



UT TylerTM
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

Leadership Profile

Spring 2026



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

The University of Texas at Tyler invites nominations, applications, and expressions of interest in its search for the next Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students (VPSA).

The University of Texas at Tyler, commonly known as UT Tyler, is a public research university and a member of the University of Texas System. Founded in 1971 as Tyler State College, it became part of the UT System in 1979 and expanded to a full four-year institution in 1998. UT Tyler merged with the University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler in 2021, creating a unified institution that includes a medical school, the first in East Texas.

UT Tyler now enrolls approximately 11,600 students, marking the largest enrollment in the institution's history as of Fall 2025. The university offers more than 90 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs across a broad array of colleges and schools, including Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Health Professions, Nursing, Pharmacy, the School of Medicine, Honors College, and a Graduate School.

The main campus spans 320 acres in Tyler, with additional campus locations in Longview, Palestine, Houston, and expanded health science and medical facilities. UT Tyler is classified as an R2: Doctoral University – High Research Activity, the highest Carnegie designation in East Texas, with annual research expenditures exceeding \$30 million. The university is recognized for accessibility and student support, with a student-faculty ratio of approximately 17:1 and an acceptance rate of 94 percent.

UT Tyler is eager to welcome a collaborative, energetic, and strategic leader as its next VPSA. Reporting to President Julie Phillely, MD., and serving as a member of the President's leadership team, the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students will provide vision, leadership and strategic direction for a \$10 million operating budget and a portfolio of 41 staff and 123 student employees across all areas of student life including campus activities, student organizations, residence life, wellness, leadership development, and judicial affairs.

As a member of an ambitious and student-focused leadership team, the VPSA will contribute meaningfully to institutional strategy while ensuring that student affairs is viewed as a central partner in the life of the university. The VPSA will work closely with colleagues across the institution and play a key role in shaping a student affairs operation that is dynamic, connected, and fully aligned with the university's mission and priorities. This role represents an exceptional opportunity for a student affairs professional to help build momentum around campus life, strengthen connections among students, and advance a vibrant, engaging, and purpose-driven student experience. The VPSA will help elevate student success and foster high-impact experiences that support persistence, development, and connection.

The successful candidate will be a seasoned leader with the ability to envision what student affairs can become at a growing research university. This individual will demonstrate strong administrative, financial, and managerial skills; an understanding of contemporary student affairs challenges and opportunities; and a commitment to collaboration, relationship-building, and creative problem-solving. The VPSA will bring enthusiasm, sound judgment, and strategic thinking to the work of strengthening campus community and enhancing the overall student experience.

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 Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

The Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students will provide visionary leadership and strategic direction for student affairs, fostering a vibrant and supportive campus environment. This senior leader is responsible for elevating the student experience through dynamic programming, wellness initiatives, and support services that align with the institution's mission, values, and student-first promise. The VPSA serves as a highly visible, accessible, and enthusiastic advocate for students while advancing student experience, success, and retention.

The VPSA will advance student success at UT Tyler through the development and delivery of comprehensive and well-coordinated student support services. As student needs and support models continue to evolve in today's higher education landscape, the VPSA will regularly evaluate the priorities, effectiveness, and alignment of the division's units with the University's Strategic Plan and mission.

In addition, the VPSA will oversee student affairs functions to ensure alignment with institutional goals and objectives and will apply evidence-based best practices across all areas of the division. The VPSA will foster a culture of continuous improvement and quality assurance by using assessment and data to inform decisions related to campus life programs, operational effectiveness, and student success outcomes.

This role also presents the opportunity to develop and implement a new strategic plan for the Division of Student Affairs, positioning the division to proactively support student success and partner with the community to create a safe and engaging environment that fosters student growth and development. This aligns with the mission to provide high-quality, effective services and programs that encourage student experience and cultivate civic responsibility.

Key Responsibilities of the VPSA

- Provide vision, leadership and supervision of staff and programs across all areas of student life – including campus activities, student organizations, residence life, wellness, leadership development, and judicial affairs.
- Develop and implement bold initiatives aligned with the university's strategic plan that enhance engagement and the student experience - fostering a fun, connected, student centric culture.
- Partner with all university divisions to provide support for enrollment, recruitment, and alumni initiatives. Lead cross-campus collaborations and partnerships with academic and administrative colleagues as well as external partners to strengthen the student experience.
- Serve as a highly energetic and accessible Dean of Students, advocating for the needs of students in social, academic, and campus life matters. Act as a trusted and visible presence across our campuses – someone who students know and see at events, games, performances, and key moments in their journey.



- Lead student conduct, conflict resolution, and crisis response processes that are fair, educational, and grounded in the values of respect and care.
- Build transparent communication channels with students, families, faculty, and staff, ensuring two-way listening and visible responsiveness.
- Ensure compliance with University and UT System policies and procedures and federal and state guidelines.
- Oversee the budget, ensuring resources are allocated effectively to support strategic priorities, ensuring accountability and alignment with divisional priorities.
- Represent the Division of Student Affairs on institutional committees and at key university functions.
- Cultivate philanthropic, grant, and corporate partnerships to fund new student initiatives, leadership programs, and signature campus experiences.
- Champion and model an engaging, memorable campus experience, creating “moments that matter” for students and a sense of pride that lasts long after graduation.
- Other duties as assigned.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students will bring energy, vision, entrepreneurial thinking and coherence to a program that has been in transition in recent years. The VPSA will possess the experience, vision, and energy necessary to lead a complex institution of higher education to its next step in providing an optimal environment for student growth, development, and experience.

Develop and advance an innovative and unifying strategic vision for the Division of Student Affairs

In alignment with UT Tyler's strategic vision for the future, the division is eager to focus on student success and to foster a culture of excellence and opportunity. This is an excellent opportunity for the new leader to build and advance a unified strategic direction for Student Affairs. This new leader will help foster high-impact experiences that support a lively, connected, and purpose-driven campus life.

The VPSA will inherit staff dedicated to the university's mission and eager to meet the varying needs of the student body and campus community. As an established leader in the field, the VPSA will create conditions that allow the team to thrive by recognizing and valuing staff expertise while modeling next-level, highly proactive student affairs practices. The next VPSA will bring knowledge of the best national practices in student affairs, bolstered by a strong national professional network to elevate the Division's work to enhance the student experience. The VPSA will be a creative leader, an attentive listener, and a natural collaborator, approaching this opportunity with energy, enthusiasm, patience, and good humor.

Increase student sense of community and experience

UT Tyler believes that a vibrant, healthy, and well-integrated campus social life is a critical component of the overall student experience. The University recognizes the importance of ensuring that all students have access to a wide variety of campus-based opportunities that foster a strong sense of community while supporting academic, co-curricular, and social experience—key contributors to student retention and persistence.

University leadership is eager to further strengthen social experience and has demonstrated commitment through investments in an expanding residential presence. While many students live near campus in off-campus housing, the growth of both on-campus and nearby residential options has made the campus more accessible and created greater opportunities for students to participate in activities, programs, events, and employment. As the UT Tyler community continues to grow, the Division of Student Affairs wants to create a vibrant student experience.

Collaborate with campus partners to bolster student success

The faculty at UT Tyler are dedicated to academic excellence and enhancing student learning through innovative instruction and experiences. The VPSA will have demonstrated a history of strategic experience with faculty, colleges, and academic affairs administrators to collaboratively build interdivisional initiatives to support the student success agenda and enhance the coherence of the student experience. In an effort to support greater integration of curricular and co-curricular activities that will lead to more effective learning, retention, and graduation outcomes, ensuring partnership and coordination across all key points in the student lifecycle. Drawing on the new VPSA's experience in developing and valuing partnerships with faculty members and colleagues in academic affairs, the new VPSA will work across boundaries, modeling the way and providing support to the Division of Student Affairs team in doing the same to create a student-centered learning environment that promotes learning, retention, and graduation.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The next Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students will have an extraordinary commitment to the student experience in the context of a student-centered community. To achieve these goals, the following are required and preferred professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- Strategic leader with a creative mindset, able to envision and execute new ways of engaging students, enhancing culture, and building community.
- Utilize a variety of communication styles to achieve successful outcomes and negotiate agreements.
- Establish, nurture, and maintain productive relationships with internal and external audiences.
- Ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously, working both independently and as a team member.
- Excellent interpersonal skills with a demonstrated record of completing assignments.
- Outstanding organizational skills with the ability to plan, prioritize, and coordinate events and activities.
- Detail-oriented with the ability to manage multiple responsibilities effectively.
- Demonstrated flexibility and initiative in a dynamic work environment.

Required Education / Experience:

- Master's degree in Higher Education or related field.
- Seven (7) years of experience in higher education in related areas.
- Five (5) years leadership and supervisory experience.
- Experience building student life initiatives and signature events.
- May accept a combination of education and experience.

Preferred Education / Experience:

- Experience in budget management.
- Experience with PeopleSoft.

About The University of Texas at Tyler

The University of Texas at Tyler owes our reputation to the talent, strength, and determination of our faculty and staff. Together, we strive to make this institution bigger and better through creative problem-solving, a spirit of service, unwavering collaboration, and an investment in the next generation of East Texas professionals.

UT Tyler's strategic plan is driven by three guiding priorities; student success, teaching excellence, and service to East Texas.

Student SUCCESS

We exist to ensure that every student who enrolls with us not only completes their degree but also graduates truly prepared to enter the workforce — all while enjoying the journey. We'll prepare our students for a lifetime of success and meaningful impact.

Teaching EXCELLENCE

Faculty-student interactions lay the foundation for the development of knowledge and critical thinking. We recognize the critical role of innovative and effective instruction in preparing students for real-world challenges and lifelong success. We'll be known for teaching excellence.

Serve EAST TEXAS

We are only as strong as our community. By fostering economic growth, advancing healthcare and creating vibrant cultural communities, we will forge a strong bond with our community and serve as a trusted partner for years to come.

OUR MISSION

UT Tyler is a comprehensive public university. We help our students, patients, and community members achieve their educational and health goals by offering a combination of excellence in higher education, research, public service, and advanced healthcare delivery.

OUR VALUES

Servant Leadership: We put the needs of our students, patients, colleagues, and community first.

Excellence: We work collaboratively every day to be better and strive to establish and achieve exemplary outcomes.

Accountability: We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards and manage the resources of UT Tyler wisely.

OUR VISION

We aspire to be an impactful, values-centered institution unified in common purpose; a community that fosters opportunity, committed to providing a uniquely balanced student experience and improving the quality of human life.

Eight Academic Colleges & Schools

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Students in the College of Arts and Sciences are a community of innovators and creators. With programs spanning the humanities, natural and social sciences, communications, the arts and career preparation, our students not only launch their careers or pursue graduate studies but also serve and grow the East Texas region and beyond.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Our students are taking the next step toward making a positive impact in the community. The School of Education equips students with the tools and preparation for becoming caring, service-oriented educational professionals and leaders in schools.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Students in the College of Engineering are innovating our world by solving problems using scientific skills, technical creativity, and business knowledge. We are ranked No. 62 in the nation in the *U.S. News and World Report's* 2025 Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs (no doctorate) and are the third-best undergraduate program in the state.

SOULES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

The Soules College of Business gives students the knowledge and experience needed to launch their careers and advance the economy of East Texas and beyond. Our students are prepared after graduation to become business leaders, thinking critically and strategically on every business decision they make.

SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

The School of Health Professions trains students to become driven, caring problem-solvers. Our students are prepared for careers in public health, healthcare administration, psychology, rehabilitation, or exercise and movement science through hands-on instruction that examines existing challenges and equips them to propose forward-looking solutions.

SCHOOL OF NURSING

From registered nurses on the front lines of healthcare delivery to clinicians and researchers contributing to nursing's scholarly output, the UT Tyler School of Nursing prepares students for careers as caring, community-oriented professionals serving East Texas and the nation. Ninety-five percent of our students already have a job or pursue graduate studies after graduation.

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Emphasizing a community-centered approach, the UT Tyler School of Medicine combines advanced research, hands-on learning, and partnerships with regional healthcare providers to cultivate a new generation of physicians prepared to improve healthcare outcomes and enhance the quality of life in East Texas. We are the first medical school in East Texas and seventh in The University of Texas System. We offer a robust graduate program with 22 residency and fellowship training programs in areas such as family medicine, internal medicine, neurology, psychiatry, surgery, and anesthesia. Our Master of Biotechnology program's interdisciplinary curriculum emphasizes medical research and biotechnology innovation and prepares students for careers in medical research, diagnostics, and therapeutic development. The new, five-story, 248,000-square-foot Medical Education

Building (MEB) in Tyler's Midtown District will support interdisciplinary education for medical students and resident training and will be part of a medical education program expansion throughout the UT Health East Texas Health System.

BEN AND MAYTEE FISCH COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

Our PharmD program is at the forefront of pharmacy education, teaching future pharmacists the solutions-oriented skills used every day in the healthcare field — preparing them to become an asset to any healthcare team and to deliver compassionate and effective patient care.

Leadership

Julie V. Philley, MD

President, The University of Texas at Tyler

On June 1, 2024, Julie V. Philley, MD became the sixth president of The University of Texas at Tyler and the first woman to lead the university. A Professor of Medicine and board certified in internal, pulmonary, and critical care medicine, Dr. Philley served as UT Tyler's Executive Vice President for Health Affairs following the 2021 merger of UT Tyler and the UT Health Science Center at Tyler, which created a single, integrated university. She also served as Vice Provost from 2022 until she was appointed President. Dr. Philley played an instrumental role in launching the UT Tyler School of Medicine — the UT System's seventh medical school, which welcomed its first cohort in 2023. Previously, she was Chair of the Department of Medicine and Professor of Medicine at the UT Health Science Center at Tyler.

A native of East Texas, Dr. Philley was raised in Overton. She returned to the region in 2012, serving as Assistant Professor of Medicine at the UT Health Science Center at Tyler, where she continued research efforts in nontuberculous mycobacterial disease and bronchiectasis. An accomplished researcher, Dr. Philley has led numerous studies and published book chapters and articles. She earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Woman's University and her MD at UT Health Houston's McGovern Medical School, completing an internal medicine residency program at Johns Hopkins University/Sinai Hospital and a fellowship at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Dallas. Dr. Philley is an active member of the East Texas community. In addition to her board leadership with UT Health East Texas, she also serves on the boards of Hospice of East Texas, the East Texas Quality Care Network, the East Texas Medical Center Foundation, UT Health Tyler, and Teaching Hospitals of Texas, among other community service activities. She and her husband, Richard Lee, live in Tyler, where Lee serves as Music Director of the East Texas Symphony Orchestra.

About Tyler and East Texas

Renowned as the Rose Capital of the United States, Tyler is a growing mid-size city located less than 100 miles east of Dallas. As a regional focal point for entertainment, retail, healthcare, dining, arts, and outdoor recreation, Tyler offers small-town affordability with the comforts of a big city. Whether you want to take an afternoon to hike through Tyler State Park, shop at the Village at Cumberland Park, or eat your way through all the local Tex-Mex joints, Tyler is a vibrant place to live and work. Plus, it was named the no. 1 city in Texas to move to by USA Today. So, beat the crowd and discover Tyler for yourself.

For more information about UT Tyler and East Texas visit: [About | The University of Texas at Tyler](#) and [ut-tyler-profile.pdf](#)

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited.

Applications should include, as two separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile. Professional references are not requested at this time.

[WittKieffer](#) is assisting the University of Texas at Tyler in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by May 11th.

Nominations, inquiries, and application materials can be directed to:

Mercedes Chacon Vance and Jenna Brumleve

UTT-VP@wittkieffer.com

The University of Texas at Tyler is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

