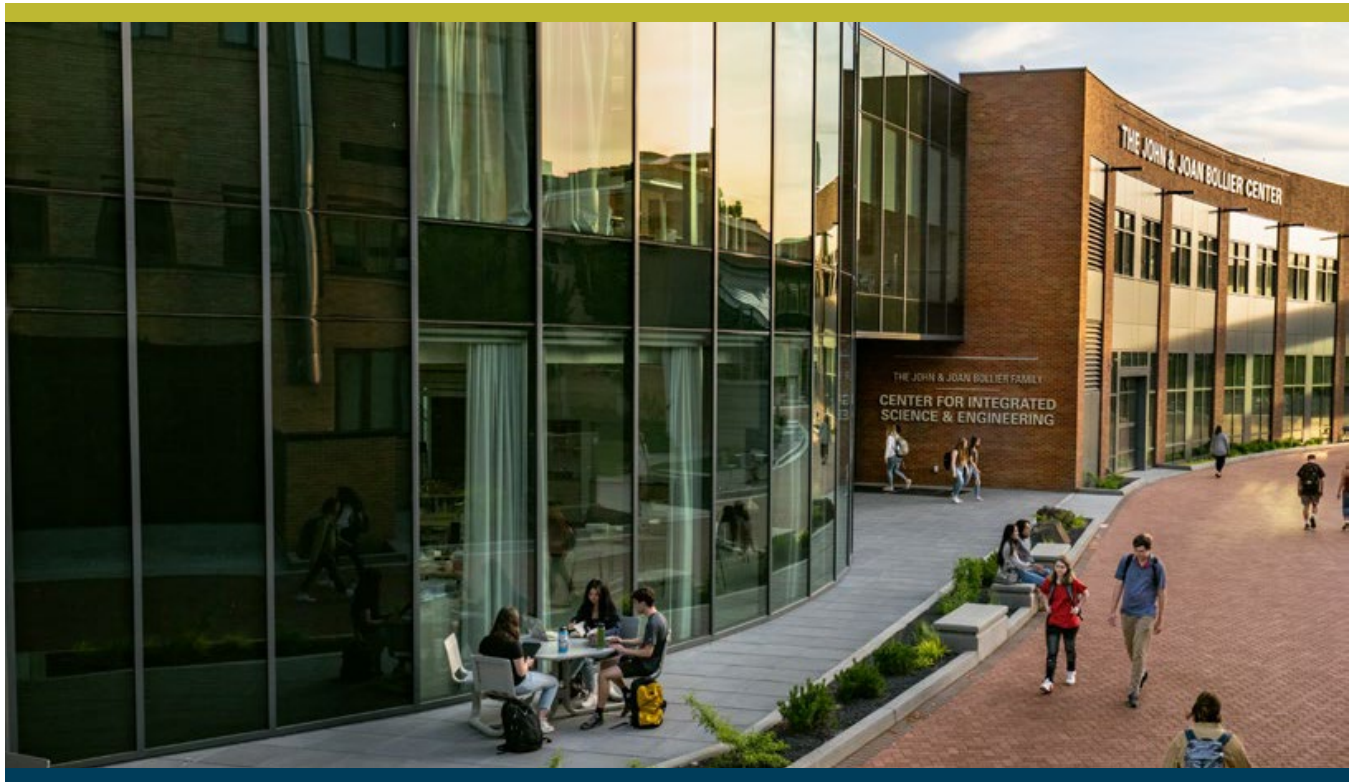# GONZAGA
U N I V E R S I T Y

Dean
School of Engineering & Applied Science

Leadership Profile

WittKieffer

Executive Summary

Gonzaga University seeks a visionary and collaborative leader committed to academic excellence and student success to serve as the next dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS).

The next dean will develop a compelling vision for the future of SEAS and advance a strategy that elevates the school's standing and maximizes its impact. The vision and strategy will leverage Gonzaga's historical strengths as a liberal arts institution anchored by exceptional teaching and its Jesuit, Catholic, humanistic mission to further distinguish SEAS as an exemplar of innovation for the common good.

It is a time of great momentum for engineering and applied science at Gonzaga. In 2022, the university unveiled the Bollier Center for Integrated Science and Engineering, ushering in a new era of collaboration, reflection, and problem-solving and elevating STEM education at Gonzaga to a new level of engagement and real-world preparation. From climate change and public health research to biochemistry, psychology, neuroscience, and electronics labs, the center creates opportunities for engineering and applied and natural sciences to live and grow together, fostering discovery, innovation, and learning that benefit society.

In summer 2025, STEM at Gonzaga took another leap forward. A new Center for Materials Research, supported by a $1 million National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) grant shared with the College of Arts and Sciences, will advance innovation, industry partnerships, and student learning. A new state-of-the art Biomedical Engineering Laboratory Suite will support hands-on learning in the school's new biomedical engineering program. SEAS has also launched new academic programs in data science and cybersecurity and minors in robotics and AI, complemented by a new NIST-funded Applied AI Lab. The Gonzaga Research Opportunities in Math, Engineering, and Computer Science (GRO-MECS) program is a new SEAS initiative designed to ignite greater student interest in STEM fields while providing impactful experiential learning opportunities.

SEAS faculty and students benefit from transformative partnerships and facilities, including Gonzaga's leadership in the Inland Northwest Tech Hub in collaboration with Boeing, NASA, SpaceX, and more than 200 other partners. SEAS partners closely with Gonzaga's new Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology, which drives interdisciplinary, human-centered education and innovation at the intersection of data, AI, and the arts and sciences.

The next dean will lead SEAS at an exciting moment in Gonzaga's history. Dr. Katia Passerini took office as the university's 27th president in July 2025 and was officially installed in October. Only the second layperson to serve in the role since Gonzaga's founding in 1887, President Passerini leads the university in educating undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students for lives of leadership and service to others.

Gonzaga University is a nationally ranked liberal arts university rooted in the Pacific Northwest with academic experiences and connections that span the globe. Committed to the Jesuit tradition of developing the whole person, Gonzaga prepares students for lives of leadership and service to others. The university enrolls nearly 7,500 students across seven colleges and schools. With small class sizes and teachers ranked among the nation's best, Gonzaga stretches perspectives, stimulates curiosity, and discovers new pathways to progress.

The next dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Science must champion and balance academic excellence with practical application, honoring the school's history and traditions while pushing boldly into the future. An earned terminal degree in a STEM field and qualifications that merit an appointment as a full professor with tenure at Gonzaga University are required. To learn more, see *Procedure for Candidacy* at the end of this document.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

Working in collaboration with internal and external constituents, the next dean will articulate a compelling vision for the School of Engineering and Applied Science's future and advance a strategy that elevates the school's standing and maximizes its impact. The vision and strategy will leverage Gonzaga's historical strengths as a liberal arts institution anchored by exceptional teaching and its Jesuit, Catholic, humanistic tradition to further distinguish SEAS as an exemplar of innovation for the common good.

Specifically, the dean will be expected to:

- **Champion academic and pedagogical excellence and interdisciplinary collaboration.**
  Inspire high-impact scholarship and research and ensure excellence and innovation in teaching across SEAS departments and programs. Building on the momentum of new programs in biomedical engineering, data science, and cybersecurity, facilitate and foster additional collaborations with the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Health Sciences, School of Business Administration, Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology, and other units to identify new programmatic and research opportunities.

- **Cultivate and expand industry, government, and community partnerships.**
  Strengthen engagement and collaboration with external partners to create opportunities for students and graduates; to align academic programs with innovations in engineering and computer science; and to support local and regional STEM workforce needs. Play a signature role in Gonzaga's ongoing leadership of the multi-institution Inland Northwest consortium as it re-competes to establish the American Aerospace Materials Manufacturing Center.

- **Generate new resources.**
  Diversify revenue streams and establish and steward strategic relationships that benefit SEAS. Working with Advancement, identify, cultivate, and generate new resources to support: high-impact learning opportunities and co-curricular activities; faculty and undergraduate research; critical infrastructure such as research facilities and teaching labs; career networking programs; and faculty and staff professional development.

- **Develop long-term strategies for enrollment management and student retention.**
  Working with department chairs, program directors, and Enrollment Management, steward responsible and sustainable growth in both undergraduate and graduate enrollment in alignment with SEAS resources and capacity. This includes identifying academic programs that have additional capacity; advocating for and building new programs that increase enrollment and visibility at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional certification levels; and developing a multi-year enrollment plan and its related resource needs. Continue to invest in and calibrate student support and success initiatives to reflect shifts in student preparedness.

- **Recruit, retain, and support exceptional faculty and staff.**
  Recruit exceptional, diverse faculty and staff who celebrate and support Gonzaga's Jesuit, Catholic, humanistic mission—including teacher-scholars who can inspire innovation while maintaining the university's tradition of excellence in teaching—and actively facilitate their professional development and success.

- **Build community and strengthen a culture of transparency.**
  Model an authentic commitment to inclusive decision making and shared governance; to open, transparent communication; and to fostering a cohesive community in which all voices are heard, respected, and celebrated.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Gonzaga University seeks a visionary and strategic leader to serve as dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. In leading SEAS, the dean must be able to champion and balance academic excellence with practical application, honoring the school's history and traditions while pushing boldly into the future. An earned terminal degree in a STEM field and qualifications that merit an appointment as a full professor with tenure at Gonzaga University are required.

In addition, the ideal candidate will have the following characteristics:

- **Ability to champion Gonzaga's mission.** An appreciation of and willingness to promote Jesuit education and the charisms to care for the development of the whole person in mind, body, and spirit; to cultivate leaders of purpose; and to stand with the vulnerable.

- **Commitment to academic, research, and teaching excellence.** Intellectual curiosity and vitality and a record of distinction in teaching, service, scholarship (applied or theoretical), and research funding. An understanding of the relationship between technical scholarly work and excellence in teaching. Capacity to support and strengthen research.

- **Vision and growth orientation.** Ability to set a clear and inspirational vision. An opportunistic mindset and future focus. Experience developing and implementing strategic plans and initiatives with evidence of successful outcomes.

- **Collaborative leadership.** Capacity to understand stakeholder interests and collaborate effectively with constituents. Ability to build consensus and engender trust.

- **Commitment to external engagement and partnership.** A record of effective outreach and engagement with community, industry, and other external partners and ability to steward strategic relationships leading to measurable philanthropic, curricular or placement outcomes. Experience engaging diverse domestic and international communities.

- **Industry experience, knowledge, and network.** Deep understanding of, and established relationships within, engineering, computer science, and related industries; and the ability to bridge academia and industry.

- **Prior experience in academic administration.** A record of success in faculty recruitment, enrollment management, faculty and staff professional development, student support and retention, and academic program development.

- **Student orientation.** Authentic commitment to student engagement, success, and well-being.

- **Exceptional interpersonal skills.** Ability to communicate clearly, effectively, and transparently, and the inclination and capacity to listen to others.

- **Fiscal and fundraising acumen.** An understanding of and experience in financial management, strategic budgeting, and resource allocation, and the willingness and capacity to steward philanthropic donations exemplified by measurable outcomes/examples.

- **Servant leadership.** Capacity to advocate effectively for faculty, staff, and students. A leadership style characterized by empathy and compassion, thoughtfulness and kindness, and integrity and fairness.

- **Change management experience.** Proven ability to manage change effectively. Adaptability and agility, an openness to new ideas and different perspectives, and the capacity and willingness to take measured risks.

- **Operational and management skills.** Sophisticated organizational and business acumen. Proven ability to build, manage, and lead a high-performing team.

About the School of Engineering & Applied Science

SEAS has played a defining role at Gonzaga University since it was first established as the School of Engineering in 1934 with an inaugural class of 31 students. Today, the school enrolls more than 850 students and accounts for approximately 15% of undergraduate students at Gonzaga, which is one of only four Jesuit universities in the West with an accredited engineering program. SEAS has developed a regional and national reputation for high-quality engineering instruction coupled with the essential elements of a Jesuit education. The school is ranked No. 21 for Undergraduate Engineering and No. 14 for Civil Engineering (non-doctorate) by *U.S. News & World Report.*

SEAS is driven by the pursuit of innovation for the common good. By combining a rigorous technical curriculum with a broad liberal arts education that emphasizes communication skills, critical thinking, and ethics, the school equips its graduates to push the boundaries of modern technology and prepares them for professional lives that span engineering, computing, business, and other disciplines.

SEAS students benefit from a wide range of immersive, hands-on experiential learning opportunities. All SEAS undergraduates participate in a Senior Design Project and have access to the Manufacturing Technology Center. Nearly three-quarters of SEAS undergraduates participate in internships; more than one-third study abroad, and nearly one-quarter of students engage in research.

Mission, Vision, and Values

SEAS produces broadly-educated and capable engineers and computer scientists ready to contribute innovative solutions for a better world, guided by Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic values, a commitment to the whole person, and a focus on social responsibility and ethical leadership.

SEAS faculty and staff work toward a common vision for educating its students, embracing the Jesuit education tradition while working continuously to translate aspects of that tradition to the SEAS mission. The school strives to be an exemplar of undergraduate and graduate engineering education, offering programs distinguished by quality, innovation, creativity, and scholarship. SEAS is dedicated to personal interaction with its students, instilling in them the professional responsibility of contributing to society through ethical practice.

SEAS values collaboration, assessment, and continuous improvement, which are essential for achieving the school's vision. The school is committed to maintaining an environment characterized by open communication where all people are treated fairly.

SEAS students work on Boeing airplane seats as part of their Senior Design project.

Departments and Programs

The School of Engineering & Applied Science offers 10 undergraduate degrees and three master's degrees through five departments: Biomedical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical & Computer Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering.

Undergraduate Degrees
- B.S. in Biomedical Engineering
- B.S. in Civil Engineering
- B.S. in Computer Engineering
- B.A. in Computer Science
- B.S. in Computer Science
- B.S. in Cybersecurity
- B.S. in Data Science
- B.S. in Electrical Engineering
- B.S. in Engineering Management
- B.S. in Mechanical Engineering

Undergraduate Minors
- AI in Engineering and Applied Science
- Computer Science
- Cybersecurity
- Data Science
- Software Application Development
- Robotics

Graduate Programs
- Master of Engineering Management
- Master of Engineering in Transmission and Distribution Engineering
- M.S. in Data Science
- Certificate in Transmission and Distribution Engineering

Biomedical Engineering

SEAS welcomed its first cohort of biomedical engineering majors in Fall 2024. One of the most interdisciplinary programs at Gonzaga, the B.S. in Biomedical Engineering combines engineering disciplines with biology, chemistry, and human anatomy and physiology. Designed to support diverse career paths, including medical device design, biomaterials, bioelectronics, and pharmaceuticals, the biomedical engineering curriculum offers students flexibility in their junior and senior years to tailor their studies. The program provides a pathway to medical school for students interested in medicine. The UW-GU Health Partnership provides opportunities for Gonzaga undergrads to study and research alongside University of Washington School of Medicine faculty and medical students.

As part of Gonzaga's investment in the new program, a new state-of-the-art Biomedical Engineering Laboratory Suite in the Bollier Center for Integrated Science and Engineering was unveiled in August 2025. Featuring a teaching lab, a tissue culture lab, and two faculty research labs, the new facility supports hands-on learning and faculty-led research across a wide range of biomedical engineering topics. The teaching lab provides students with advanced lab experiences that focus on medical device design, biomedical signal measurement, and system testing. Students engage in building and evaluating their own medical devices and electronics—an immersive experience that complements classroom learning and prepares them for careers at the intersection of engineering and human health.

Civil Engineering

Civil Engineering students at SEAS are equipped with the knowledge and skills to build a safer, more sustainable world. Graduates design and maintain the systems that keep communities running, from clean water and safe buildings to efficient transportation. The department offers a B.S. in Civil Engineering, which combines technical excellence, experiential learning, and the Jesuit charism of *cura personalis*. Students can choose a specialized subdiscipline from among the following:

- Construction Engineering & Management
- Environmental Engineering
- Geotechnical Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Transportation Engineering
- Water Resources Engineering

In addition, a construction concentration is available that includes a minor in business for engineering technologies.
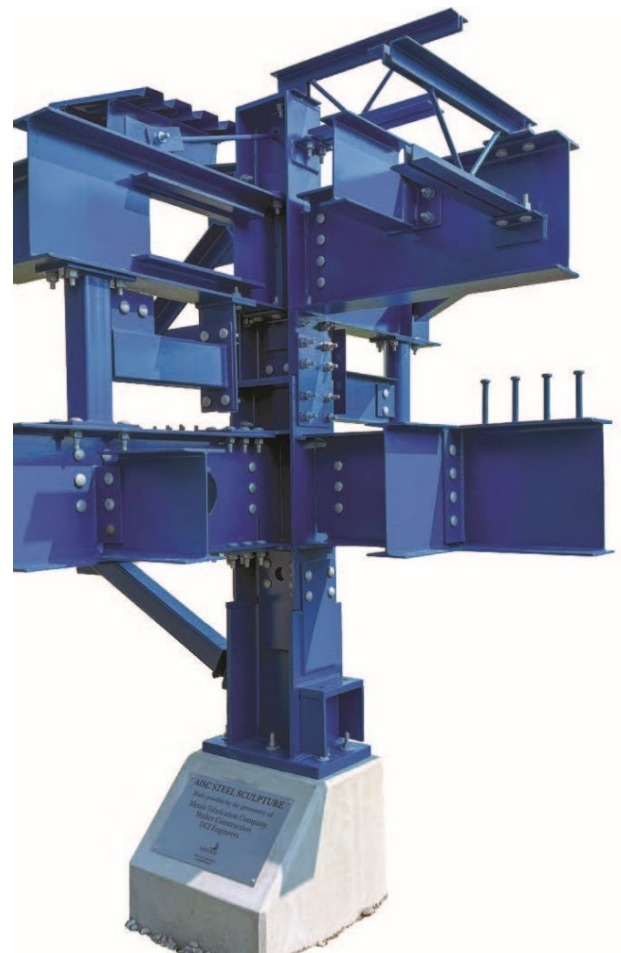
The American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) Steel Structure, a teaching tool for structural engineering, became a fixture on the Gonzaga campus in summer 2025.

Department Chair Yanping Zhang, Ph.D., speaks with SEAS students.

Computer Science

The Department of Computer Science has recently initiated new degree programs and significantly revised existing curricula to better align with the evolving tech landscape. These updates reflect growing demand for specialized expertise in data science, cybersecurity, and software engineering.

Launched in 2024, the B.S. in Data Science combines coursework in computer science, mathematics, and application domains such as marketing, economics, and environmental studies. Students explore the full data science lifecycle, including data collection, cleaning, analysis, visualization, statistical modeling, machine learning, and model deployment. The program emphasizes communication and ethics and culminates in a year-long, data-intensive capstone project.

The department launched the B.S. in Cybersecurity in Fall 2025. This technical degree prepares students to design secure software, protect networks, and conduct digital forensics. Coursework includes cryptography, secure systems, and the Internet of Things. Students will complete a senior design project, guided by faculty and co-sponsored by professionals from the cybersecurity industry.

A new M.S. in Data Science also launched in Fall 2025. The on-campus graduate program is focused on machine learning, AI, statistical modeling, communication, and project management. Students use the department's new GPU server to train and fine-tune neural network-based models. The program includes an accelerated option that allows Gonzaga undergraduates to earn a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in five years. This pathway is open to students from various majors who meet the prerequisites in statistics, calculus, and programming.

These new programs complement the existing B.S. and B.A. in Computer Science while also responding to strong market demand for graduates with skills in data analytics, secure systems, and AI-enhanced software development. These efforts represent a strategic transformation of the Computer Science Department's academic portfolio, positioning graduates for success in fast-moving, tech-driven fields while reinforcing Gonzaga's commitment to innovation, ethics, and interdisciplinary learning.

Electrical & Computer Engineering

The Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering (ECE) prepares students for careers that span the telecommunications, healthcare, energy, aerospace, automotive, and other industries driven by technological innovation. Electrical Engineering graduates go on to design and build electrical systems, devices, and technologies that power modern life while Computer Engineering graduates blend electrical engineering and computer science to create, develop, and integrate hardware and software systems.

The department offers a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and a B.S. in Computer Engineering. Both programs offer concentrations in Applied AI and Robotics. In addition, students can pursue the following specializations:

Electrical Engineering Specializations
- Wireless Communications
- Applied Electromagnetism and Antennas
- Digital Signal Processing and Control Systems
- VLSI/Microchips
- Analog and Digital Electronics
- Power and Green Energy Systems

Computer Engineering Specializations
- Computer Networks, Cybersecurity, and IoT
- Computer Hardware Architecture
- VLSI/Microchips
- Embedded Computer Systems
- Digital Programmable Systems
- Parallel and Cloud Computing
- Biomedical Engineering Systems

The Center for Engineering Design & Entrepreneurship oversees the Senior Design program for all Electrical and Computer Engineering undergraduates. All engineering and computer science majors have access to the Cadwell Maker Center, where they can use rapid prototyping equipment to create proof-of-concept models, bringing their ideas to life.

An AI research intern tests algorithms in a traffic setting.

Engineering Management

Gonzaga's Engineering Management program prepares students to drive innovation, connecting business and engineering technology. The B.S. in Engineering Management provides a broad engineering foundation combined with the flexibility to specialize in one or more SEAS disciplines and complemented by essential business knowledge. Offered in conjunction with Gonzaga's School of Business Administration, the program includes a Business for Engineering Technologies minor. Graduates can take advantage of a 4+1 B.S./MBA pathway or pursue Gonzaga's online Master of Engineering Management.

Mechanical Engineering

Approximately 250 Gonzaga undergraduates major in mechanical engineering, making it the largest and most popular major in SEAS. The department prepares students to tackle real-world challenges across manufacturing and technological fields that span aerospace, automotive, biotechnology, pharmaceutical, renewable energy, robotics, transportation, and other industries. The B.S. in Mechanical Engineering builds a strong foundation in problem-solving, creativity, and ethical leadership, with coursework in:

- Manufacturing and Materials Science
- Solid Mechanics and Machine Design
- Dynamics and Controls
- Biomechanics
- Mechatronics
- Thermal Fluid and Energy Systems

Working with their professor, mechanical engineering students get the drill in SEAS's Manufacturing Technology Center.

Research Initiatives and Centers

Architectural rendering of the Center for Materials Research

Center for Materials Research

The Center for Materials Research (CMR) is a new centralized, shared-user facility that provides unique opportunities for development, characterization, and deployment of novel materials-centered technologies. Located in Gonzaga's Bollier Center, it is home to state-of-the-art analytical instrumentation for mechanical and chemical characterization of surface and bulk material properties across length scales.

As a test lab, the center is accessible to existing and potential partners in the broader Inland Northwest region, including existing industries and possible future ventures such as the Tech Hub/American Aerospace Materials Manufacturing Center. Through such collaborations, the center will advance fundamental scientific knowledge and accelerate materials innovation and product development. Moreover, the center provides new, transformative learning opportunities for Gonzaga University students through research and instruction-based experiences while positioning Gonzaga to support STEM workforce training in the region.

The CMR will initially be equipped with 11 new instruments, reflecting an investment of nearly $1.75 million, which allow for mechanical (static and dynamic), morphological, thermal, thermogravimetric and spectroscopic analyses of materials. These include: a Fourier transform infrared microscope; nano-isothermal calorimeter; nanoindenter; scanning laser vibrometer; differential scanning calorimeter; thermogravimetric analyzer; confocal Raman microscope; dynamic mechanical analyzer; dynamic light scattering system; and surface area and pore size system analyzer, in addition to large-scale MTS equipment that will complete the Structural High Bay Laboratory.

Beyond instrumentation, the center represents a cluster of interdisciplinary faculty and staff from SEAS and across Gonzaga with technical expertise in engineering, chemistry and biochemistry, biology, and environmental studies. A dedicated lab manager provides dedicated personnel for instrument maintenance and management. Together, these in-house instruments and technical experts will drive and facilitate new academic and industry partnerships.

GRO-MECS

The [Gonzaga Research Opportunities in Math, Engineering, and Computer Science](#) (GRO-MECS) program is a new SEAS initiative designed to ignite greater student interest in STEM fields while providing impactful experiential learning opportunities. While all Gonzaga engineering and computer science majors engage in a [Senior Design capstone project](#), GRO-MECS allows more students to gain valuable research experience prior to their senior year.

Launched in 2025, GRO-MECS provides undergraduate students opportunities to actively contribute to the creation of new knowledge by engaging in faculty-led research. Through immersive hands-on projects, SEAS students gain valuable experience, witness the real-world impact of their work, and deepen their understanding of complex concepts, enhancing their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

In its inaugural year, following a competitive process, 12 students were selected to work with SEAS faculty in their research labs. Winning student proposals included research projects on Mosaic Knot Theory; Tribological Properties of Additively Manufactured Polymer Composites; a Suspension System for Wheelchairs; and Wildfire-Related Water Pollutants.
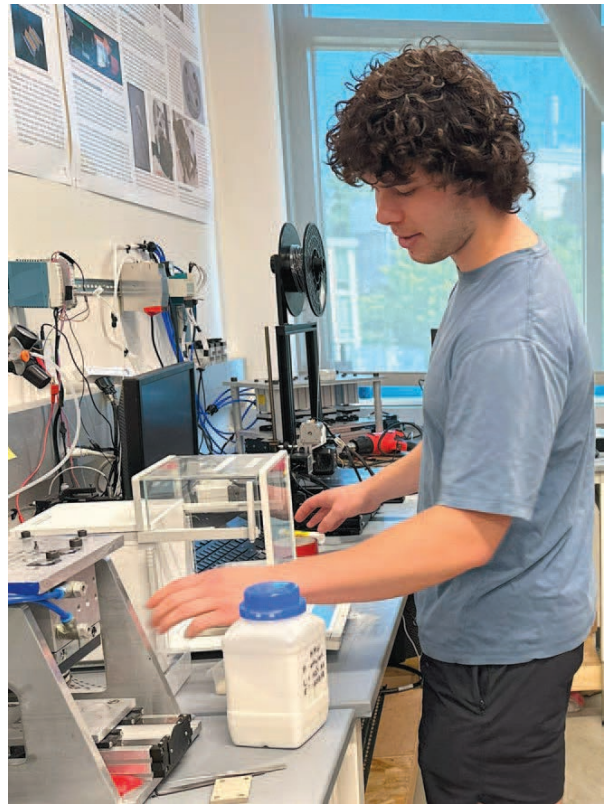
An undergraduate researcher mixes polymer powder to synthesize custom 3D printer filament.

SEED Research Awards

In addition to GRO-MECS, SEAS faculty can fund research students through the [Seubert Engineering Entrepreneurial Design (SEED) awards](#). SEED funds are available to support research students who participate on a project with an entrepreneurial component. The main purpose of this challenge is to stimulate technological innovation that show promise of social and/or commercial impact. Preference is given to projects that address climate, sustainability and societal and environmental impacts, will result in students co-authoring an academic paper for publication, or have a strong possibility of becoming a senior design project the following academic year.

Student Experiences

Engineering Abroad

SEAS undergraduates can participate in <u>Gonzaga in Florence</u>, the university's flagship study abroad program, during the spring semester of their sophomore year. Based at the <u>Mozilo Center</u> in Florence, Italy, the program combines academic excellence with cultural immersion, providing students opportunities to expand their perspectives, engage with the world, and deepen their understanding of Jesuit education on an international scale. The center includes classrooms, art studios, a chapel, and a library, all set within a peaceful garden courtyard. Two engineering courses — Dynamics and Mechanics of Materials — are taught by SEAS faculty. SEAS students who study abroad deepen their understanding of how engineering fits into a broader social, environmental, and cultural context.

Student Clubs

Numerous clubs and chapters of professional organizations provide SEAS students co-curricular opportunities for learning, skill-building, and making a real-world impact on campus and beyond. Check out some of the standout activities and milestones our students achieved this past academic year. Learn more about the diversity of SEAS <u>Zagtivities</u>.

Center for Engineering Design & Entrepreneurship

The <u>Center for Engineering Design & Entrepreneurship</u> oversees the Engineering and Computer Science <u>Senior Design program</u>. Teams of seniors work on a complex problem for the full academic year, developing the problem-solving, communication, and business skills which students will need in their future careers. The project meets requirements of both Gonzaga's core curriculum and ABET accreditation.

Maker and Technology Spaces

SEAS students turn ideas into products at the <u>Cadwell Maker Center</u> where rapid prototyping equipment enables the creation of proof-of-concept models. The <u>Manufacturing Technology Center</u> provides a safe environment in which any Gonzaga student can learn to use powerful machinery and tools to develop technical skills.

The STEM Ecosystem at Gonzaga

In 2019, Washington STEM predicted that within a decade, jobs in STEM fields would comprise "the majority of projected family-sustaining job openings"—projecting more than 79,000 jobs for credentialed STEM professionals in Washington State by 2030—yet would be "the hardest to fill with local talent." At the time, Gonzaga had already recognized the rapidly growing demand for education in tech-heavy fields such as biomedical engineering, cybersecurity, data science, and software development. Since then, the university has steadily risen to meet that challenge with several institutional investments and strategic initiatives to strengthen its STEM enterprise and to position Gonzaga to maximize its impact on those fields in order to meet societal needs.

Since updating its strategic plan in 2023, the university has established a new Institute for Informatics and Applied Science, unveiled multiple new academic programs, and led the pursuit of an Inland Northwest Tech Hub to create a center to develop and manufacture materials vital to the future of the aerospace and aviation industries. The center would serve as a valuable opportunity to merge advanced technology study and research with real-world applications.

Additionally, the University has further enhanced learning opportunities through collaboration, exemplified in the unique University of Washington School of Medicine-Gonzaga University Health Partnership—through which Gonzaga undergraduates work alongside UW medical students in state-of-the-art laboratories—and in longstanding partnerships with regional industry titans like Boeing.

Today, Gonzaga is on the leading edge of higher education and technological innovation. By bringing together faculty and students from across colleges and schools in spaces designed to catalyze innovation, Gonzaga equips learners with an interdisciplinary understanding of STEM disciplines through its uniquely Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic approach to liberal arts education. Faculty work alongside students to identify innovative and value-driven solutions for a complex world and to prepare them to be ethical leaders who are passionate about serving the common good.
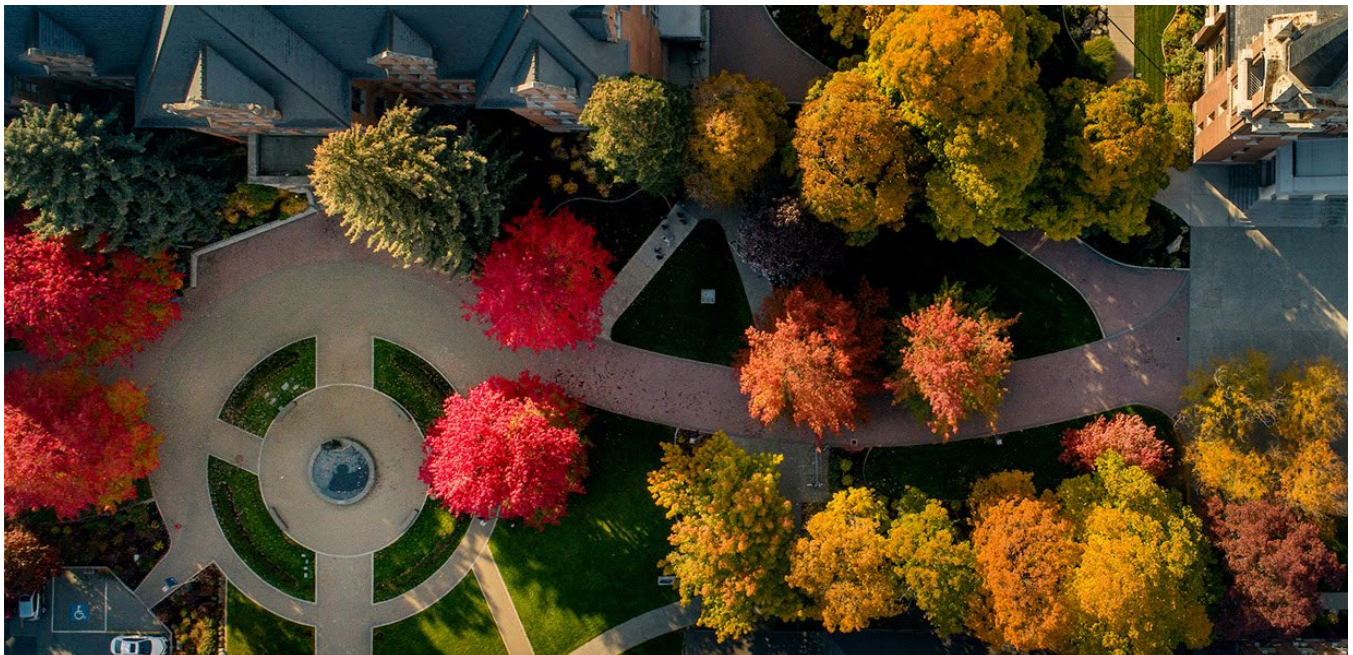
Image by Benjamin Benschneider

Bollier Center for Integrated Science and Engineering

Gonzaga unveiled the John and Joan Bollier Family Center for Integrated Science and Engineering in 2021, ushering in an new era of collaboration, reflection, and problem-solving and elevating STEM education at Gonzaga to a new level of engagement and real-world preparation. From climate change and public health research to biochemistry, psychology, and electronics labs, this Jesuit-inspired space creates opportunities for engineering and applied and natural sciences to live and grow together.

The 82,679-square-foot facility combines with the PACCAR Center for Applied Sciences, Herak Center for Engineering, and Hughes Hall to create a 270,490 square-foot integrated STEM complex on the Gonzaga campus where students can solve problems and explore innovation and entrepreneurship. Transparent spaces put science and engineering on display, encouraging engagement with the entire community.

The Bollier Center is home to 18 labs and spaces that focus on areas such as advanced computing, molecular biochemistry, clean combustion research, and structural construction, among others. With 34% of the center dedicated to collaboration areas, students can connect with one another with ample space to spread out, plan, and create. Students of all majors can experience the facility through core curriculum classes, study spaces, and club activities. Through senior design projects, clubs, and other outreach opportunities, the center also connects SEAS students to downtown Spokane and regional businesses such as Avista, Itron, and Boeing.

In 2024, the NIST granted SEAS $1 million in funding for research infrastructure in the Bollier Center—part of a $1,846,500 grant shared with the College of Arts and Sciences—enabling the acquisition of cutting-edge equipment across multiple departments.

Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology

Established in 2023, the Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology (IIAT) seeks to position Gonzaga University at the forefront of informatics education. Guided by Ignatian principles, this universitywide institute emphasizes the importance of Responsible AI, equipping students, faculty, and staff with the knowledge and tools to create and leverage AI systems that are transparent, fair and accountable.

The institute fosters responsible technological progress using an approach that is built on and integrates three foundational elements: transformative learning, interdisciplinary research, and collaborative innovation.

Transformative learning. In collaboration with Gonzaga's deans, faculty, and staff, the institute shapes informatics-infused learning experiences grounded in Jesuit values, from the undergraduate core curriculum to master's and professional certificate programs.

Interdisciplinary research. IIAT is a catalyst for creative, interdisciplinary research that addresses real-world challenges in the development and application of responsible AI and informatics. Through mentorship and funding, the institute supports faculty- and student-led inquiry, emphasizing agile research approaches that keep pace with technological change.

Collaborative innovation. A signature feature of the institute is the Human-AI Collaboratory (HACLab)—a flexible, interdisciplinary environment for innovation, exploration, and collaboration. The HACLab fosters solution-focused innovation through partnerships with industry, government, non-profits, and educational thought leaders. Working alongside IIAT engineers and Gonzaga students, collaborators engage in creative ideation and development to solve real-world problems and advance the human condition.

About Gonzaga University

Gonzaga is a premier liberal arts-based university renowned for providing an exemplary Jesuit education that empowers its graduates to lead, shape, and serve their chosen fields and the communities to which they belong. The university's success is rooted in a continual focus on strengthening the educational experiences that define and distinguish Gonzaga. What began with an initial class of 18 students in 1887 has since transformed into a nationally recognized, comprehensive liberal arts university with nearly 7,500 students with the skills to be leaders in their communities and in the careers they choose.

From the creative arts to the applied sciences, Gonzaga exposes minds to more than just great thinking. With a 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio and teachers ranked among the best in the nation, the university stretches perspectives, stimulates curiosity, and discovers pathways to progress. Each learning opportunity is an invitation to further inquiry, encouraging students to look for what others may not see.

Mission

Gonzaga University is an exemplary learning community that educates students for lives of leadership and service for the common good. In keeping with its Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic heritage and identity, Gonzaga models and expects excellence in academic and professional pursuits and intentionally develops the whole person intellectually, spiritually, culturally, physically, and emotionally. Through engagement with knowledge, wisdom, and questions informed by classical and contemporary perspectives, Gonzaga cultivates in its students the capacities and dispositions for reflective and critical thought, lifelong learning, spiritual growth, ethical discernment, creativity, and innovation. The Gonzaga experience fosters a mature commitment to dignity of the human person, social justice, diversity, intercultural competence, global engagement, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and care for the planet. Grateful to God, the Gonzaga community carries out this mission with responsible stewardship of its physical, financial, and human resources.

Rankings and Recognition

- No. 21 for Undergraduate Engineering among non-doctorate institutions[1]
- No. 14 Civil Engineering program among non-doctorate institutions[1]
- Recognized as a Best National University; listed in the top 24% of the 434 schools which received designation.[1]
- Approved to join Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most prestigious honor society.
- No. 17 in the country for best undergraduate teaching.[1]
- No. 48 in the country for most innovative universities.[1]
- Named one of the "Best 391 Colleges"[2]
- Top 10 school for veterans, their spouses and military families (2025–26 Military Friendly School)
- Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award for comprehensive efforts in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion across campus. *(Insight Into Diversity, 2024)*
- No. 21 in the country for "Students Who Study Most."[2]
- Top 100 green college *(The Princeton Review Guide to Green Colleges, 2025)*
- No. 14 in the country for Best Health Services[2]
- Ranked among the top 56 prettiest college campuses in America *(Condé Nast Traveler, 2025)*
- Named to the Forbes' America's Top Colleges List *(Forbes, 2025)*
- No. 15 in the country for excellence in service learning[1]

See more facts and figures.

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[1] *U.S. News & World Report, 2026*
[2] *The Princeton Review's Best 391 Colleges: 2026 Edition*

Academics: Teaching, Research, and Creative Inquiry

Steeped in Jesuit tradition, Gonzaga is proud of the academic environment that has been created over the last 138 years. Research, scholarship, and creative inquiry occupy critical roles among the faculty, who bring knowledge, insights, and skills from their disciplines into the classroom, laboratory, or studio space. In turn, students benefit through opportunities to learn, discover, and engage in creative endeavors under the guidance of expert professors.

Colleges and Schools

Gonzaga offers 16 undergraduate degrees through 53 majors, 68 minors and 73 concentrations; 23 master's degrees; and 5 doctoral-level degrees through seven colleges and schools:

- College of Arts and Sciences
- School of Business
- School of Education
- School of Engineering and Applied Science
- School of Health Sciences
- School of Leadership Studies
- School of Law

Academic Centers

- Career & Professional Development
- Center for Global Engagement
- Center for Lifelong Learning
- Center for Student Academic Success
- Center for the Study of Hate
- Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry

Academic Institutes

- Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment
- Institute for Informatics and Applied Technology
- Woodley Institute for Civil Engagement and Humanistic Dialogue

University Leadership

Katia Passerini, Ph.D.
President

Dr. Katia Passerini joined Gonzaga University as its 27th president on July 15, 2025, becoming the second layperson to serve in the role at the Jesuit institution since its founding in 1887. President Passerini was previously provost and executive vice president at Seton Hall University where she also served as interim president for one year. Prior to that, she was a distinguished chair and dean at St. John's University and a professor of management information systems and dean of the Honors College at the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

President Passerini's academic expertise and research are rooted in information systems and management. Her research focuses on understanding macro-economic drivers of knowledge management, studying wireless broadband applications and industry trends, and computer-assisted learning and education. Her professional background includes work outside higher education, including projects at Booz Allen Hamilton (now part of PriceWaterhouseCoopers) and the World Bank, where she focused on information technology projects in Europe, North America, and the South Pacific. A certified project management professional (PMP), she previously worked in the automotive and telecommunications industries.

Dr. Passerini was a Fulbright Student Scholar, Fulbright Administrator Scholar, and Italian National Research Council Fellow, and has received several funded scholarships, awards, and grants. She earned undergraduate degrees in political science and economics from LUISS University and University of Rome, respectively, and M.B.A. and Ph.D. degrees from The George Washington University as well as a Certificate in Business Project Management from New York University.

Maria (Mia) Bertagnolli, Ph.D.
Interim Provost

Dr. Mia Bertagnolli, Professor of Biology, was appointed as Interim Provost in July, 2024. She has taught at Gonzaga and held several administrative roles since 1993. A graduate of Gonzaga, she earned her PhD in biology from the University of Utah (Dr. Mary Beckerle, mentor) and was fortunate to return to Gonzaga to begin her teaching career.

Dr. Bertagnolli was jointly appointed to the Biology and Chemistry Departments and taught for both departments for many years as the Clare Boothe Luce Professor of Biochemistry before moving fully to the Biology Department. She has since served as chair the Biology Department (2011-2017), Chair of the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry (2019-2020), and the Director of the Center for Teaching and Advising (2020-2022). She also spent several years as an Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences and served as Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs January 2023-July 2024. Throughout her career, Dr. Bertagnolli has helped departments develop clear guidelines for reappointment, promotion and tenure, developed resources and training that support faculty development and promote equitable and inclusive hiring practices as well as pedagogy, provided leadership training for department chairs and other academic administrators, and mentored/coached faculty at Gonzaga and other institutions. She has also been co-directing a multi-institutional ADVANCE Partnership grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) focused on creating peer mentoring networks that encourage and support equity and diversity and promote the advancement and retention of women in STEM disciplines. In addition, she is Co-PI on an NSF ADVANCE Partnership project with Seattle University and St. Louis University to help align faculty advancement with mission values and increase the inclusivity of faculty promotions processes.

Spokane: The Lilac City

Spokane became a city in 1881, primarily known for its natural resources: farms, forests, fur, and mines, as well as being a railroad hub for shipping. The original inhabitants of this region are the Spokane people, who were forcibly removed and placed on reservations, as was the case with the many neighboring tribes in the Inland Northwest. In their Salish language, Spokane means "Children of the Sun." The Spokane River and its falls were the source of life and livelihood for the Spokane people – and also attracted early settlers interested in their hydroelectric potential, rugged beauty, and life-sustaining qualities.

Today, Spokane is a bustling hub of the Pacific Northwest. Greater Spokane has a population of 593,466, making it the largest city along the northern tier of the United States between Seattle and Minneapolis. Gonzaga is less than half a mile from downtown Spokane and 15 minutes from the Spokane International Airport. The city is epitomized by its slogan, "Creative by Nature," offering vast opportunities for a range of interests and outdoor activities.

The region's scenic setting offers unlimited opportunities for enjoying the Northwest's great outdoors. The area's 76 lakes, three skiing areas, 33 golf courses, and three major shopping malls offer faculty, staff, and students a variety of off-campus pursuits. Multiple music venues, live theater and Broadway plays, the Spokane Symphony, three professional sports teams, and a vital downtown shopping and entertainment district add a lively spirit to the mix. Numerous independent restaurants feature local and organic food and emphasize sustainable eating practices. Wine enthusiasts can visit several tasting rooms and wineries, while beer lovers will enjoy the ever-growing craft brewery scene.

Spokane has been selected as an All-America City multiple times. In recent years, *Parenting Magazine* ranked Spokane one of the top 10 places to raise a family, and MarketWatch report ranked Spokane the No. 1 city in the U.S. to save money. Spokane also ranks as the top city in the U.S. for freelancers and has been selected as the best place to live on a six-figure salary.

Learn more about [Spokane](#).

Procedure for Candidacy

All inquiries, nominations and applications are invited.

Candidates should provide a CV and letter of interest that addresses the themes described in this leadership profile using WittKieffer's candidate portal.

For fullest consideration, applicant materials should be received by January 16, 2026. Candidates will be considered until an appointment is made.

Confidential nominations and inquiries can be directed to the search consultants:

Philip Tang and Sarah Seavey
GonzagaSEASDean@wittkieffer.com

The salary range for this position is $225,000 to $275,000. Appointment at or near the top of the salary range will be reserved for candidates with exceptional qualifications and demonstrated leadership excellence. Pay is based on several factors including but not limited to education, work experience, certifications, geographic location, etc. This role may be eligible for additional compensation based on merit and/or achievement of specific goals. In addition to salary, Gonzaga University offers benefits such as, comprehensive benefits package, tuition waiver and 401k contribution (all benefits are subject to eligibility requirements).

Gonzaga University is a Jesuit, Catholic, humanistic institution, and is therefore interested in candidates who will contribute to its distinctive mission. Gonzaga University is a committed EEO/AA employer and diversity candidates are encouraged to apply. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to their disability status and/or protected veteran status.