



# Position Specifications

Lee University

Cleveland, Tennessee

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**Title: President**

**Organization: Lee University**

**Location: Cleveland, Tennessee**

**Website: <https://www.leeuniversity.edu/>**

## **ORGANIZATION**

Lee University is a private, comprehensive university located in Cleveland, Tennessee, in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Lee has emerged as a leader in higher education in the southeastern region and is consistently ranked in the "Top Tier" of the Best Regional Universities in the South by U.S. News & World Report. Lee is also ranked by Princeton Review's "Best Colleges," and is one of the 141 colleges named Best in the Southeast.

Over the past two decades, Lee has become one of the largest Christ-centered private institutions in the Southeast. During that period, the university has seen a remarkable transformation that has included significant growth in its academic programs, student enrollment, faculty expertise, and diversity, as well as an expanded sense of mission and vision.

Lee University in recent years has been recognized as an institution of national standing in many areas that are frequently ranked by outside observers. One of the reasons for this emergence is that Lee stands out in a select group of higher education institutions, that of Christ-centered, liberal arts colleges and universities. Another reason is that Lee's original core values and goals have remained strong even as it has adapted to the changing landscape of academic and professional life.

Lee University traces its origins to humble beginnings over a century ago. The Church of God initiated plans for a Bible training school culminating in the school's establishment in Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1918. The first term began with 12 students and one teacher, Mrs. Nora B. Chambers. As enrollment grew, the school relocated multiple times to accommodate its expanding needs, including moves to Sevierville, Tennessee, and back to Cleveland in 1947, where it acquired the former Bob Jones College campus. This historic site became the institution's permanent home.

Renamed Lee College in 1947 to honor its second president, F. J. Lee, the school continued to grow and adapt, laying the groundwork for the transformative changes and remarkable expansion that began in the 1980s.

The liberal arts emphasis at Lee College came into its own in the mid-1980s with a deliberate move to embrace the broader evangelical Christian community. The shift brought an influx of new students and faculty. In the thirty-four years between 1986 and 2020, student enrollment more than quadrupled from 1200 to more than 5100.

Lee remains committed to its sponsoring denomination, but the institution's broad enrollment policy attracts students from a variety of religious traditions, academic abilities, and ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Lee draws students from nearly all 50 states and more than 50 countries.

The faculty has also grown and diversified to keep pace with the 57 undergraduate majors, 159 undergraduate programs, and 56 graduate programs in its six schools: School of Business, College of Arts & Sciences, the Helen DeVos College of Education, the School of Music, the School of Religion, and the School of Nursing. Faculty members come from around the world and represent a wide range of academic, cultural, and evangelical Christian backgrounds.

Campus construction programs have added 100 acres and more than 23 major buildings to Lee's landscape over the past thirty years. Among these are eight dormitories, six classroom buildings, a student union building, a chapel, two recreation centers and two athletic facilities, a health clinic, a recital hall, and a recording studio.

At the turn of the new millennium, Lee University emerged as a leader in higher education by integrating benevolence, service learning, personal strengths development, and cross-cultural studies into every student's educational experience. This innovative approach earned Lee numerous accolades. In 2017-2018, The Institute of International Education Open Doors (IIEOD) ranked Lee among the Top 5 institutions nationwide for the highest percentage of students participating in Study Abroad programs and among the Top 15 for the total number of study abroad students.

Lee is also renowned for its exceptional music programs, which have produced award-winning ensembles and artists celebrated on national and international stages. The Lee University Singers, Voices of Lee, and Lee Festival Choir are recognized for their extraordinary performances worldwide.

In addition to these distinctions, Lee has received recognition from the Templeton Foundation, earning a place on its Honor Roll of Character Building Colleges. It has also been featured on the Corporation for National and Community Service's Honor Roll multiple times, including receiving its prestigious President's Award, an honor shared with only five other American universities. Lee has further been celebrated as one of the "Great Colleges to Work For" by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

As the new president steps in, they will lead a university renowned for its innovation, dedication to its mission, and commitment to academic excellence. The president will continue to strengthen Lee University's position as a top-tier, Christ-centered institution, building on its remarkable growth and global influence.

## **Learn More**

- [Hundred Year Journey: The Lee University Story](#)
- [Lee University is Your Place](#)
- [Experience More](#)
- [Commissioning Highlights](#)
- [Celebration 2024](#)
- [Celebration 2024 Event Recap](#)
- [Winter Commencement Recap \(Winter 2024\)](#)

- [Lee University Sizzle Video \(2024\)](#)

## Social Media Sample

- [Facebook | Lee University](#)
- [Instagram | Lee University](#) (view Reels for video shorts)

## Mission

Lee University's Mission Statement:

**"Lee University is a Christian institution offering liberal arts and professional education on both the undergraduate and graduate levels through residential and distance programs. The university seeks to provide an education that integrates biblical truth, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, with truth discovered through the study of the arts and sciences and in the practice of various professions. A personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior is the controlling perspective from which the educational enterprise is carried out. The foundational purpose of all educational programs at Lee University is to develop within students the knowledge, appreciation, understanding, ability, and skills necessary for responsible Christian living in a complex world."**

Lee University's commitment to integrating faith and learning is reflected in its approach to education. By combining rigorous academic programs with a strong foundation in Christian values, the university creates an environment where students can develop intellectually, spiritually, and personally. Faculty and staff are dedicated to cultivating each student's individual talents while encouraging a deeper understanding of their faith. Outside the classroom, students are offered numerous opportunities for service learning, global engagement, and leadership development. These experiences prepare them to navigate the complexities of a diverse, global society. Lee University ensures that graduates not only possess expertise in their chosen fields but also the character and wisdom to lead with integrity, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and embody their Christian faith in all areas of life.

## Core Values

Lee University's core values are as follows:

1. **Christ-Centered Faith:** A commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which guides all aspects of life and learning.
2. **Academic Excellence:** A dedication to providing high-quality education that challenges students to think critically and excel in their chosen disciplines.
3. **Service to Others:** A commitment to serving both local and global communities through outreach, service learning, and a spirit of selflessness.
4. **Integrity:** A focus on honesty, ethics, and moral character in all actions and interactions, fostering a culture of trust and responsibility.

5. **Community:** A belief in the importance of building strong relationships within the local community and beyond, where mutual respect, support, and collaboration thrive.
6. **Diversity:** An appreciation for the various cultures, perspectives, and experiences that enrich the Lee community and prepare students for a global society.
7. **Spiritual Growth:** Encouragement of personal spiritual development through prayer, worship, and an ongoing commitment to living out one's faith, in the spirit of Lee's Pentecostal tradition.

The new president of Lee University should exemplify the institution's core values in every aspect of their leadership. A Christ-centered vision, grounded in integrity and faith, will guide their decision-making and interactions with students, faculty, and the broader community. The president should champion academic excellence, fostering an environment where both faculty and students are empowered to achieve their highest potential. Emphasizing service, the new leader should inspire outreach and engagement, both locally and globally, while nurturing a culture of diversity and inclusion. Above all, the president must lead with humility, wisdom, and a commitment to spiritual growth, ensuring that the university continues to fulfill its mission of preparing students for lives of responsibility and service in a complex world.

## **Faith Statement**

Lee University, a Christ-centered University, is committed to a conservative, evangelical, Pentecostal religious faith as outlined in the Church of God Declaration of Faith:

- In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
- In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.
- That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.
- That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.
- That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
- In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.
- Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.
- In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.
- In speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.
- In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
- Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.
- In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet.
- In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.
- In the bodily resurrection, eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.

## **COMMUNITY**

Lee University is nestled in the picturesque landscape of southeast Tennessee, where the Tennessee River winds through the rolling foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The Cleveland community has a strong connection to Lee, with the university playing a central role in enriching the area's beauty and vitality. Lee's stunning campus not only enhances the region's charm but also contributes to local growth by creating jobs and fostering economic development. With over 150 programs of study, ranging from associate to doctoral degrees, Lee's original mission remains unchanged: to provide a safe yet challenging environment where students can grow and prepare for the demands of a complex world.

## **REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

The President:

Reports to: Board of Directors

Supervises: Provost  
Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Vice President for Business and Finance  
Vice President for Student Life  
Vice President for Student Success  
Vice President for University Relations  
Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing  
Vice President for Operations  
Vice President for Information Technology

Relationships with Chancellor  
Employees  
Faculty  
Students  
Alumni and friends of the University  
City, County, State, and Federal officials  
Church of God and the broader Christian community  
The greater Cleveland community

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, Lee University is actively searching for its next president to strategically guide the 106-year-old institution into its next season of growth and opportunity. Located in the heart of scenic southeast Tennessee, Lee is a well-respected private Christian university with a strong connection to its community. Currently led by Dr. Paul Conn, who serves as both President and Chancellor, the university is poised for new leadership.

Dr. Conn assumed the new role of President and Chancellor on May 5, 2024, after an inspiring

tenure as President that lasted 34 years and a subsequent term of nearly four years as Chancellor. Dr. Conn, along with his wife Darlia McLuhan Conn, led the university through a transformative period in the 80's and 90's, maintaining Lee's institutional momentum into the new millennium and beyond the school's 2018 centennial. Dr. Conn will continue in his role as Chancellor after the new president is named, ensuring a seamless transition as Lee embarks on its next chapter.

The Lee University Board of Directors (Board) is responsible for the search and selection of the President, as outlined in governing documents. Recognizing the importance of the task, and the incredible place the university holds in the hearts of its students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, the Board has initiated several next steps, including the appointment of a Presidential Search Committee (Committee). Board members on the Committee are engaged day-to-day in the process; other representatives are involved in an active advising role.

## **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTATIONS**

During the first year, the new President will need to establish credibility as a strategic servant leader, gaining in-depth insights into Lee University, and establishing a direction for the organization. In addition, specific goals that have been identified as measures of success for the first 12 to 18 months include:

- **Spiritual Leadership:** Provide clear, compassionate spiritual guidance to the university community, ensuring that Lee's Christian identity remains central to its mission. Inspire students, faculty, and staff to live out their faith in all areas of life, integrating biblical truth into academic, social, and professional pursuits. Serve as a role model in spiritual growth, leading with humility, integrity, and a deep commitment to fostering a Christ-centered community.
- **Vision:** Articulate and communicate an inspiring and compelling vision, firmly grounded in cherished Lee roots and heritage and appropriately inculcated with innovative goals and objectives for the future, to all Lee stakeholders. This message should become a rallying point, providing a cohesive identity and sense of direction for Lee University over the next 10 years.
- **Fundraising and Finances:** Strengthen and expand fundraising efforts, focusing on endowment growth, unrestricted gifts, and diversifying revenue sources. Ensure sound financial practices by adhering to operating budgets, investing in reserves for long-term sustainability, and securing new income-generating opportunities.
- **Enrollment:** Focus on enrollment stabilization and growth, recognizing the importance of achieving two to three early wins to inspire confidence and build momentum in leadership.
- **Relationship Building:** Foster healthy internal and external relationships with care, humility, intention, and courage. Build the trust of faculty, and all Lee University employees, as a thoughtful leader who engages with appropriate transparency, boundaries, and consensus building and serves as a shield when necessary. Engage the denomination with mutual respect and in a spirit of openness, collaboration, collegiality, and shared purpose.
- **Leadership Development:** Empower and develop leadership within the institution, inspiring members of the cabinet to own their roles with enthusiasm, innovation, and

optimism and develop and provide leadership development pathways for high-potential employees at all levels of the organization.

- **Collaboration:** Forge a cooperative and collaborative, effective, and dynamic partnership with Chancellor Conn, characterized by mutual respect, thought and operational partnership, and leadership - seeking to complement one another's strengths and leadership approaches for the shared good of Lee University, its mission, and consistencies.

## **CANDIDATE PROFILE**

The following describes many characteristics of the ideal presidential candidate at Lee University:

### *Education:*

- Well-prepared academically, with an earned terminal degree from an accredited university strongly preferred.

### *Passion:*

- A deep, living relationship with Jesus Christ, with a lifestyle that vibrantly represents a clear devotion to Jesus Christ, the authority of Scripture, and life of the Church and Pentecostal tradition, aligned with the Church of God.
- Demonstrated experience and/or understanding in providing effective and inspiring leadership in higher education or similar settings, with a strong appreciation for the liberal arts tradition and a proactive approach to innovation and growth.
- Passion and commitment to Christian Higher Education.
- A willingness to be deeply engaged as an active member of the local community.
- A leader who inspires others to achieve their greater potential.
- A source of enthusiasm, optimism, kindness, and compassion, cultivating an environment of warmth and approachability that encourages positive relationships and inspires others.
- A genuinely likable leader who fosters a sense of belonging and fosters an atmosphere where people feel valued and motivated to contribute their best.

### *Experience/Skills:*

- Ability to promote the Christian mission and values of the institution as well as work collaboratively with various internal and external stakeholders, including church, government, and civic leaders.
- Successful in fundraising and relationship-building to enhance the university's mission and expand its impact through meaningful support of students, alumni, and institutional growth.
- A track record of consistent, spiritually-driven leadership, building high-performing teams, and mentoring others to foster mutual respect and trust.
- A proven ability to cast and articulate a vision, distribute resources effectively, and achieve results in complex organizational settings, managing a complex budget.
- Ability to lead transformative change through a forward-thinking approach and developing innovative strategies. Skillfully prepares others for what lies ahead by guiding them through change with clarity, evoking confidence and calm, while maintaining a mindful pace to ensure alignment and engagement across the community and constituencies.
- Proven ability to assess risks, measure results, and stay attuned to emerging trends in higher education and its regulatory environment, with the aptitude to pivot as needed, ensuring sustainable growth and impact.



- Approach conflict resolution with humility, skill, and a spirit of prayer and discernment—whether addressing interpersonal, cultural, or organizational challenges. Demonstrate empathy, active listening, and a commitment to fostering unity.
- Approachable, visible to, and intentionally engaged with students, genuinely enjoying student relationships.
- Actively participates in a variety of campus activities, engaging with students across diverse settings, fostering a strong sense of community, and demonstrating a genuine interest in their academic, social, and spiritual development.

*Personal Characteristics:*

- Commitment to Lee University’s mission, purposes, policies, and objectives, coupled with an ability to articulate these elements in a winsome way to all segments of the Lee constituency.
- Exhibits a unique blend of humility and confidence, coupled with an ability to work in collaboration with others, and complementing the leadership and relationships previously established.

For more information, please contact:

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