Executive Summary

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) seeks an experienced and innovative leader to serve as its Vice President for Student Life (VPSL). The next VPSL will join UNI at a critical moment in its history, will build on a strong foundation and will revitalize the Division of Student Life. Reporting directly to President Mark Nook and serving as a member of the President's Senior Leadership Team, the next Vice President for Student Life will have a primary focus on student success including a proactive partnership with academic affairs; champion data-informed and metric-oriented student success efforts; strategically manage the resources, programs and personnel of the division with clarity and efficiency; and advance the institution's efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion to fully realize the benefits of a robust multicultural community.

The university's next Vice President will be a strategic and experienced student affairs leader who takes initiative and has the collaborative and interpersonal skills to operate effectively with multiple constituencies and to achieve results. In the midst of the university's return to campus for the academic year, the Division of Student Life plays a critical role in rebuilding and broadening the sense of community with student-centered practices that meet the needs of a diverse and changing student population.

As one of three public universities in the state of Iowa, UNI is the only comprehensive university and serves the state, region, and beyond with programs designed to support and enhance the economy. The University is proud of its rating at #2 among Top Public Regional Schools – Midwest (US News and World Report) and its recognition as the site of Iowa’s #1 teacher education program. True to its roots, UNI continues to emphasize hands-on learning and service as preparation for meaningful careers and civic engagement. The University of Northern Iowa values access to higher education and does so within a supportive environment as demonstrated by its excellent retention, persistence, and graduation rates that are consistently higher than the national average for a regional comprehensive. With a population of 9,231 undergraduate and graduate students, UNI offers more than 90 fields of study, 250+ student clubs and organizations, 17 Division I collegiate athletics programs, and a multitude of fine and performing arts options.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy on page 12.
Role of the Vice President of Student Life

The Vice President of Student Life serves as the senior student affairs officer of the university; provides executive leadership, vision, strategic direction, and operational management for the Student Life division; cultivates a student-centered approach to the work of the division; promotes student success, learning, and well-being; builds a sense of engagement and campus community; guides divisional programs to foster a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and stimulating campus life; formulates and implements administrative policies, particularly those affecting students; provides counsel to the President and University leadership on issues impacting students; and serves as a member of the President’s Senior Leadership Team and the President’s Cabinet.

The Vice President oversees a talented, dedicated team and has executive responsibility for the Division of Student Life which currently includes the following units: Career Services; Center for Multicultural Education; Counseling Center; Dean of Students; Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice; Gender and Sexuality Services; Maucker Union; Military and Veteran Student Support; Student Accessibility Services; Student Employment; Student Health Clinic; Student Involvement and Event Services; Student Wellness Services; and Recreation Services. The university plans to move the housing and dining portfolio into the Student Life division in 2023.
Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The Vice President for Student Life will bring energy, vision, entrepreneurial thinking, and coherence to the programs and services of the Division of Student Life. Reflected in the name change from Student Affairs to Student Life is the University’s commitment to deliver programs and services to support the student experience and acknowledge the many and varied life experiences that are part of the journey of every student who enrolls at the University of Northern Iowa. The University takes pride in its strong graduation and persistence rates and recognizes that this success is related to the student-friendly policies, practices, and programs that have been developed to enhance the student experience. The University has the depth and resources of a midwestern regional university, and the warmth, informality, commitment to student success and impressive persistence outcomes that are often associated with a private college. This combination, expressed in many different ways by faculty, staff, and administrators is one of the signatures of the UNI student experience.

The Vice President will support a talented and committed staff who are deeply engaged in the work of the division and eager to partner with a new leader in broadening and deepening the work and impact of the student experience at UNI. The Student Life staff works hard to enhance the student experience, support academic success, and elevate the profile of student life at UNI. The Vice President will possess the intellectual vision and motivation necessary to lead as a member of a senior administration committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The ambitious agenda for Student Life at UNI requires that the Student Life leader be a person of stature and experience in the field with a strong desire to fully engage in the strategic priorities of the University. This is an opportunity for a talented, ambitious leader to contribute to a successful institution by reenergizing the student experience and moving the programs to their next stage of development and integration with the academic programs in particular and more generally with the University as a whole.

Particular emphasis will be given to the following areas during the first several years of the Vice President's leadership at UNI:

1. **Reposition Student Life to be vibrant and nimble in an ever-changing higher education landscape**

President Nook has indicated his support for a dynamic and impactful Division of Student Life, creating this transformational opportunity for a forward-looking and energetic leader to build on an already strong program and broaden and deepen its impact for an institution that is moving forward with confidence into the post-COVID higher education environment. There are a number of assets with which the next Vice President will work, including a growing warehouse of data collected over many years from which the Vice President can draw in building a strategy to move forward. The institution takes particular pride in its success with retaining and subsequently graduating students at a higher rate than many of its peer institutions, at least in part attributable to the care, attention to detail and high-quality interactions students have with faculty, staff, and
administrators at UNI. Under the leadership of Interim Vice President for Student Affairs David Grady, Ph.D., the division is well along in a process of planning and identifying the key strategic priorities around which Student Life will be organized. Working groups of Student Life staff are currently working on these four strategic priorities:

• **Advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging** in the division and on campus through intentional student programming and services, strategic staff recruitment and development, and equitable policies, procedures, and practices.

• Deliver comprehensive and holistic **health and well-being** services and education to UNI students that focus on all dimensions of wellness.

• Utilize transformational high impact practices to enhance **student engagement** inside and outside of the classroom and to contribute to retention rates, graduation rates, and first destination success.

• **Ensure the vitality of the division** through dependable collaboration with campus partners, effective and efficient stewardship of fiscal and human resources, optimal utilization of facilities, and enhanced internal and external communication of the Student Life story.

2. **Enhance the partnership with Academic Affairs to increase the coherence of the educational experience**

The Vice President will have demonstrated experience building strategic and successful partnerships with the faculty and academic affairs administrators in support of student success. The Vice President will be a pro-active communicator and will seek partners among faculty and academic affairs colleagues. UNIs provost Jose Herrera, Ph.D. fully supports enhanced partnerships between the areas. The VPSL will engage in efforts to ensure that a deep commitment to student success is recognized as a shared goal between the divisions and more broadly across the institution. Reflecting experience and success in developing and valuing partnerships with faculty members, deans, and academic affairs administrators, the VPSL will work across boundaries to eliminate barriers to completion for students and to make the UNI experience as student-centered as possible.

3. **Demonstrate a deep commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

The institution has a deep commitment to raising awareness and encouraging campus and community engagement with issues of diversity. The University of Northern Iowa believes in building a strong campus community that is equitable, inclusive, and welcoming and that encourages individuals and groups to learn and work within and across diverse communities. Critical to the university’s current and future strategic priorities is to assure the recruitment, retention, and success of historically underrepresented and underserved students and employees, and to lead empathic positive change in underserved communities through our service mission. According to The Education Trust, UNI’s six-year minority graduation rate is 20 percentage points above the average minority graduation rate for peers with a similar student profile. With several of
Iowa’s largest TRIO programs, UNI has made significant progress in removing barriers to access and success for students from low-income, first generation, and military-connected backgrounds, as well as learners with disabilities. A recent UNI Alumni Magazine article, *The Courage to Confront “Education Debt,”* captures several key initiatives focused on guiding positive change in the communities we serve.

The Vice President for Student Life will join a cabinet and senior leadership team who recognize the leadership, partnership, and collaboration required to advance change on an institutional and community-wide scale. The next VPSL will play an important role in the university’s efforts and will bring to UNI experience, commitment, and expertise in creating a campus culture that celebrates diversity, promotes broad cultural understanding, and encourages both campus and community engagement around issues of inclusivity and equity. The University readily acknowledges the interplay of campus, local, state, and national issues in framing this approach and creating the conditions for discourse on these issues. The University is committed to its obligation to educate students who have skills for leadership, citizenship, and meaningful engagement in the diverse communities in which they may live, work and lead in their futures.

4. **Demonstrates effective and efficient operational and resource stewardship**

UNI is immersed in a mission-critical effort to enhance access for students by re-aligning tuition and fees to be affordable and predictable for Iowa students and their families. In addition to working in collaboration with the Iowa Board of Regents, Iowa General Assembly, the Office of the Governor, and key community and philanthropic stakeholders in this work, the University is focused on achieving operational efficiencies that enable UNI to re-prioritize cost savings and avoidances toward our mission. Critical to the role of the Vice President for Student Life will be a strong financial acumen and the ability to achieve efficiency while encouraging innovation and upholding the university’s commitment to an affordable and high-quality holistic living and learning experience. In addition, the University is seeking an accomplished professional with experience calibrating the balance between operations and resource stewardship and offering programs and services that contribute to student success.
Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The University of Northern Iowa seeks in its next Vice President for Student Life, a distinguished record of academic accomplishment and leadership. An earned doctorate or terminal degree is required. The ideal candidate will have at least 7 years of progressive, senior management experience in higher education and/or student affairs; demonstrated competence in budgeting, financial, human resources, and crisis management; a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and social justice; an ability to build positive relationships with students and others on campus and to partner with key constituencies; experience in strategic planning and assessment; strong communication and problem-solving skills; commitment to educational excellence; and an ability to provide inclusive, collaborative, transparent, and data-informed leadership is required.

The preferred candidate will also have a demonstrated knowledge and understanding of contemporary higher education trends and best practices, and sensitivity and skill to work with diverse student and employee populations.

CHARACTERISTIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Exhibits a student-centered approach to the work of the division; optimizes each student’s educational journey through high quality, student-focus experiences that complement the academic mission of the university; leads and participates in initiatives that enhance the campus quality of life and contribute to the success of students; and articulates the value of student engagement and the value of out-of-classroom student life contributions to the overall educational experience.

2. Serves as a relationship builder forging collaborative partnerships with academic affairs, finance and operations, the campus community, and the local community; develops and sustains a strong relationship with the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs to enhance student success and to provide transformational learning experiences; engages in recruitment, retention, persistence, and graduation efforts; and promotes student well-being.

3. Provides leadership for creating and implementing a vision for the division based on university values and in support of its mission and strategic plan; embraces diversity and excellence through inclusion; models and promotes an inclusive culture; practices cultural humility; demonstrates high ethical standards and integrity; and promotes accountability.

4. Actively participates in student life and University life by being highly visible and approachable on campus; serves as an engaging mentor and role model for students; advocates for students and the division within the larger university; and builds a sense of engagement and campus community.

5. Provides strategic leadership and oversight of Student Life staff, operations, and budgets; demonstrates a management approach that is resourceful, creative, and entrepreneurial; fosters team building and a healthy work environment; empowers, mentors, and motivates staff; and promotes professional staff development.
6. Creates a culture of assessment; uses data, research, and assessment to guide decision-making; benchmarks programs and services against peer institutions and recognized best practices; and ensures continuous improvement of activities and services in the division.

7. Provides leadership and/or active involvement on key university committees, councils, and initiatives; actively engages in university partnerships and community outreach; collaborates with other Board of Regents, State of Iowa institutions; and maintains professional competency through active participation in professional associations.

About University of Northern Iowa

Overview

The University of Northern Iowa’s purpose is to enrich lives, communities, and the world through students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Through personalized attention, the University creates an environment in which every person is able to reach their academic, professional, and personal life goals. Investing in the success of the students, faculty, and staff empowers individuals to build strong senses of purpose, community, and responsibility. By investing in individuals, the University of Northern Iowa innovates ethical solutions to the problems of our time.

Vision

Offering personalized attention to students, the University of Northern Iowa will be a diverse and inclusive campus community that provides an engaged education empowering students to lead locally and globally.

Mission

Within a challenging and supportive environment, the University of Northern Iowa engages students in high-quality and high-impact learning experiences and emphasizes excellence in teaching and scholarship.

Values

As a university community UNI is guided by the following core values:

- **Academic Freedom**
  The freedom of inquiry and expression in teaching and scholarship.

- **Access**
  An inclusive educational environment that is accessible and affordable.

- **Accountability**
  A commitment to integrity, responsibility, and the highest ethical standards integrated into all University practices.

- **Collaboration**
A commitment to work together to achieve our shared vision, mission, and goals.

- **Community**
  A caring and safe community, characterized by civility and respect, which stands in solidarity against any actions that exclude, discriminate against, or silence members of our community.

- **Diversity**
  The cultivation of a diverse and inclusive learning and work environment.

- **Engagement**
  Active participation in transformative, innovative, and lifelong learning in service to humanity.

- **Excellence**
  A commitment to the pursuit of excellence in individual and collective endeavors.

- **Sustainability**
  A vibrant community and campus that is economically sound, environmentally responsible, and socially just.

## The Division of Student Life

The Division of Student Life is an integral component of a vibrant, diverse and stimulating campus experience at UNI. Through intentional, student-centered programs and services, Student Life helps UNI students succeed and prepares them for personal and professional success after graduation. Our dedicated staff encourage students to fully engage in campus life and the Cedar Valley community, to excel inside and outside of the classroom, and to reach their maximum potential.

### Mission

**We help students succeed.**

We help students prepare for responsible citizenship, personal fulfillment, and success in life by supporting their efforts to learn through their experiences, achieve their academic goals, and strive for excellence in all they do.

**We do this by:**

- Developing environments that are safe, welcoming, inclusive and healthy
- Providing services that are professional, supportive and personalized
- Fostering meaningful student engagement in campus and community life that develops leadership, educates about diversity, and contributes to learning

### Vision

The Division of Student Life inspires student success through transformative experiences, inclusive environments, and campus and community engagement.

### Values
University of Northern Iowa

- An inclusive, safe, equitable and respectful community
- Engagement as citizens locally, nationally and globally
- Imagination and innovation
- A culture of care that supports growth
- Campus and community partnerships

The Division of Student Life portfolio includes: Career Services; Center for Multicultural Education; Counseling Center; Dean of Students; Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice; Gender and Sexuality Services; Maucker Union; Military and Veteran Student Services; Student Accessibility Services; Student Employment; Student Health Clinic; Student Life and Event Services; Student Wellness Services; and Recreation Services.

Academics

The University of Northern Iowa believes in educational excellence, accessibility, and collaboration and is known for designing robust and engaging learning experiences. UNI offers outstanding programs in fields such as teacher education, business, technology, performing arts, natural sciences — in total, more than 160 areas of study across nearly all disciplines.

The University of Northern Iowa supports students with a number of academic resources, including tutoring and advising, to help students excel. Postsecondary education student affairs graduate program seeks to prepare practitioners to empower the holistic development of students.

Student Success

UNI’s four-year graduation rate has increased by 14 percentage points in 20 years and is 8 percentage points above the average four-year graduation rate of similar institutions. The vast majority of UNI students complete their degrees in 5 years or less.

Undergraduate Graduation Rates

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<td>2016</td>
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UNI’s success in reducing time students spend earning their degrees also enhances efficiency in university operations.
The Cedar Valley

UNI is nestled in the middle of the vibrant Cedar Valley, an area that offers the perfect combination of history, culture and technology, and a community of people who treat each other like family. The Cedar Valley, which includes the conjoined communities of Cedar Falls and Waterloo, offers live music, comedy clubs, waterparks, great restaurants, shopping, coffee shops, parks, and more than 80 miles of bike trails. College Hill and downtown Cedar Falls offer unique shopping and dining experiences, and neighboring Waterloo has even more to explore.

Cedar Valley by the numbers:

120+ unique shops and boutiques

100+ local dining and drink establishments

10+ museums

120+ attractions

20+ sports and recreation facilities

130,000+ population in Black Hawk County

You will see Panther Pride across the Cedar Valley. That is because our faculty, staff, and students are actively engaged with the people, industries, and communities of our region, leading and
assisting through engaged scholarship and service to enhance quality of life for a richly diverse community.

Learn more about Cedar Falls, Waterloo and the Cedar Valley at:

Grow Cedar Valley
Cedar Falls Tourism
College Hill Partnership
Cedar Falls Main Street
Cedar Trails Partnership
Experience Waterloo
Downtown Waterloo
Northeast Iowa Regional Board of Realtors
Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting the University of Northern Iowa in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by January 5, 2022.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer’s candidate portal.

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Sheila Murphy and Jen Pickard
UNIVPSL@wittkieffer.com

The University of Northern Iowa does not discriminate in employment or education. Visit https://policies.uni.edu/1303 for additional information.