



Associate Vice President for Global Engagement

Leadership Profile

Summer 2026



Executive Summary

The University of Kentucky (UK) seeks a dynamic, strategic, and collaborative leader to serve as its next Associate Vice President for Global Engagement (AVP). Reporting to the Vice President for Student Success, this individual will serve as the University's senior international officer, provide executive leadership for global engagement strategy, and oversee the UK International Center (UKIC)—the institution's central hub for international programs, partnerships, and services.

The AVP will play a pivotal role in advancing a comprehensive, institution-wide internationalization strategy that aligns with UK's priorities around student success, research excellence, and institutional impact. This leader will serve as the University's chief international strategist, guiding both vision and execution to ensure global engagement efforts are cohesive and scalable.

In addition to strategic leadership, the ideal candidate will lead the UKIC team and oversee its operations, ensuring that global engagement efforts are aligned, effective, and sustainable. This leader will also navigate the University through the rapidly changing environment of international education—identifying new opportunities, addressing potential risks, implementing best practices, and connecting the University with strong potential partners.

The University of Kentucky (UK) is the Commonwealth's flagship, land-grant university. It is also the largest higher education institution in Kentucky, with over 200 academic degree programs enrolling more than 38,000 students. UK is a dynamic, growing university, committed to advancing student success, enhancing its research and creativity, and driving meaningful economic and community impact. Global engagement plays a critical role in each of these institutional priorities, offering the next Associate Vice President meaningful opportunities to contribute to, and leverage, the University's momentum.

The successful candidate will possess an advanced degree and at least ten years of progressively responsible and relevant experience in student services management or a closely aligned field. Experience in a comprehensive university with an international student population is also strongly preferred. While not required, a doctorate or other terminal degree is preferred.

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 Associate Vice President for Global Engagement

Reporting directly to the Vice President for Student Success, the Associate Vice President for Global Engagement (AVP) serves as the University of Kentucky's senior international officer and provides strategic and operational leadership for the University's global engagement in alignment with institutional priorities. The AVP leads the University of Kentucky International Center (UKIC) and is responsible for advancing a comprehensive, institution-wide approach to internationalization that integrates student success, research, and institutional priorities.

This role combines visionary leadership with hands-on management of a complex, multi-functional organization. The AVP serves as both a strategic architect and operational leader, ensuring that global engagement efforts are cohesive, high-performing, and aligned with the University's mission and long-term aspirations. This visible leader will also serve as UK's representative to international delegations, institutions, and agencies.

The Associate Vice President will:

- Provide executive leadership and oversight of the UK International Center, including direct supervision of senior staff and functional leaders across education abroad and exchanges; international student and scholar services, including immigration support to UK faculty and UK HealthCare physicians; international partnerships and research; international health, safety and security; international enrollment management; and global health initiatives.
- Lead the development and execution of a comprehensive global engagement strategy that integrates academic, co-curricular, and research activities and positions the University of Kentucky as a globally engaged institution of impact.
- Direct strategy and performance across key functional areas, including expanding access, ensuring excellence and regulatory compliance, and advancing high-impact partnerships, research initiatives, risk management, and global health programs.
- Partner closely with Enrollment Management and University leadership to shape and implement international recruitment and matriculation strategies, aligning efforts related to marketing, communications, data analytics, budgeting, and best practices to enhance enrollment outcomes and student success.
- Serve as the University's principal advisor on global engagement to senior leadership, providing informed guidance on emerging international trends, geopolitical dynamics, risks, opportunities, and benchmarking institutional efforts against national and global peers.
- Lead and actively engage the International Advisory Council to foster cross-campus alignment, gather input, and drive coordinated action in support of institutional global priorities.
- Advocate for and advance curricular internationalization in collaboration with academic leadership, including supporting policies and practices related to credit transfer, global learning integration, and student mobility.
- Provide leadership in the development and stewardship of international partnerships, including joint and dual degree programs, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and adherence to accreditation and regulatory requirements.
- Promote and support the expansion of international research activity, including identifying and advancing externally funded initiatives and multidisciplinary, multi-college collaborations.
- Identify institutional barriers to global engagement and lead efforts to strengthen policies, processes, and organizational structures to enable innovation and growth in international activity.
- Enhance the University of Kentucky's global visibility, reputation, and competitiveness by providing strategic oversight of international marketing and positioning efforts, including collaboration with UK Marketing and Communications and UK Research leadership.
- Provide executive leadership during the response to international crises affecting students, faculty and staff.
- Represent the University of Kentucky in national and international forums, major professional associations (including AIEA and NAFSA), and serve as a senior ambassador to global partners, institutions, and governmental entities, managing complex negotiations and protocol-sensitive engagements.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next AVP will join UK at a time of strong institutional momentum and will be expected to advance several critical priorities:

Strengthen the UK International Center as a Strategic Enterprise

Enhance organizational effectiveness, clarify priorities, and ensure strong alignment across all global engagement functions while optimizing resources and performance. Lead and actively leverage the International Advisory Council, ensuring meaningful input, alignment, and coordinated execution of global engagement priorities across the institution.

Develop and Execute a Cohesive Institutional Global Strategy

Lead the creation and implementation of a clear, actionable internationalization roadmap that aligns global activities with institutional goals and maximizes impact. UKIC is actively developing its next global engagement strategic plan, presenting an opportunity for the new AVP to join while this work is in its late stages.

Advance International Student Success and Enrollment

Partner closely with Enrollment Management to shape and execute international recruitment and matriculation strategies, including alignment on budget, marketing and communications, data analytics, and adoption of best practices to improve yield and student success outcomes.

Expand Access to Global Learning

Broaden participation in education abroad and other global learning opportunities, ensuring equitable access for all students, advocating for the integration of global experiences into future University courses and curricula, and demonstrating impact in all forms, including workforce development and student development. Promote adoption of policies, structures, and processes to enable expanded international activity of all forms.

Grow High-Impact Global Partnerships and Research Collaboration

Develop, deepen, and steward strategic international partnerships aligned with UK's academic and research strengths, including opportunities for externally funded initiatives. Provide leadership and guidance in the development of international joint and dual degree programs, ensuring alignment with accreditation standards and regulatory requirements.

Navigate a Complex Global Landscape

Provide informed leadership on immigration of students, faculty, and staff; compliance and global risk; geopolitical dynamics; and emerging opportunities affecting international education and institutional partnerships.

Elevate UK's Global Visibility and Positioning

Enhance the University's reputation through strategic engagement in global networks, international marketing, and representation in key forums and partnerships. Provide strategic oversight of international marketing and global brand positioning in collaboration with University marketing and research enterprise leaders, including efforts to enhance international reputation and competitiveness for global funding and partnership opportunities.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The University of Kentucky seeks a leader who combines strategic vision, operational expertise, and collaborative leadership.

Required Qualifications

- Advanced degree (master's or equivalent)
- At least ten years of progressively responsible and relevant experience in international education, global affairs or a closely aligned field
- Demonstrated success managing complex organizations, teams, and budgets
- Deep knowledge of international student services, education abroad, partnerships, risk management, and compliance frameworks
- Proven ability to lead strategic planning, organizational change, and cross-functional collaboration

Preferred Qualifications

- Doctorate or other terminal degree
- Experience leading a centralized international office within a comprehensive university
- Academic credentials suitable for faculty appointment
- Experience advancing international enrollment strategies and student success initiatives
- Record of building global partnerships and securing external funding
- Demonstrated ability to leverage data systems and enterprise tools

Leadership Characteristics and Personal Attributes

The successful candidate will be:

- A strategic integrator who brings coherence to global efforts of both UKIC and those occurring elsewhere around UK
- An experienced and engaged leader of highly effective international education teams
- A collaborative and influential professional who builds strong partnerships across campus and beyond
- A student-centered advocate who connects global engagement to student outcomes
- A globally experienced and culturally competent professional
- A decisive and data-informed executive with strong organizational and financial acumen
- An innovative and entrepreneurial thinker capable of identifying new opportunities and solutions

About the University of Kentucky

Overview

The University of Kentucky (UK), located in Lexington, is the Commonwealth's flagship, land-grant institution, founded in 1865. It is one of the state's two land-grant universities and is the largest higher education institution in the state. The institution comprises 16 colleges, a graduate school, an honors college, and more than 200 academic degree programs enrolling more than 38,000 students and recognized as an R1 university with over \$500 million in annual research expenditures. The campus spans 784 acres and has seven libraries on campus, with the largest being the William T. Young Library, a federal depository that hosts subjects related to social sciences, humanities, and life sciences collections.

Located in the vibrant city of Lexington, University is one of only eight institutions in the U.S. with the full complement of liberal arts and sciences and professional schools and colleges, including business, law, medicine, and veterinary science on one contiguous campus. UK is committed to advancing student success, enhancing research and creativity, and driving meaningful economic and community impact. Global engagement plays a critical role in each of these institutional priorities.

By putting students first; taking care of its people; inspiring ingenuity; ensuring greater trust, transparency, and accountability; and bringing together many people into one community, the University of Kentucky continues to equip the next generation of leaders who will impact our world for the better.

UK's student body of over 27,000 undergraduates and about 10,000 graduate and professional students represents more than 100 countries, every state in the nation, and all 120 Kentucky counties. UK undergraduate students compete successfully for prestigious scholarships and awards, such as the Fulbright, Astronaut, Truman, Goldwater, Marshall, Udall, Rhodes, and Gates Cambridge. In 2023, 15 UK students and alumni were awarded the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

A sign of the University's global impact, since the inception of the Fulbright Program in 1946, 288 UK faculty and staff and 135 UK students have been awarded Fulbright grants in support of research, teaching, and studies in more than 70 countries around the world. UK was named a Top Fulbright Producer in 2019.

The University's dynamic \$1 billion research and development enterprise encompasses traditional scholarship, the humanities, emerging fields in technology and a robust health care enterprise. For the past nine years, UK HealthCare has been ranked number one in Kentucky in the *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Hospitals Rankings. UK is one of 34 institutions in the country with research designations for excellence in cancer, aging, and translational science. The UK Markey Cancer Center has earned a "Comprehensive" Cancer Center designation, the highest level of recognition awarded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

At its heart, UK is guided by a founding mission that is as relevant today as it was at its founding nearly 160 years ago—devoted to service in every corner and community of the Commonwealth.

Academics

The University of Kentucky's academic mission is enabled by the people—visionaries, disruptors, and pioneers—who make up its 200 academic programs. The University demonstrates particular excellence in fields such as pharmacy, public policy, health professions, and agriculture while maintaining broad strength across the sciences, engineering, business, and social sciences, and emerging in other areas, such as social work, as a new national leader. Anchored in its mission to serve the Commonwealth while competing on a national stage, UK possesses strong upward momentum, combining applied impact, academic rigor, and strategic investment in research and facilities.

UK's academic enterprise consists of 18 colleges and schools:

- [Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment](#)
- [College of Arts and Sciences](#)
- [Gatton College of Business and Economics](#)
- [College of Communication and Information](#)
- [College of Dentistry](#)
- [College of Design](#)
- [College of Education](#)
- [Stanley and Karen Pigman College of Engineering](#)
- [College of Fine Arts](#)
- [College of Health Sciences](#)
- [J. David Rosenberg College of Law](#)
- [College of Medicine](#)
- [College of Nursing](#)
- [College of Pharmacy](#)
- [College of Public Health](#)
- [College of Social Work](#)
- [The Graduate School](#)
- [The Lewis Honors College](#)

The academic community is also served by [UK Libraries](#)' seven locations across campus, extensive physical and digital collections, and wide-ranging resources and services.

International Center

The [University of Kentucky International Center](#) (UKIC) serves as the institution's central hub for global engagement, advancing a comprehensive portfolio of programs, services, and partnerships that connect the University to the world. As part of the Office for Student Success, UKIC integrates international student and scholar services, education abroad and exchange programs, global partnerships and research, international health, safety, and security, international enrollment management, and global health initiatives to support the University's mission. The Center plays a critical role in embedding global perspectives across the student experience, supporting international enrollment and student success, facilitating faculty work in global learning and research, and ensuring that global engagement is aligned with the University's academic, research, and institutional priorities.

UKIC is a highly collaborative enterprise that works in close partnership with academic colleges, Enrollment Management, and administrative units to deliver high-impact global programs and services. With a dedicated staff of approximately 35 professionals and an annual budget of over \$4.6 million, the Center supports compliance, risk management, and continuous improvement across all areas of international activity while expanding access to global learning and strengthening international partnerships and research collaborations. UK has been recognized nationally for excellence in internationalization, including being named a Senator Paul A. Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization recipient by NAFSA in 2023, and the winner of the APLU's International Impact Award that same year. UKIC provides a strong and stable foundation for continued growth and innovation, positioning the University of Kentucky to further elevate its global presence, reputation, and impact.

The organization chart for the International Center is included at the end of this leadership profile.

International Enrollment

In the most recent academic year, the University enrolled 1,399 international students. The most popular sending countries included China, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Brazil, Iran, and South Korea. About 48 percent of UK's international students are doctoral students, 24 percent are undergraduates, 12 percent are master's students. The remainder are in other classifications, including non-degree and post-doctoral standing.

Education Abroad

In academic year 2024-2025, 1,170 UK students participated in Education Abroad, with the most popular destinations including the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Spain, Ireland, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Greece. The

majority of participants selected a mid-length program of two to eight weeks and about one-quarter were in a program of eight weeks or longer. Most of UK Education Abroad participants are in programs led by UK faculty.

Global Health Initiatives

Unique to the University of Kentucky, the [Global Health Initiative \(GHI\)](#) builds collaborative partnerships to advance research, education, and service learning. In partnership with host country global health leaders and communities, GHI works across disciplines to deliver health services and a global health education at home and abroad.

More data on the University of Kentucky's international enrollment, education abroad, and global engagement is available on UKIC's [Global Footprint](#) website.

Office for Student Success

UKIC is part of the University of Kentucky's Office for Student Success. The Office for Student Success provides strategic leadership for a comprehensive portfolio of programs and services that support students from recruitment through graduation and beyond. Encompassing more than 40 units across multiple functional areas, the division is responsible for advancing institutional priorities related to access, persistence, and completion. Guided by a student-first philosophy, the Office for Student Success brings together enrollment, advising, student support services, and co-curricular engagement to create a coordinated and holistic student experience aligned with the University's broader mission.

As a highly integrated and collaborative enterprise, the Office for Student Success works closely with academic and administrative partners across campus to improve student outcomes and drive institutional effectiveness. The division emphasizes data-informed decision-making, cross-functional alignment, and continuous improvement in support of student success goals. Within this context, the UK International Center plays a critical role in advancing international student success, global learning, and engagement, reflecting the division's commitment to preparing all students to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

The organization chart for the Office for Student Success is included at the end of this leadership profile.

Leadership



Kirsten Turner, Ph.D.

Kirsten Turner serves as the University of Kentucky's Vice President for Student Success and chief student affairs officer. A leader with a long tenure at the University of Kentucky, she transitioned to her current position after serving in multiple associate provost roles and as an architect of the institution's strategies to improve retention and graduation rates. Prior to joining the provost's office, Turner served in various leadership roles in UK's College of Arts and Sciences. As a member of President Capilouto's leadership team, Turner is committed to a student-first philosophy. Her portfolio includes areas that span the full range of student experience: from recruitment to graduation and beyond. Turner earned her Ph.D. at the University of Virginia, in the Center for the Study of Higher Education. Her research interests focus on the public and private benefits of higher education and the American professoriate.

Lexington, Kentucky

The city of Lexington is a wonderful place in which to live, work and study. Lexington has appeared on *USA Today*'s list of the top cities in which to live, *Vogue*'s list of destinations to visit, *Forbes*' "Top 20 Cleanest Cities," and in the top 30 of *U.S. News & World Report*'s "Best Places to Live." It was also named as one of *Condé Nast Traveler*'s "Top 5 Best Small Cities in the U.S." and as one of *Southern Living*'s "The South's Best Cities" in 2025.

With a population of roughly 323,000, anchoring a metropolitan area of more than 517,000 people, Lexington offers both the warmth and hospitality of a small city, alongside the amenities typically found in a large city. Lexington's economy is particularly strong in manufacturing, technology, and entrepreneurial support, benefiting from a diverse, balanced business base. Leading employers in the metro region include the University of Kentucky and UK HealthCare as well as Amazon, IBM, Lexmark, Lockheed-Martin, Toyota, and UPS. Lexington is well connected via major interstate highways as well as Blue Grass Airport, which has frequent service to major airline hubs and leisure destinations.



Lexington is also home to great sporting traditions, including horse racing and Kentucky Wildcat athletics. In the spring and fall, one can spend a beautiful afternoon watching thoroughbred racing at Keeneland, which hosted the Breeders' Cup in 2022 and will again in October 2026. The region also boasts excellent parks and natural wonders, including Red River Gorge and Mammoth Cave, the longest underground cave system in the world.

The food scene is filled with Kentucky originals, southern classics, and creative fusion. City residents benefit from a great local farm-to-table food environment with reimagined southern staples coupled with inventive bourbon-infused creations. In the heart of bourbon country, one of Lexington's most exciting hotspots, the Distillery District, offers creative cuisine, craft beers, local bourbons, and premium ice cream on a revitalized 25-acre historic property. Lexington has a vibrant arts scene with offerings in music, dance, theater, and visual and literary arts. The Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra provides more than 100 concerts, educational events, and community programs each year. The Lexington Opera House is a premier cultural destination in downtown Lexington that serves an average of 85,000 patrons every year, offering ballet, opera, children's productions, family shows, comedy, music, and professional national Broadway tours.

The city is also composed of a rich cultural tapestry. The international population grew 300 percent in the last decade, and more than 150 languages are spoken in Lexington. International investment, students, academics, and visitors from around the world bring a wealth of economic and cultural viewpoints to Lexington. The true charm of Lexington lies in the fact that it has all the amenities of a big city while maintaining that special small-town feel.

For more information about Lexington, see [VisitLEX](#).

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile and a CV or resume. WittKieffer is assisting the University of Kentucky in this search. For full consideration, candidate materials should be received by August 5, 2026.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Rob Springall and Roxana Woudstra

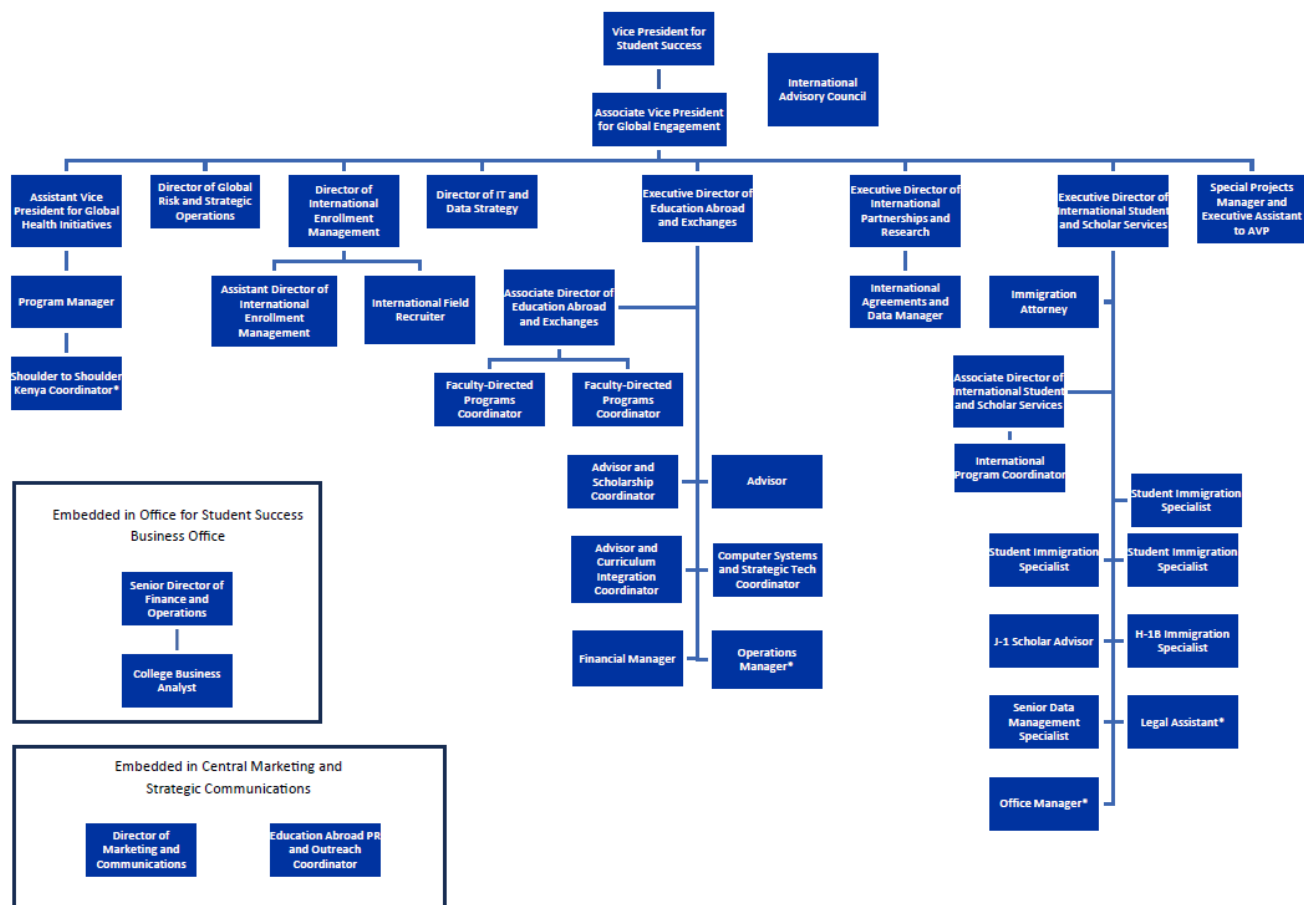
rwoudstra@wittkieffer.com

The University of Kentucky is committed to an inclusive workforce by ensuring all our students, faculty, and staff work in an environment of openness and acceptance. We strive to foster a community where people of all backgrounds, identities, and perspectives can feel secure and welcome. We also value the well-being of each of our employees and are dedicated to creating a healthy place to work, learn, and live.

In the interest of maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our students, employees, patients, and visitors, the University of Kentucky is a Tobacco & Drug Free campus.

Upon offer of employment, successful applicants must undergo a national background check and pre-employment drug screen as required by University of Kentucky Human Resources. The University of Kentucky is an Equal Opportunity University that values inclusion.

Appendix



*STEPS employee

Student Success



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