

The Opportunity and Leadership Agenda

Gannon University is in a uniquely strong position as it enters its first presidential transition in over a decade. Though external challenges—the pandemic, demographic trends, increasing competition for students, issues around affordability and cost for students—have had an impact on the University, Gannon has continued to move forward. As it approaches its centennial year in 2025, the Gannon community is looking for a leader to sustain and accelerate the forward momentum generated in recent years, building upon its many achievements and leveraging them to realize even greater success in its second 100 years.

In particular, four key priorities emerge for the next president:

- **Continue to cultivate, apply, and deepen Gannon’s unique identity and culture.** Gannon is both proud of its identity as Catholic and diocesan university and openheartedly welcoming of the rich diversity of the world. The next president will deepen that commitment, engaging the campus community in clarifying operational definitions of terms like Catholic and diocesan as they are applied in the life of the University in both Erie and Ruskin. Importantly, this leader will also situate and articulate the University’s efforts in a variety of areas (a sense of belonging, a commitment to service, the intellectual value of faith and reason, the importance of JEDI, a lens for considering and responding to emerging political and cultural topics, etc.) in terms of their relationship to this identity. University leadership has intentionally cultivated a unique organizational culture that has contributed greatly to Gannon’s success—a culture that is student-focused and service-oriented, nimble and forward-looking, proactive and willing to take calculated risk, candid and respectful in dialogue and transparent in communications. The next leader will continue to embrace and cultivate this distinctive culture as they lead the entire Gannon community forward, and will be a warm, approachable member of what is often described as “the Gannon family.”
- **Provide strategic leadership through a blend of vision and execution.** The university has a well-developed strategic plan through 2025, and the campus community is deeply engaged in work to pursue the goals articulated therein. The first strategic work of the next leader will be to successfully continue execution toward the current plan, making course corrections as needed due to the many and rapid changes in the external environment. As 2025 approaches the president will be called upon to lead the campus community in development of its next strategic plan, doing so in a manner that builds upon its mission and identity, accelerates the positive momentum already underway, meaningfully engages the community, utilizes data to inform decision-making, leverages institutional strengths, addresses emerging challenges and opportunities, and provides clear direction for action and clear responsibility and timelines for implementation.
- **Strengthen and leverage the financial health of the University in pursuit of strategic goals.** As a largely tuition-driven institution, Gannon is heavily reliant upon student enrollment to sustain its resource base. Efforts to ensure that the academic portfolio includes high-quality, high-demand programs—including introducing new programs and modes of delivery (Ruskin campus and online offerings, for example)—have been essential to the University’s health, reflecting the Gannon’s stated commitment to the liberal arts and sciences as well as professional preparation. The next president will continue to pursue such possibilities that leverage the strengths of the university to meet emerging educational needs. Initiatives to create a learning

environment of belonging and support have had a positive impact upon student satisfaction, retention, and success; the next leader will build upon these efforts. While a consistent stream of new initiatives is essential to institutional health, the next president will also attend to strengthening the infrastructure around initiatives already underway. In particular, this leader will align resource allocation with areas of high demand and/or growth, accelerate work to improve employee engagement and satisfaction in the current competitive environment for talent, and prioritize next generation capital projects that may include redevelopment of existing spaces as they approach the end of their current useful life. Growing the financial base beyond enrollment through continued expansion of philanthropic support, corporate partnerships, and other creative funding sources will be increasingly important in the emerging demographic context.

- **Deepen the University's connection to the communities it serves.** Gannon University was founded in part to serve the Erie community, and the success of the University and the success of the local community are intertwined. The University is one of the largest employers in the region and is deeply engaged in a variety of efforts to improve the quality of life in the local community. While this symbiotic relationship is already strong, the next president will seek to deepen it further, supporting efforts to strengthen the economic development of Erie, seeking additional ways in which the student experience can be enhanced through community engagement (service learning, internships, employment, et al), and pursuing mutually beneficial partnerships with the corporate community that can strengthen Gannon's enrollment and financial health. While Gannon's roots are understandably not as deep in Ruskin, the new president will need to seek ways to strengthen the student experience (clinical partnerships, affordable housing, et al) by increasing the University's impact in that local community as well.

Required and desired characteristics

The next president at Gannon University will be a practicing Catholic. This individual will have demonstrated success in a substantial organizational leadership role. In addition, the ideal candidate would possess a terminal degree along with the following skills, experiences, and characteristics:

- A passion for Gannon and the communities it serves, demonstrated by presence at campus and community events and willingness to make a long-term commitment to this role, the University, and the local community. A willing and visible advocate, cheerleader, and spokesperson for the University.
- A person of lived faith with a deep commitment to Catholic higher education and an active spiritual life.
- A personal and professional commitment to justice, equity, inclusion and belonging, with a track record of translating that commitment into meaningful action.
- A proven leader with a data-informed and collaborative approach to decision-making, willing to make and communicate difficult decisions in a clear, timely manner. Skilled at change leadership and conflict management.
- A strategist able to cultivate a compelling shared vision of the future and to successfully execute toward that vision in a dynamic environment.
- An accessible, approachable, warm personality; a caring person who builds genuine relationships with a wide variety of people (students, faculty and staff, community leaders,

alumni, Trustees, et al). An engaging presence, with the willingness and ability to use that engagement to secure corporate and philanthropic support for the University.

- Awareness and understanding of the many trends affecting higher education (demographic, technological, financial, social, et al), and a track record of navigating those trends in pursuit of institutional success. Experience in a setting with multiple modes and/or sites for delivering educational experiences preferred.
- Courageous and driven, with an appropriate blend of confidence and humility. Persistent, steady, and hopeful in the face of adversity.
- Creative and entrepreneurial, willing to take calculated risks in pursuit of institutional goals and open to new ideas and approaches.
- Experience in building strong teams, including both developing individuals and bringing those individuals together as a group to achieve organizational success.
- Financial acumen, with an understanding higher education finance and experience in successfully managing budgets and aligning resources to achieve strategic goals.
- High moral character, including treating others with respect, consistently ethical behavior, and unimpeachable integrity.
- Strong communication skills, including listening as well as speaking and writing, and an open, transparent, and direct style that keeps the community informed and engenders trust.