PROVOST

A Prospectus for the search

September 18, 2006

With the departure of Dr. Maravene Loeschke for the presidency of Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Wilkes University announces a search for its next Provost. The search committee, appointed by President Joseph E. (Tim) Gilmour and chaired by Dr. Paul Adams, vice president for student affairs, expects to begin review of applications November 3rd and to recommend an appointment by early spring, with the new provost expected to take office in summer, 2007.

About the University

Wilkes University, in Wilkes Barre, PA, opened its doors in September 1933 as Bucknell University Junior College (BUJC). The college earned accreditation by the Middle States Association in 1937 and formed its own board in 1938. In the late 30s and early 40s, BUJC received several grand houses in the city’s wealthiest neighborhood, adjacent to downtown and the Susquehanna River. In 1947, the institution became Wilkes College and with a new charter began to offer baccalaureate degrees. New buildings went up, more fine homes and offices were acquired, and the College became a substantial presence in Northeastern Pennsylvania. In the 50s and 60s, as enrollments grew, new residence halls, academic buildings, a library, a performing arts complex, and athletic facilities were brought on line. The 1970s and 80s were difficult years for the College with the Hurricane Agnes flood of June 1972, a steady drop in the number of high school graduates in the region, a decline in the economy of the region, and increasing competition from area colleges. But academic and campus planning begun in the late 80s resulted in the start of a successful pharmacy school and expansion of graduate offerings, and a well-planned consolidation and beautification of the physical plant.

Since 2001, with an ambitious strategic plan, Vision 2010, and a revitalized board and administration, the University has grown its on-campus enrollments by 30 percent and anticipates significant growth in graduate and continuing education enrollments. It
The University now enrolls 2,188 undergraduates (fall 2005), all but 220 of them full time; 2,019 graduate students, overwhelmingly part time; and 272 first-professional students, all but a handful full time. Wilkes’s total headcount enrollment last fall was 4,480, up 21% from 2001. Ninety percent are Pennsylvanians; two-thirds are female, 55% are first generation; 7% are students of color; and 1% are from abroad. At the undergraduate level, admission is “selective,” with an acceptance rate of 73%. The SAT 25/75 percentiles are 960/1180. Half of all undergraduates live in campus housing. There is no Greek system; all organizations must be open to all students. Over the past several years, the six-year graduation rate has crept up from below 50% to near 60%. About a fourth of all graduates go directly to graduate or professional school.

In terms of programs, Wilkes offers 22 BA’s in liberal arts fields, two BBA’s in business, and 17 BS degrees in fields including chemistry and biology, engineering, nursing, and pharmaceutical sciences. Business majors account for 21% of the undergraduate enrollment, with another 12% in education, 10% in communication fields, and 10% in the health sciences. At the master’s level, degrees are offered in creative writing, business, mathematics, nursing, electrical engineering, and education. Three-fourths of Wilkes’s graduate enrollments—1,406 students—are in teacher education, with instruction offered at 70 sites across the eastern half of the state. Some 275 students, virtually all full time, are enrolled in a notably successful six-year Pharm.D. program in the School of Pharmacy. Thematically, across all schools and levels and for many years, Wilkes has put high emphasis on student mentoring by faculty, staff, and student peers.

The academic program is led by a full-time faculty of 128 augmented by 100 adjuncts, for a computed 15-1 student-faculty ratio. Within the full-time faculty, 71 (55%) hold tenure with another 34% on tenure track; the remaining 23 faculty members are visitors or not on tenure track. The University also employs 292 other personnel, including administrators, coaches, and clerical, maintenance, and security staff. The instructional mission is supported by the 175,000-volume Farley Library, which is slated to be renovated to include a state-of-the-art learning commons. IT is outsourced to SunGard Higher Education; administrative functions are supported by the Banner System, presently undergoing a nine-month, front-end overhaul to provide a more capable web portal for University transactions. The University is completing year two of a five-year, $1.73 million Title III grant for strengthening its mentoring capacity through academic advising and supplemental instruction.
By charter, Wilkes is nonsectarian; by Carnegie classification, it is a Master’s I. The University is governed by an active, 36-person Board of Trustees, which includes an Academic and Student Environment committee with which the Provost works closely. Reporting to the president are six vice presidents, for academic affairs (the provost), student affairs, finance and general counsel, development and alumni relations, marketing and enrollment services, and human and organizational development.

Wilkes’s operating budget for FY2007 is $80 million; it has realized significant surpluses for four consecutive years. Planned capital expenditures this year are $5.9 million. Total endowment stands at $43 million (6/30/2006). For 2006-07, student charges are $22,990 for tuition, $9,860 for room and board. Over 80% of undergraduates have need-based aid; the discount rate has been brought down from 50% to 37%. In FY 2006, Wilkes drew down just 3% of endowment for operating expenses. Alumni annual giving is at 15% (the alumni operation has recently been revamped to connect alumni better to the University). Annual fund giving totaled $1,244,000 in 2005-06.

Over 330 Wilkes undergraduates participate in intercollegiate athletics. The University maintains seven varsity programs each for men and women, all NCAA Division III, competing in the Middle Atlantic States Athletic Corporation (MASCAC). This fall, the Wilkes football team opened the season ranked 23rd in the nation. Last year, the women’s soccer and field hockey and men’s wrestling teams won National Team Academic Awards. Football, women’s soccer, and softball all advanced to post-season NCAA playoffs last year.

Wilkes has enjoyed continuous Middle States Association accreditation since 1937. Its next MSA self-study report will be due in 2009, with a visiting team expected in spring, 2010. The provost’s office finds accreditation visits coming on a regular basis, with no fewer than six professional bodies accrediting University programs: ACS, CCNE, EAC, ABET, ACBSP, and ACPE.

Finally, the City of Wilkes-Barre itself (pop. 43,000) is on the verge of a renaissance, with the University an active partner in its rebuilding. The city’s glory days, built around coal, railroads, and heavy manufacturing, are in the past. The emergent city is built around higher education (Wilkes and King’s College are both located downtown), light manufacturing, logistics and distribution, back office services, and health care. Downtown revival is well underway with the renovation of a historic theater offering a mix of arts and live entertainment, the opening of a new 14-screen movie complex, and a Barnes & Noble College Superstore, developed in partnership with Wilkes and King’s; a $30 million riverfront redevelopment project will soon launch. Among the city’s assets are the natural beauty and recreational opportunities of the area, with the Endless Mountains to the west and Poconos to the east; a highly favorable cost of living and housing market; the employment opportunities and dining, arts, and entertainment options of a 560,000-person SMSA; a regional airport connecting to a dozen hub cities; and easy access via interstates to Philadelphia (115 miles) and New York City (131 miles).
Wilkes’s strategic vision

Wilkes’s overarching goal is to “be recognized as a premier small university in the Mid-Atlantic Region, dedicated to academic excellence through mentoring. We want to move from a very good institution to a great one.” These words are from the University’s “Vision 2010” document, developed over the past two years and now available in full at www.wilkes.edu/pages/1413.asp.

Three strategic initiatives lie at the heart of Vision 2010, each of which set an agenda for the next provost. First come academic programs: the University wants to fashion and deliver a world-class mentoring experience and make that a key part of its brand; grow and reshape graduate/continuing studies so as to add 1,000 FTE students by 2010 (going from the present 800 to 1,800); and it will examine the case for a law school. The second initiative looks to the support environment: Wilkes wants to transform university services into a lean, customer-focused operation; achieve 15% operational savings; implement the campus master plan; connect better with alumni; work on downtown improvement; and carry out a capital campaign. The third strategic initiative calls for significantly enhanced faculty and staff development.

The pending capital campaign—its goal may be in the neighborhood of $60 million—is notable in three respects for the next provost. For one, half or more of the monies raised will be for academic development, which will put a premium on the provost’s abilities to plan and execute. Second, a campaign such as this puts the president on the road a lot, which impacts the provost as the second in command. Third (and typical these days), the provost himself or herself will need to play a personal role in fund-raising, fashioning the case for campaign needs in relation to particular funders.

About the provostship

The provost reports to the president, is a member of the cabinet, and acts in the president’s stead in his absence. The provost, the VP for student affairs, and the VP for marketing and enrollment services work together with the Board’s committee on Academic and Student Environment. The provost is the institution’s chief academic officer and senior officer responsible for executing the University’s academic strategy. Reporting to the provost are the associate provost (to whom the library and registrar report) and the University’s five deans, of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; the Jay S. Sidhu School of Business and Leadership; Pharmacy and Nursing; Science and Engineering; and Graduate Studies and Continued Learning.

Opportunities and challenges

The next provost will find multiple opportunities to make a mark for the better at Wilkes University.

1. To refashion and deepen University leadership. The challenge of an ambitious set of strategic initiatives is that of finding ways to channel the talents and drive
of top administrators toward the achievement of stated goals. To that end, two years ago the University engaged the Training Resources Group of Alexandria VA to study decision-making at Wilkes. The upshot was development and adoption of a Leadership Model for the University. Under that model, each manager at Wilkes, starting with the Cabinet officers, sets direction and manages change; drives toward results; grounds action in passion and realism; communicates directly and collaboratively; coaches and develops others; and demonstrates self-management. Instead of silos, the cabinet acts as a whole. To reinforce communication and work even more closely together, all senior administrators and many of the services they oversee (business, registrar, admissions, financial aid, development and alumni affairs, HR, financial aid, IT, etc.) will move in October from their present scattered offices to a new, open-space area in a refurbished building.

The opportunities inherent in these steps for the new Provost are obvious: to coordinate academic with fiscal planning, to strengthen the ties between academic and student affairs, to bring an “academic” voice into facilities planning and management, and so on. The challenges are there, too: to enter effectively into an intact and strong cabinet group; to ensure that academic values and needs are fully considered and supported by the Cabinet; and to find new and effective ways of including larger parts of the campus community—notably the deans, department chairs, and faculty leaders—in the governance and management of the University.

These challenges have particular moment because the faculty is concerned about the reach and pace of recent change at the University. The faculty will want the new provost to be an effective advocate for its values and to ensure faculty involvement in setting the University’s directions. The president and current cabinet members fully support this desire and want to work closely with the new provost to achieve these ends; they know that Vision 2010 cannot be realized without full faculty understanding and commitment.

2. The opportunity to build. The next provost should have the great (and rare!) chance to help bring to realization two major projects: a new building for science, engineering, and health programs and the creation of a law school. In the case of the former, the most imaginative planning will be needed to foresee the subject-matter and pedagogic futures of three central and variously related fields, after which there is a green building to design, money to be raised, and faculty and students to attract. In the case of the law school, finding good ways to involve community, board, and bar in its thoughtful establishment becomes a challenge, after which comes the hiring of a dean and first faculty, securing facilities and necessary approvals, and the attraction of able students. These two projects, in and of themselves, have the potential to be the next provost’s legacy.

3. Mentorship. Vision 2010 says it all: Wilkes will “build the capacity to deliver a world-class mentoring experience.” How precisely this capacity will be
designed and delivered is still being defined; a task force has begun thinking through the implications for learning at all levels with the goals of significantly enhancing student learning, graduation rates, and student (and alumni/ae) satisfaction. The issues are curricular, co-curricular, pedagogic, and cultural. Significant resources have been set aside to support this effort, but a faculty with 12-hour loads is concerned about its ability to deliver more. This effort will require significant academic leadership and capacity for innovation, but will ultimately establish a “mentoring brand” that will make Wilkes stand out from its competitors.

4. **A pursuit of outcomes.** A focus on the attainment of outcomes and on evidence-based practice is now a hallmark of management and professional life in a host of non-profit and people-serving organizations, including healthcare, K-12 education, social services, and now higher education (the Spellings Commission being the latest example). At Wilkes, the new leadership model (“manage for results”) expresses this; the University’s accreditors expect it of curricula with ever-greater insistence. At Wilkes, good progress has been made in the stating and assessment of educational outcomes, but much, much more will have to done to meet the ever-tighter standards of Middle States and its professional counterparts. Here, again, arises an issue for the provost’s leadership.

**Preferred qualifications**

Wilkes University seeks a dynamic, experienced academic leader for its provost, an individual who

- Has the academic and administrative background and credibility to win the respect of faculty, staff and students and stimulate their engagement with the University’s future

- Puts students first and is able to work effectively with faculty and staff to fashion educational experiences that integrate learning and mentoring, in class and out, to enable extraordinary student achievement

- Has been successful in hiring, retaining, and developing strong subordinates

- Knows academic planning and budgeting and manages for results

- Follows closely the latest developments in higher education, at both the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels, enabling Wilkes to stay current with best practice

- Embraces the value of diversity and global perspective

- Has the ability to communicate effectively with individuals, within groups, and across the University
o Is a person of integrity, humility, imagination, and good humor.

About this search

A nine-person search committee is now at work. Its membership consists of four elected faculty members, an administrator and a staff representative, two students, and Dr. Paul Adams, the vice president for student affairs, who serves as chair. Anita Ruskey provides administrative support for the committee and search. Josephine Panganiban, vice president for human and organizational development, will also work with the committee.

The committee is assisted by Dr. Theodore J. Marchese of Academic Search, Inc., of Washington, D.C. For further information about the post and search you may contact Ted in confidence at (202) 263-7478 or via tjm@academic-search.com.

The search committee will commence review of applications on November 3, 2006, and continue its work until the position is filled. It expects to conduct neutral-site interviews December 1-2 and schedule campus visits for finalists later in January, with hopes of recommending candidates to the president by February. The successful candidate would assume the provost position next summer.

To apply, candidates should address a thoughtful letter of interest to Dr. Adams, speaking as appropriate to the issues and preferred qualifications in this prospectus. Include also a current resume highlighting relevant experience and accomplishments, and attach to it the names and phone numbers of at least five professional references (these will be called later, at a semi-final stage, with the candidate’s foreknowledge). Letters of nomination and recommendation are not requested. By search committee affirmation, all information from and about candidates will be kept in strict confidence in perpetuity. Send materials as an e-mail attachment in Word to wilkesprovost@academic-search.com, with the letter addressed to:

Dr. Paul S. Adams, Chair
Provost Search Committee
Wilkes University
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Wilkes University is constantly seeking to become a more diverse community and to enhance its capacity to value and capitalize on the cultural richness that diversity brings. The search committee strongly encourages applications from persons with diverse backgrounds and assures them of full consideration in the search and of ongoing support if selected.