Familiarity with or interest in the startup ecosystem, business incubation, or entrepreneurship programs
- An advanced degree is preferred though not required; a bachelor's degree is required

Leadership Competencies

Beyond credentials and characteristics, the ideal candidate will demonstrate the following competencies that Ohio Wesleyan's president has identified as essential for success in this role:

- **Visionary execution:** The ability to see what is possible where others see only what exists, structure arrangements that did not previously exist, and move with urgency and creativity to build value, always paired with the discipline and pragmatism to execute. This role rewards both the visionary and the builder.
- **Campaign vision and discipline:** The capacity to hold a long-term campaign strategy with clarity while managing the daily complexity of a major philanthropic enterprise. The right candidate has been in the room when transformational commitments are made and knows exactly how to get there again.
- **Presidential partnership:** The VP will work with a president who has direct advancement experience and high expectations. This requires confidence, candor, and the ability to bring genuine ideas and strategic perspective to that relationship alongside strong execution. The right candidate brings genuine collaborative energy to every relationship on campus, seeing the full institution as a partner in advancement's success.
- **Community rootedness:** An authentic desire to be present and engaged in Delaware, Ohio and the broader Central Ohio community. OWU's strategic ventures are inseparable from the community it serves.
- **Integrated thinking:** The ability to see how philanthropy, partnerships, government relations, and entrepreneurial ventures reinforce one another, and to lead a team that operates across all of them with coherence and common purpose.

- **Mission conviction:** A belief in what OWU is building, America's University for Ambitious Self-Discovery, that is genuine and communicable. This conviction will be the most powerful tool in the VP's fundraising and partnership development arsenal.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Ohio Wesleyan offers a competitive total compensation package commensurate with the scope and seniority of this position. Compensation will be thoughtfully structured to reflect both market realities and the expanded portfolio this role encompasses.

The University provides a comprehensive benefits package including health, dental, and vision coverage; retirement plan with institutional contribution; tuition remission for eligible employees and their dependents; generous paid time off; and professional development support.

OWU is committed to supporting relocation for a candidate moving to the Delaware/Columbus area. Specific compensation details will be discussed with candidates during the interview process.

DELAWARE, OHIO: A PLACE WORTH CALLING HOME

Delaware, Ohio is one of the most livable small cities in the Midwest. A vibrant downtown, strong public schools, a rich arts and cultural scene, and a strong sense of civic identity make Delaware an increasingly attractive community for families and professionals.

Columbus, one of the fastest-growing major cities in the United States, is 25 miles south. The VP and their family will have ready access to world-class dining, arts, sports, healthcare, and the full amenities of a major metropolitan area, while living in a community with the character and scale that many families actively seek.

OWU's campus is integrated into Delaware's downtown in ways that create a genuine town-gown community. The next VP for Advancement and Strategic Ventures will be a meaningful part of Delaware and a contributor to its civic life.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Ohio Wesleyan University invites applications and nominations for the Vice President for Advancement and Strategic Ventures. The search is led by a committee chaired by Adam Smith, Vice President for Enrollment, in close partnership with President Dr. Matt vandenBerg.

How to Apply

Candidates should submit the following materials in a single PDF document:

- A letter of interest addressing qualifications for the role and attraction to Ohio Wesleyan's mission and strategic vision (no more than three pages)
- A current curriculum vitae or resume
- The names and contact information of three professional references (references will not be contacted without prior notification to the candidate)

Materials should be submitted via email to: **Adam Smith, Vice President for Enrollment** [asmith@owu.edu]

Nominations of exceptional candidates are also welcomed and encouraged at the same address.

Timeline

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Candidates are encouraged to apply promptly. First-round conversations with the President are anticipated to begin in the coming weeks.

Confidentiality

All applications and nominations will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Inquiries about the position are welcome.

Ohio Wesleyan University's Commitment

Ohio Wesleyan University is committed to equal opportunity in its educational programs, activities, and employment policies. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. OWU is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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