

OHIO UNIVERSITY

Dean, Scripps College of Communication

Leadership Profile

Winter 2026



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

[Ohio University](#) (OHIO), an R1 research university and the oldest public university in the state of Ohio, seeks an accomplished and visionary leader to serve as [Dean of the Scripps College of Communication](#) (Scripps College). The dean will lead a diverse academic ecosystem with energy and vision, elevating Scripps College to new levels of success and promise. The dean will join the college at a time when innovative, forward-thinking change is celebrated and in motion. The dean will be well positioned to lead and advance this charge amongst a motivated Ohio community and beyond.

The Scripps College of Communication is home to a host of dynamic undergraduate and graduate [academic programs](#) in five schools: the School of Communication Studies; the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism; the J. Warren McClure School of Emerging Communication Technologies; the School of Media Arts and Studies; and the School of Visual Communication. The college is a leader in experiential learning and hosts several expansive innovative technology initiatives as a part of its broader mission. Faculty experts in the college are teaching across emerging technology spaces, publishing cutting-edge research, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and developing strategies for storytelling in a rapidly changing world. The college is committed to impactful scholarship, the discovery of new knowledge, and the application of knowledge in practice, combining education with experience and convergence. As such, the college offers courses that incorporate education into industry practice and provides a range of traveling and regional experiences to connect students with invaluable career opportunities.

The five schools in the college distinguish themselves as leaders in their respective fields. The college has seen the Schools of Journalism and Visual Communication produce Pulitzer-winning, industry-defining journalists and photographers for decades; the School of Media Arts and Studies is ranked as one of the top 50 media programs in the U.S; the School of Communication Studies is one of the largest programs at Ohio University; the School of Emerging Communication Technologies produces ground-breaking work in XR and game development, information technology, and cybersecurity. Faculty are leading the charge in teaching innovative technologies, interdisciplinary collaboration, and strategies for storytelling in an ever-more-connected society. Students do not just read about what is new and next — they navigate, apply, and lead it.

OHIO students learn by doing. They are offered many [educational experiences beyond the classroom](#), giving each student the insights and experience needed to hit the ground running in these competitive industries. Scripps's students are offered exceptional [career development](#), extensive internship opportunities, and access to one of the strongest [alumni networks](#) in the country. Scripps students graduate with impressive internships and real-world experience guided by faculty experts at the top of their field. Over 60 Pulitzers have been awarded to its alumni, students, and faculty.

Founded in 1968, the Scripps of College of Communication has been a national leader in diverse areas across communication, media, and technology. The dean will be expected to lead these five schools and five centers with vision, and in partnership with the directors of the schools. The college carries a strong legacy of excellence, and this position will afford the next leader the opportunity to carry on that tradition. The dean will focus on fundraising, attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff, and telling and expanding the story of this renowned academic institution. The dean will work to strengthen industry relationships locally and nationally to ensure that the college has access to internships, sponsorships, guest speakers, and inspiring professionals.

Reporting directly to [Dr. Donald J. Leo](#), Executive Vice President and Provost, the dean will be an inspiring leader with an unwavering commitment to the Scripps College of Communication, ensuring that its needs are represented and prioritized within the university's strategic priorities. The dean will foster an environment that enables interdisciplinary collaborations to thrive, allowing the college to contribute to the creative and research agenda throughout the university. The dean will serve as a facilitator, bridge builder, and obstacle remover to support faculty research, college learning outcomes, and utilize resources effectively. The dean will meet with the faculty, staff, students, and [Dean's Advisory Council](#) regularly in the spirit of strong shared governance.

The next dean will steward and cultivate existing and new relationships to advance the college's philanthropic priorities, including alumni relations, sponsorship, special events, and fundraising. The dean will demonstrate

significant intellectual curiosity and possess the ability to effectively represent the work of the students, faculty, and academic programs across all disciplines. The dean will actively listen to the needs of faculty and staff to create and collaboratively execute a strategic vision. Most importantly, the dean will be relatable, student-centric, have impeccable character, and be fully committed to Ohio University.

The candidate must possess an earned terminal degree in a related field, demonstrate expertise in their field, show a record of creativity and competence in research and scholarship, and prove their ability as an effective teacher. Upon appointment, candidates must be eligible for tenure at the rank of full professor in one of the schools within the Scripps College of Communication.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.



Role of the Dean, Scripps College of Communication

The dean, as chief academic and administrative officer of the Scripps College of Communication, promotes excellence in curricula, teaching, and learning; academic advising; interdisciplinary initiatives; scholarship and industry advances; professional development of faculty and staff; and stewards fiscal and other resources. They are responsible for providing innovative, effective, and dynamic leadership that supports the college's mission, values, organizational structure, and culture, thereby continuing the long-term success of the college and university. The dean serves as a strong advocate and spokesperson for the college, both within the university and with external constituents and communities.

Reporting to the provost, the dean oversees strategic planning, fiscal resources, and personnel management. The dean ensures best practices are executed in recruiting, retaining, and developing faculty and professional staff; student recruitment and success efforts; resource development and advancement; and programming, education, advocacy, and engagement that cultivates inclusive excellence. The dean will manage an operating budget of more than \$16 million and provide leadership to dedicated faculty and staff.



An organizational chart can be found at the end of this document.

The successful candidate will be a visionary and forward-thinking leader who can foster creative achievement, research, and scholarship commensurate with OHIO's R1 stature.

Schools and Centers

The Scripps College of Communication houses five schools and five centers. It offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as undergraduate and graduate certificates.

The E.W. Scripps School of Journalism (JOUR): The E.W. Scripps School of Journalism blends strong liberal arts and professional skills courses. The School provides an education that emphasizes professional excellence, critical thinking, and social responsibility. It offers hands-on education, practical experience and intellectual exploration, which students apply to many professions and to a rewarding life in a multicultural and fast-changing world. Whether it's telling a story, building a brand, or engaging in research, the School prepares students for their immediate and future career.

The J. Warren McClure School of Emerging Communication Technologies (ECT and ITS) prepares business-savvy technology professionals through undergraduate and graduate programs in Information and

Telecommunication Systems (ITS), Cybersecurity Operations (CSO), and Virtual Reality and Game Development (VRG). The school's distinctive integration of technical training with business education addresses growing workforce demands in data centers, cybersecurity, and digital media industries. The VR and Game Development program is ranked nationally, while the GRID Lab has secured millions of dollars in external research contracts. Nearly all ITS graduates are employed or in graduate school upon graduation. The McClure School demonstrates strong industry outcomes and research capacity.

The School of Communication Studies (COMS) offers distinct academic programs for students in advocacy, interpersonal, health, and organizational communication. The Bachelor of Science Degree promotes a liberal arts orientation, whereby students learn to pose questions and pursue answers through critical thinking, description, synthesis, critique, and imagination. All OHIO regional campuses offer a 4-year degree in COMS. The School's two online master's degrees allow professionals to advance their careers while studying and earning a degree from a distance. The School's Ph.D. program provides students with rigorous instruction to develop and enhance research expertise in relating and organizing, health communication, and rhetoric and culture.

The School of Media Arts & Studies (MDIA) is a nationally ranked media program that prepares proactive and entrepreneurial individuals to think critically, act creatively, and practice ethically in a global media society. The school focuses on undergraduate areas of music production and industry, video and cinema production; animation; studies in media theory; certificates in social media and podcasting; and a renowned graduate program in partnership with the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism.

The School of Visual Communication (VICO) is all about compelling storytelling, whether through information design (interactive and publication), photojournalism, or commercial photography.

WOUB Public Media offers public broadcast services, student professional development, and non-broadcast educational services in support of Ohio University's goals. It is an administrative unit of the Scripps College of Communication.

The Game Research and Immersive Design (GRID) Lab focuses on research and creative activities related to the development of games, extended virtual realities (XR), and cinematic VR.



The Barbara Gerald's Institute for Storytelling and Social Impact's mission is twofold: 1) to create and tell stories that have social relevance and impact; and 2) to research all aspects of storytelling from inception, delivery through diverse means, and personal public reactions to stories.

The Social Media Analytics Research Team (SMART) Lab offers innovative spaces for interdisciplinary research collaborations, as well as provides the necessary technology support for students, faculty, and staff to conduct analytics research.

The Harris Student Support Center provides Scripps College students with holistic, one-on-one advising, relationships that foster academic success, and intensive support for those at risk and those on academic probation.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next dean of the Scripps College of Communication will be a visionary, student-centered leader who builds on a strong foundation while guiding the college through a rapidly evolving communications landscape. The next dean will be expected to demonstrate:

Visionary and Innovative Leadership

The next dean should bring a strong academic foundation and credibility in communication, coupled with an appreciation for the diversity of programs within Scripps. The communication industry is evolving rapidly, and Scripps must remain at the forefront of these changes. The next dean should embrace innovation and lead with a forward-thinking mindset, advancing initiatives in areas such as AI, XR, UX, and cybersecurity while preserving the college's strong foundation in academic research. This role requires a curious leader who can anticipate trends, adapt to challenges in higher education and the media, and articulate a bold vision that inspires confidence among students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.

Student-Centered Decision Making

Scripps has built its reputation on a deeply student-focused culture, and the next dean must continue this tradition. Students should remain at the center of every decision, ensuring that the college sustains its exceptional retention and graduation rates while fostering an environment where students feel supported and engaged. Visibility and accessibility will be critical. Students, faculty, and staff value a leader who is present, approachable, and actively involved in the life of the college. This is an opportunity to build on a strong tradition of student success and to amplify experiential learning initiatives that prepare graduates for a rapidly changing communication landscape.

Enthusiastic External Engagement

The next dean will inherit an engaged community of alumni, advisory council members, and industry partners who are eager to contribute their expertise and resources. The Dean's Advisory Council is highly invested in the college's success and wants meaningful involvement beyond attending occasional meetings. Defining a clear path for their engagement early on will be essential. This includes leveraging their networks to support internships, job placement, and fundraising efforts. With a strong alumni base that believes in the college, the dean has an opportunity to deepen relationships and create innovative partnerships that strengthen the college's reputation and expand opportunities for students.

Strategic Recruitment and Enrollment

While Scripps enjoys a strong reputation and the highest retention and graduation rates at Ohio University, competition for students is increasing. The next dean must sharpen recruitment strategies to ensure the college remains a top choice for prospective students. This includes telling Scripps' story in compelling ways, highlighting its unique mix of programs, vibrant culture, and leadership in emerging fields. These areas represent exciting growth opportunities, and continuing to push the envelope will help position Scripps as a destination for students seeking a forward-thinking communication education. Scripps also offers online degrees (bachelor's and master's) that are offered via OHIO Online. Strategy and development of online learning will be a priority.

Resource Development and Financial Stewardship

Budget constraints and cuts present a significant challenge for the next dean. Fundraising and resource development will be critical to sustaining momentum and supporting innovation. The dean must navigate financial complexities with transparency and creativity, advocate effectively with university leadership, and build political

capital to secure resources for the college's future. This is an opportunity to engage alumni and external partners in new ways, ensuring that Scripps continues to thrive despite financial pressures.

Collaborative and Inclusive Culture

Scripps is known for its positive, student-focused culture and strong team cohesion. Faculty and staff value collaboration, celebration, and a sense of community—and they want to see this continue. The next dean must prioritize faculty and staff development, maintain high retention rates, and foster an environment that values diverse programs and perspectives. With five schools under its umbrella, Scripps offers unique opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, and the dean will play a key role in sustaining this spirit while introducing fresh ideas.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Ohio University seeks a leader with a distinguished record of academic accomplishment and leadership. An earned terminal degree is required. Experience bridging academia and industry is highly valued. The ideal candidate will be a skilled relationship builder with integrity, empathy, and energy; someone who leads by example, navigates complexity with confidence, and demonstrates a commitment to long-term success.

Required Qualifications:

An earned terminal degree in a communication-related field or a closely aligned discipline, with a record of scholarship, creative activity and/or equivalent professional experience commensurate with a tenured appointment at the rank of full professor in one of the schools within the college.

Demonstrated academic administrative experience at the level of department chair, center director, associate/assistant dean, dean, or equivalent academic leadership experience.

Evidence of commitment to student success and a student-centered approach to leadership.

Desired Qualifications:

- **Budget and Resource Management:** A proven record of managing complex budgets and operating within financial constraints, with transparency and creativity.
- **Visionary Leadership and Strategic Planning:** Experience developing and implementing strategic plans that position an academic unit for growth and innovation.
- **Fundraising and External Relations:** Established ability, or demonstrated interest and capacity, for external fundraising, alumni engagement, and building partnerships with industry leaders.
- **Breadth of Understanding:** Appreciation for the wide spectrum of disciplines within the college, including journalism, media arts, communication studies, visual communication, and emerging fields such as AI, VR, UX, and cybersecurity.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Intellectual openness and transparency in building productive relationships within the college, across the university, and with external stakeholders.
- **Advocacy and Visibility:** Ability to advocate for the college within the university and beyond, promoting its role in shaping the future of communication and its impact on society.
- **Innovation and Adaptability:** Demonstrated capacity to encourage and facilitate innovation across disciplines and to navigate the complexities and challenges facing higher education and the communication industries.
- **Student-Centered Culture:** Commitment to maintaining and enhancing the college's strong culture of accessibility, engagement, and celebration of student, faculty, and staff success.
- **University Leadership:** Ability to work effectively with senior leadership, build political capital, and contribute to institutional priorities.



About Ohio University

Overview

As the oldest public university in the state, Ohio University has long been a regional and state leader in preparing students for successful careers. Ohio University's total enrollment is over 30,000 students across the state and online, including almost 1,000 international students from 102 countries. Approximately 20,000 students from Ohio are studying at the residential campus in Athens, a quintessential college town nestled deep in the Appalachian foothills of beautiful Southeast Ohio.

Founded in 1804 and guided by world-class faculty members, Ohio University is home to more than 250 academic programs across a wide range of fields, including business, communications, healthcare, medicine, social sciences, the arts, and STEM. The University's focus is ensuring student success through access to real industry and research experiences at an affordable cost, which is why Ohio University is ranked the No. 1 Best Value public university in the state of Ohio, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

The University's success in developing student potential is due to the richness of student-faculty engagement and the synergistic relationships between its exceptional undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The University leverages its partnerships and the knowledge generated from research and scholarly activities to enhance classrooms, learning communities, centers of excellence, guided research, artistic endeavors, and experiential academic opportunities.

The main campus of Ohio University is in Athens, Ohio, with five regional campuses (Chillicothe, Eastern, Lancaster, Southern, and Zanesville), as well as additional extension campuses in [Dublin](#) and [Cleveland](#), and numerous competitive online programs. OHIO has 12 colleges, offering over 250 academic programs and over 130 master's and 35 doctoral programs. In addition, OHIO offers more than 50 online programs, including certificates, associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. More than 3,750 students are served by the regional campuses, approximately 5,700 students are in fully online programs, and nearly 1,000 are medical students in the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine.

OHIO students and alumni strive to make a difference in the world. Ohio University students consistently receive nationally competitive awards, such as the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, with 202 recipients since the program's inception in 1946. For six consecutive years, Ohio University has been awarded the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award.

OHIO is uniquely positioned to provide a variety of services and programs to the southeastern Ohio Appalachian region. The University consistently ranks among the nation's highest-performing public universities in terms of actual versus predicted graduation rates, reflecting the remarkable depth and breadth of student-faculty engagement. Because of the level of the faculty's commitment to student success, OHIO's graduate and undergraduate programs, regional education, and outreach initiatives make substantial contributions to the furtherance of civic engagement and service in the realms of communication, the environment, technology, health and wellness, fine arts, and the liberal arts and sciences.

For more information about OHIO, please see the University's Office of Institutional Research [Factbook](#), the [Budget Book](#) in the Office of Finance, or visit www.ohio.edu.

Mission and Vision

Ohio University's mission and vision statements encapsulate the University's purpose and goals. They also play an important role in defining the ties that link all members of our university community.

Mission Statement: To hold the door open to higher education so that all those eager to solve humanity's most urgent challenges might enter to learn, connecting them with experiences and discovery that will help make them think critically, care deeply, lead boldly, and ultimately depart to serve.

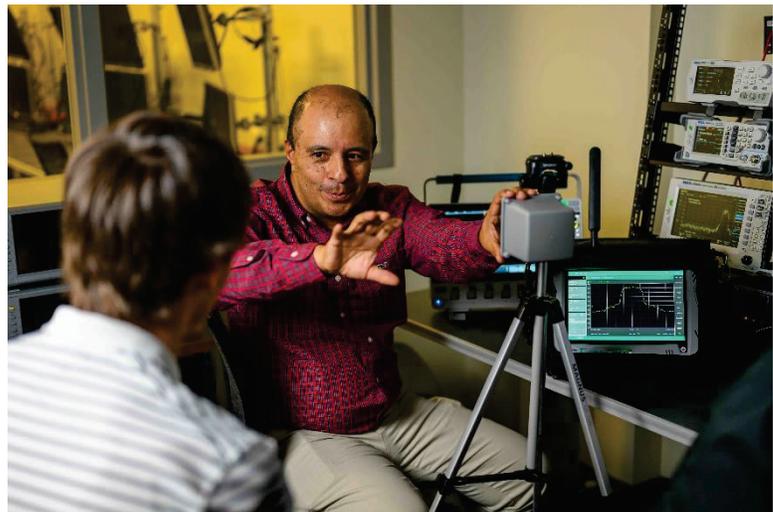
Vision Statement: To deliver the most valuable university education in Ohio, and lead as one of the most valued public universities in the nation.

Academics

Ohio University's degree-granting colleges serve as the home of academic departments, schools, and centers that deliver diverse programs, degrees, and majors. Each college has a unique community and culture that supports each student's specific personal, academic, and professional goals.

Colleges

- [Chaddock and Morrow College of Fine Arts](#)
- [College of Arts and Sciences](#)



- [College of Business](#)
- [Graduate College](#)
- [College of Health Sciences and Professions](#)
- [Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine](#)
- [Honors Tutorial College](#)
- [The Patton College of Education](#)
- [Russ College of Engineering and Technology](#)
- [Scripps College of Communication](#)
- [University College](#)
- [Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service](#)

Dynamic Strategy

Ohio University President Lori Stewart Gonzalez led the campus in a yearlong planning process in 2023 to develop OHIO's strategic plan, the [Dynamic Strategy](#). An innovative and responsive plan, it includes Learn, Discover, Engage, and Work pillars. Academic goals include helping to define what R1/T1 status would look like; further infusing experiential learning in students' curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities; and expanding OHIO's world-class research in healthy aging, energy and the environment.



Leadership

Provost Dr. Donald J. Leo



Donald J. Leo, Ph.D., assumed the role of Executive Vice President and Provost of Ohio University on July 1, 2024. Leo, who most recently served as the first Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Georgia, is a professor of mechanical engineering with a higher education career spanning over 25 years. During his tenure as dean, engineering enrollment at UGA grew fourfold to over 2,700 students, research activity increased significantly, and the college developed numerous partnerships and outreach activities to enhance community engagement.

Previously, he served as Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at the Virginia Tech College of Engineering, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, and Vice President and Executive Director of the National Capital Region Operations, also at Virginia Tech. In conjunction with his position at Virginia Tech, Leo served as a program manager for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, a unit of the Department of Defense, where he created programs in the field of biologically inspired materials and systems and managed a portfolio of approximately \$50 million in interdisciplinary research.

Leo's research focuses on smart materials, and he has served as principal investigator on 50 research grants and contracts with approximately \$12 million in extramural funding.

He holds a Ph.D. and an M.S. in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering from the University at Buffalo, and a B.S. in Aeronautics and Astronautics Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Athens, Ohio

Athens is a beloved town and is ranked as one of today's "50 Best College Towns to Live in Forever." Nationally recognized for its local food scene, Athens is located near some of the state's best hiking trails and parks and was named one of the Top 100 Art Communities in America. Athens has a long history of campus and city activism related to sustainability and social justice; it was an important stop on the Underground Railroad, and the United Mine Workers of America started as a gathering of coal miners in the area. Annual local events like the Nelsonville Music Festival and the Pawpaw Festival celebrate the area's natural beauty and reputation for not only being a growing tourist destination but also a family-friendly and safe place to live.



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 Ohio University in this search. For full consideration, candidate materials should be received by **Friday, February 6, 2026**.

Nominations, applications, and inquiries can be directed to WittKieffer consultants, Melissa Fincher, Jenna Brumleve, and Bronwen Bares Pelaez, Ph.D., at:

OhioDeanCommunications@wittkieffer.com

Ohio University is committed to promoting and supporting a workplace and educational environment where healthy and respectful conduct is the cultural norm. In support of this commitment, Ohio University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, national ancestry, sex, pregnancy, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, status as a parent or foster parent, military service, or veteran status, mental or physical disability, or genetic information. Ohio University's Equal Employment and Educational Opportunity Policy ([40.001](#)) and Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct Policy ([03.004](#)) detail prohibited conduct.

University Equity and Civil Rights Compliance (ECRC) supports this purpose by monitoring the educational environment and workplace to stop, remediate, and prevent discrimination on the basis of protected status. We make policy recommendations, offer training, and provide avenues for resolving grievances based on protected status.

Should any member of the campus community experience discrimination or harassment based on a protected class status, including sexual harassment, other sexual misconduct, or retaliation due to a protected disclosure or activity, they are asked to contact the Director of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance and Title IX Coordinator. Further, reports may also be submitted for violations of the University's policy on freedom of expression.

