Opportunity and Challenge Profile

Sonoma State University
Search for the Vice President of Administration and Finance
Rohnert Park, California

Sonoma State University (SSU or Sonoma State), a comprehensive residential public institution in Rohnert Park, California, seeks a visionary and collaborative leader to serve as Vice President of Administration and Finance. This is an exciting opportunity to provide essential administrative leadership at one of California’s most popular institutions, unique in its liberal arts and sciences mission and located less than an hour away from the economically booming San Francisco Bay Area amidst the natural beauty of Sonoma County. The Vice President will work closely with SSU’s dynamic new President, Judy Sakaki, the new EVP Academic Affairs and Provost, and other campus leaders.

Sonoma State has approximately 9,400 students (92 percent undergraduate). U.S. News and World Report consistently names SSU among “America’s Best Colleges.” Founded as a liberal arts college in 1961, Sonoma State has evolved into a diversified university with six schools—Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Education, Extended & International Education, Science and Technology and Social Sciences—that provide students with the intellectual framework and hands-on skills to thrive in a variety of professional careers. A major contributor to the North Bay workforce, Sonoma State offers degrees in 46 majors and 47 minors at the bachelor's level and 15 at the master's level, as well as nine credential programs and eight undergraduate and graduate certificate programs. The University operates as part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, the largest four-year system of higher education in the United States.

Sonoma State has a longstanding tradition of promoting intellectual and personal growth, leadership opportunities and technological proficiency. There is tremendous excitement and energy on campus after new President Judy Sakaki’s arrival, as she works to build upon this tradition and refocus attention on student success and the academic mission of the University. The Vice President will play a pivotal role in this shift, overseeing the financial and administrative success and integrity of the University and supporting innovations in budgeting and reporting and provide leadership, vision and direction for the departments of the Administration and Finance Division.

In support of the enduring legacy and mission of Sonoma State, the Vice President will address a set of key opportunities and challenges, which are detailed further in this profile:

Isaacson, Miller
• Create an atmosphere of trust; build collaborative relationships with campus leadership, faculty, staff and students; and convey a commitment to shared governance

• Lead finance and administrative staff in tackling financial and infrastructure challenges while ensuring the long-term financial health of the University

• Maintain SSU’s leadership in serving a diverse student body while strengthening its services to students

A list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the Vice President of Administration and Finance can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared by the search committee with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to provide background information and detail the key opportunities and challenges related to the position. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

About California State University

The California State University system spans the entire state of California and has an annual budget of more than $5 billion; it is not only the largest four-year university system, but it is also one of the most diverse and affordable university systems in the nation. With 23 campuses, 1,460,000 students, and 47,000 faculty and staff, CSU is a leader in high-quality, accessible, student-focused higher education, and prepares the majority of California’s leaders and policymakers: approximately 64 percent of Californians with master’s degrees in public administration studied at the CSU, as well as 35 percent of those with bachelor’s degrees. In addition, 49 percent of Californians with bachelor’s degrees in city, urban, community, and regional planning studied at the CSU. The CSU System has produced tens of thousands of graduates who have had an immeasurable impact in fields such as education, health care, agriculture, government, arts and entertainment, medicine, and non-profit leadership. To learn more about the California State University system, see www.calstate.edu.

About Sonoma State University

Founded in 1960 as a teacher education center for the North Bay, Sonoma State College was approved by the state legislature in 1960; it opened in Fall 1961 with 274 students. Five years later, the nascent college moved to its current, 269-acre campus, which at the time had two buildings. In its first years, Sonoma State was a small, liberal arts college in a rural area, and

---

1 CSU Bakersfield, CSU Channel Islands, CSU Chico, CSU Dominguez Hills, CSU East Bay, CSU Fresno, CSU Fullerton, Humboldt State University, CSU Long Beach, CSU Los Angeles, CSU Maritime Academy, CSU Monterey Bay, CSU Northridge, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CSU Sacramento, CSU San Bernardino, San Diego State University, San Francisco State University, San José State University, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CSU San Marcos, Sonoma State University, and CSU Stanislaus.
earned a reputation as “Granola U” and “Frisbee U.” SSU was relatively isolated from the local community, and served primarily as a commuter and re-entry student campus. The institution grew steadily, however, and in 1978, Sonoma State was officially moved from “college” to “university” status.

Sonoma State has evolved into a diversified university with six schools—Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Education, Extended & International Education, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences—that provide students with the intellectual framework and hands-on skills to thrive in a variety of professional careers. A major contributor to the North Bay workforce, Sonoma State offers degrees in 46 majors and 47 minors at the bachelor's level and 15 at the master's level, as well as nine credential programs and eight undergraduate and graduate certificate programs. The University also offers a joint master’s degree in mathematics with San Francisco State University. The University operates as part of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, the largest four-year system of higher education in the United States. Sonoma State is one of the smaller CSU institutions, and approximately 34 percent of students live on campus—one of the highest percentages in the CSU System—and roughly 80 percent of first year students come from outside the North Bay region. Many classes have fewer than 40 students, enabling close interaction between students and faculty. SSU has been recognized nationally as a “Best Value,” “Most Connected,” and “Most Green” college by the Princeton Review.

Leadership at Sonoma State University

Dr. Judy Sakaki joined Sonoma State University as its seventh president in July 2016 and is the first Japanese-American woman to lead a four year university in the U.S. Dr. Sakaki previously served a nine-year tenure as Vice President, Student Affairs for the University of California system. There she was responsible for policies, services and initiatives relating to student access, affordability and success for all 238,000 UC students on 10 campuses. Previously, Dr. Sakaki served as Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at UC Davis, and Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs at Fresno State.

Dr. Sakaki has devoted her career to issues of student inclusion, educational opportunities and achievement. She has a strong commitment to undocumented students, veterans, and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff communities. In 2009, Dr. Sakaki co-chaired a task force to award honorary degrees to approximately 700 Japanese American University of California students who were unable to complete their degree due to their internment during World War II. This marked the first time UC campuses awarded honorary degrees in nearly 40 years.

Dr. Sakaki is a former American Council on Education Fellow, an Executive Fellow of the California State University, and a senior Fellow of the American Leadership Forum. She has attended Harvard Management Institutes and was a member of the 2010 Japanese-American Leadership Delegation to Japan. Sakaki earned an M.A. in Educational Psychology and B.A. in Human Development from California State University, East Bay and a Ph.D. in Education from UC Berkeley.
Mission and Academic Programs

The academic mission of Sonoma State University is to prepare students to be learned people who have a foundation for life-long learning; have a broad cultural perspective; have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements; will be active citizens and leaders in society; are capable of pursuing fulfilling careers in a changing world; and are concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large. To achieve its mission, Sonoma State recognizes that its first obligation is to develop and maintain excellent programs of undergraduate instruction grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. Instructional programs are designed to challenge students not only to acquire knowledge but also to develop the skills of critical analysis, careful reasoning, creativity, and self-expression. Excellence in undergraduate education requires that students participate in a well-planned program that provides both a liberal education and opportunities for specific career preparation.²

Since 1963, SSU has been fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and the University received a seven-year accreditation in 2010; many SSU schools and programs are individually accredited.³ Sonoma State is a member of the prestigious Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), whose primary mission is ensuring that a fine undergraduate liberal arts and sciences education is available to students in the public system of higher education.

Student and Campus Life

The Sonoma State campus community is ethnically diverse⁴, and sixty-four percent of SSU students receive some type of financial aid; SSU awards approximately $1.1 million in scholarships per year (academic scholarships, athletics, and performing arts). The University has a 60/40 female-to-male ratio. The majority of SSU students come from California, although countries all over the world are represented within the student body. As of Fall 2013, 29 percent of first-time freshmen come from Southern California counties, and 21 percent of all of SSU’s students are from Southern California counties. About 20 percent of first year students and 37 percent of all students come from Sonoma’s service area (Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties). The University is also proud to have recently received designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

² See https://www.sonoma.edu/about/mission.html.
³ Individual accreditation has been granted by the American Chemical Society, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the National Association of Schools and Music, National League of Nursing National Association for School of Art and Design, Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs of California Board of Behavioral Science. SSU’s School of Business and Economics received initial accreditation status from the highly regarded Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in 2006, joining an elite group of less than 15% of all business schools in the world that meet the standards for accreditation.
⁴ American Indian or Alaskan Native: 0.9%; Asian: 5.5%; African American: 3.0%; Hawaiian and Pacific Islander: 0.6%; Hispanic: 21.0%; Two or More Ethnicities: 7.7%; Unknown: 3.0%; White: 58.3%.
Campus Growth and Investment

Sonoma State has benefited from the development of an array of facilities, including the recently renovated Darwin Hall, which features state-of-the-art science laboratories and classrooms; the Jean and Charles Schulz Information Center, which houses the library and computing services and is a prototype library and information complex for the 21st century; International Hall, a hub for globally oriented programs; and new recreation and student centers that serve as centers of active student life. Most recently, Sonoma State completed the Donald & Maureen Green Music Center (GMC), a world-class performance and learning facility that includes a 1,400-seat, donor-funded concert hall, a 250-seat recital hall, classrooms, ensemble and practice rooms, and other resources. SSU also has swimming pools, laboratories, production facilities, and centers for education in specialized fields like wine business education. In addition to its main campus, SSU manages three natural preserves that support research and instruction: the 450-acre Fairfield Osborn Preserve, a 10-minute drive from campus; the 3,670 acre Galbreath Wildlands Preserve, in Mendocino County; and the 40-acre Los Guillicos Preserve, near the Mayacamas Mountain Range.

Key Differentiating Strengths

As the only California member of COPLAC, SSU’s identity as a public university rests in the liberal arts and sciences, combined with professional preparation. Boasting a loyal and committed cadre of faculty and staff, the University has a long history of shared governance, with administration participating regularly in the Academic Senate and several of its standing committees. Faculty and staff have a commitment to community engagement and diversity and are passionately committed to student success and protecting the most vulnerable students.

The University has taken strong strides over the last three years to widen and deepen its sustainability capacities as it creates a robust academic environment across all schools and promotes sustainable behavior in students through residential and campus life. Approved by the Sustainability Executive Committee in September 2014, the University’s Mission, Vision and Goals for Sustainable SSU set forth the objectives of student engagement, resource stewardship, community partners, and a common purpose to build common cause across campus constituencies to develop a sustainable campus environment. In 2016, a uniquely student-led campus sustainability audit resulted in a bronze metal rating from the international Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

In recent years, SSU has steadily grown its base of private donors, initiated partnerships with a wide range of public schools and regional businesses, and evolved far beyond its erstwhile

5 Over the past ten years, SSU has secured more than $87 million in commitments for gifts in support of the academic mission of the University. The market balance of the University’s endowment was $44.6 million, as of 6/30/15. Sonoma State University has units dedicated to University Development (fundraising and alumni relations) and University Affairs (marketing/communications, community/governmental relations), with two different vice presidents.
identity as a “commuter” college. During 2014-15 alone, the University processed a record number of 20,941 applications; implemented the Seawolf Scholars, a program supporting foster youth; launched a craft beer appreciation certificate program; published more than 65 scholarly works in science and technology; delivered a number of co-curricular lecture series – including the Neves Evans Social Justice Lecture Series and a Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series.

In 2014, SSU leaders updated a strategic plan\(^6\) for the organization for 2014-2019, building upon a prior plan developed in 2009. Through this vision, Sonoma State aspires to become a showcase for innovation and a model 21\(^{st}\) century public university. SSU has an array of distinctive strengths, including a location in one of the most beautiful regions of the world, relatively small size, and strong connections to area schools and businesses. The campus has valuable facilities for teaching and research, including the Jean & Charles Schultz Information Center\(^7\) and the Galbreath, Fairfield-Osborn, and Los Guillicos preserves.

**Role of the Vice President of Administration and Finance**

Reporting to the President, the Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration and Finance (Vice President) serves as the chief administrative and financial officer for Sonoma State University (SSU) and its auxiliary operations. In support of the University's educational mission, the Vice President is responsible for providing leadership and vision to the University’s administration and financial operations, auxiliary operations, and certain student-centered operations. The Vice President provides executive level direction and management oversight for financial, budget, tax and compliance, financial aid and veteran’s services, facilities management and capital planning, police, parking services, risk management, human resources, and commercial real estate and entrepreneurial activities for the University and its auxiliaries, as well as the intercollegiate athletics program. Additionally, the VP supports the University’s Green Music Center.

The Vice President serves as the President’s representative with respect to the financial management of both the Sonoma State University Enterprises (SSE) and the Sonoma State University Foundation. The Vice President participates in a collaborative manner in the overall leadership of the campus through membership on the President’s Cabinet, the President’s Budget Advisory Committee, serving as an ex-officio member of the Academic Senate and participating in other campus and system-wide committees. This position also represents the University's interests with a variety of units within the CSU Chancellor's Office.

As Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration and Finance, the incumbent oversees the financial and business functions for the University’s educational mission; supports the academic mission and vision of the institution; maintains open lines of communication and seeks to thoroughly understand diverse points of view, providing appropriate opportunity for

---

\(^6\) See [https://www.sonoma.edu/about/strategic/](https://www.sonoma.edu/about/strategic/).

\(^7\) The Jean and Charles Schulz Information Center is named after Peanuts cartoon creator Charles Schulz and his wife. It holds one of the largest libraries in the CSU system and the state of California with more than 400,000 volumes. A unique 750,000-volume automated-retrieval system is one of only four in the country. It also houses a valued collection of Jack London’s writings, original letters and memorabilia.
input, and making necessary decisions that align the University with goals. Major priorities of the position include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide thoughtful leadership to identify and implement innovative strategies in service of the University’s mission, with particular attention to the values of inclusion, diversity, and transparency;
- Develop innovative, creative, efficient, and cost effective solutions to problems and challenges that relate to the administrative and financial management of the University and its auxiliary organizations;
- Marshal necessary resources to implement mission and vision, utilizing data to assess progress and determine direction;
- Ensure the University’s commitment to its mission, including diversity and inclusion, as evidenced by initiatives focused on attracting and retaining talented students, faculty, and staff; and
- Foster an environment of collegiality, support, and mutual trust through transparency in actions and accountability.

Other duties for the next Vice President include the following:

- Develop, implement, routinely update and communicate a division strategic plan that supports the University's overall strategic plan, vision, and mission;
- Promote the financial well-being of the University by providing budget management, exercising executive control over University budgets, and safeguarding all financial assets of the University;
- Minimize liability to the University by ensuring compliance with governing regulations and addressing risk management issues;
- Serve as a catalyst for change in improving the University's administration, with specific emphasis on customer service, quality, diversity, efficiency gains and cost-effectiveness;
- Provide financial oversight of the overall University Budget as well as capital and other budgets, and ensure that sound, sustainable and ethical financial reporting principles are followed;
- Oversee the operations and budgets of the Administration and Finance division, as well as those of the Sonoma State Enterprises, Sonoma State University Foundation, and Athletics;
- Provide advice and consultation to the Foundation Board of Directors in the management and allocation of the Foundation’s assets and the raising of private support for the University;
- Provide advice and consultation to the Sonoma State Enterprises Board of Directors in the management of the dining and retail operations which provide support for the University;
- Manage the University's physical growth and development;
- Develop appropriate policies and procedures for the campus administration and its financial management;
- Serve as a consultant to campus administrators and managers with respect to administrative management and financial policy;
Supervise the Senior Officers and other administrative staff in the Administration and Finance division;

Provide leadership for short-term and long-term assessment strategies associated with reengineering activities;

Commitment to sustainability programs and initiatives throughout the University;

Supporting the leadership team by hiring for mission, providing timely and direct feedback, creating opportunity for personal and professional development, providing incentives for high performance, and ensuring success;

Participate in shared governance across the University including students, staff, and faculty, and applying university policies and procedures; and

Work cooperatively with the President, Cabinet, and Deans.

Key Opportunities and Challenges for the Vice President of Administration and Finance

With regard to the above list of priorities and duties, the following themes have emerged as opportunities and challenges to highlight for the next VP:

Create an atmosphere of trust; build collaborative relationships with campus leadership, faculty, staff and students; and convey a commitment to shared governance

The next VP will join a university that is more student-centric, academically focused, and forward-looking than ever before. It is a time of tremendous optimism, vision, and growth under the new leadership of President Judy Sakaki, as well as one of change led by an interim team in the cabinet. The VP will play a key role in building a culture of trust, developing collaborative and solution-oriented relationships with campus leadership and all campus constituents in support of SSU’s academic mission and the vision of the new president and provost. An important part of this effort will be establishing transparent communication and data-informed accountability in the planning of new budgeting and decision-making processes. It will be essential that the VP and Division staff involve faculty and staff in authentic shared-governance conversations on budget related and other administrative matters that support academic success, and recruitment and development of a thriving and diverse community.

Lead finance and administrative staff in tackling financial and infrastructure challenges while ensuring the long-term financial health of the University

The VP will serve as an advocate for SSU at the CSU System office and in maintaining state funding to ensure the financial health of the University, especially balanced against tuition increases and changes in discretionary and core funding. To place the University on solid financial footing, the VP will lead the Division to find creative financial management strategies and work with the other members of the cabinet to explore new revenue streams for the University that enable and underpin its mission. Where possible, the VP will work with the VP for Advancement to support the generation of philanthropic resources and also explore public private partnerships and other strategies that could help enhance faculty housing and academic spaces. It will also be important to find and plan for resources to support renovations and repairs of buildings and to address maintenance backlogs. The VP will also work collaboratively with the Division to seek ways to address and simplify finance and administrative operations for
optimal effectiveness and responsiveness. Finally, the VP will manage and streamline auxiliary services, including their governance and relationship to the University.

Maintain SSU’s leadership in serving a diverse student body while strengthening its services to students

It will be clear by the solution-orientation and actions of the next VP that s/he will be an advocate for the core education mission of Sonoma State. The VP will support the expansion and realignment of a student affairs office and operation that serves SSU’s 9,100 students. More resources have recently been transferred to grow this office in the restructuring process, but more are needed to provide appropriate administrative services and academic support for student success and to create a positive campus experience and inclusive community. The VP will work with the VP for Student Affairs to enable student needs and issues to be addressed promptly and effectively. Together with other campus leaders, s/he will work to improve the recruitment, retention and success of a more diverse student body, reflected in part by SSU’s new status as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Qualifications and Characteristics

This position requires a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university in business, finance, administration, or a related field and at least ten years of increasingly responsible executive level management and strategic overseeing multi-disciplinary operational units in a complex organization, preferably within higher education. A Master’s degree from an accredited university is highly preferred. The incumbent must possess a successful track record and a comprehensive understanding of administrative and financial affairs within public higher education, as demonstrated through senior leadership roles in higher education, government or a comparable organization. Intermediate proficiency with computers and Microsoft Office Suite required. PeopleSoft experience preferred.

The incumbent must have a demonstrated commitment to diversity demonstrated by leadership, strategic and proactive planning, allocation of resources, and accountability. The incumbent should possess the ability to see the big picture and relate business affairs strategies and resources to the University’s mission and strategic plan; an unquestionable personal and professional code of ethics; a transparent management style that fosters collegiality and teamwork; exceptional leadership for colleagues and a history of holding others accountable for the same standards. Experience with data-driven assessment for decision making and improving business processes; thorough understanding of current national trends in higher education; demonstrated appreciation for the principles of academic freedom and shared governance; demonstrated knowledge of and experience in the strategic leadership of budget development and management, capital planning, facilities management, safety/security, real estate acquisition and development, risk management, human resources, and contracting and purchasing services; ability to frame and communicate a vision for the Division; and experience in a collective bargaining environment.
Experience and/or education that demonstrates sound judgment, creativity, management, problem solving skills, integrity, flexibility and the ability to manage change is also required as is an understanding of California public higher education, as well as the ability to translate complex policies into compliant campus business processes and effectively communicate back out to all-levels of the University. Exceptional interpersonal, communication, written, supervisory and presentation skills are required. The incumbent must also possess the ability to supervise the work of staff and recommend appropriate personnel actions; be able to apply strong problem solving and conflict resolution skills and train and evaluate performance, taking corrective action as needed and deal with stressful situations while maintaining composure. Must have strong organizational skills and the ability to manage multiple projects and competing priorities simultaneously, adjusting quickly to changes needed on a daily basis, as well as make independent decisions while using discretion and initiative to perform complex work. Must have the ability to effectively communicate with all levels within the University and establish and maintain productive and effective, inclusive working relationships amongst diverse populations including staff, faculty, administration, students, and other internal and external constituents.

Location

Sonoma State University is located in the city of Rohnert Park (pop. 41,500), in beautiful Sonoma County, a world-famous wine-growing region located north of the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to SSU, Rohnert Park is home to the Spreckels Performing Arts Center, and offers access to championship golf courses, parks, tennis courts, and boundless other amenities. The Sonoma County Regional Parks Department affords a variety of options for outdoor recreation, including hiking, cycling, and kayaking. Sonoma County has more than 400 wineries and affords easy access to the Pacific coastline. For more information, visit the website of the Sonoma Wine Country Tourism Bureau.

Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: http://www.imsearch.com/6193. Electronic submission of materials is strongly preferred.

Deborah Hodson, Becca Kennedy, and Michael O’Shea
Isaacson, Miller
1000 Sansome Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94111
Phone: 415.655.4900
Fax: 415.655.4905

SSU is an Equal Opportunity Employer