



**Vice President for Student Affairs  
SUNY New Paltz  
New Paltz, New York**

**THE SEARCH**

The State University of New York at New Paltz (“SUNY New Paltz”, “New Paltz”, or “the College”), located in New Paltz, New York, seeks an innovative and accessible leader to serve as the Vice President of Student Affairs (“VPSA”). The new VPSA will join New Paltz at a time of tremendous momentum and opportunity, strengthening the integration of student intellectual, social, and residential life activities with the academic programs and mission of the College.

Founded in 1828, New Paltz is a selective, student-centered institution and is the only public university in the mid-Hudson region. The College enrolls approximately 6,600 undergraduates and 1,100 graduate students across 143 programs in six schools. As one of 64 institutions in the SUNY system, the College is a thriving member of a strong state-wide system that educates nearly 1.3 million students. At New Paltz, undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences provide a solid foundation for professional programs in the fine and performing arts, education, health care, business, and engineering.

This is an opportune moment for New Paltz. Over the past decade, the College has been on a dramatic upward trajectory—strengthening its reach and reputation, improving the academic profile of its students, improving graduation and retention rates, increasing diversity amongst students and faculty, and completing many capital projects. The College has been successful in building a learning environment that is challenging, student-centered, personalized, and grounded in a range of high-impact learning experiences such as study abroad, undergraduate student research, the honors program, internships, living/learning communities, and a rich array of co-curricular activities and leadership opportunities.

In its next VPSA, New Paltz seeks a strategic thinker who will partner with a broad array of campus and community constituents in leading the College’s efforts to provide an integrated and exceptional student experience. Reporting to the President, the VPSA is a member of the President’s Cabinet and contributes to the collaborative efforts of the senior leadership team. As the senior student affairs officer, the VPSA oversees a budget of approximately \$11 million and leads a division of 12 departments and more than 130 employees in an established and successful student affairs program.

The Vice President of Student Affairs must: provide visionary leadership to the division of student affairs and the College more broadly; work across departments to promote a fully unified student experience; support an increasingly diverse student body and build an inclusive environment; manage and develop an exceptionally strong student affairs team; work to articulate and demonstrate the role of student life throughout the campus community; build strong relationships with students; and serve as an ambassador and advocate for students beyond the College community.

The successful candidate will be a visible, student-centered leader with a highly collaborative management style and a strong record of creating a climate of openness and mutual respect, and a demonstrated commitment to working across departments to educate the whole student. S/he must also

possess a deep understanding of the educational value of a residential college and be astute to the trends, challenges, and opportunities for innovation in student affairs. A master's (minimum) or doctoral degree in a relevant field with a record of substantial and increasingly responsible experience in student life is required.

SUNY New Paltz has retained the executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this recruitment. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **History**

SUNY New Paltz has the common threads of innovation throughout its history. Founded in 1828 as the New Paltz Classical School, the institution spent the majority of the 19<sup>th</sup> century training teachers for New York State public schools. However, unlike most institutions of its kind, New Paltz encouraged a more expansive course of study that allowed its students to explore subjects beyond teacher training. Over the next 100 years, the curricular mission of the school broadened from the nearly single-track of the Classical School to one that encouraged diversity of study; in 1938 the institution became an official college and in 1948 one of the founding schools of the SUNY system. In 1960 New Paltz was on the forefront again and became among the first SUNY schools to offer a Bachelor of Arts degree. In 2014, the College opened the nation's first MakerBot Innovation Center: a collaborative 3D printing initiative that brings together various disciplines, students, faculty, and regional businesses.

New Paltz has also been a pioneer in creating an inclusive environment. In 1901 the College welcomed 50 female students from Cuba and in 1968 a program in Black Studies was established. The College has received SUNY system grants to support diversity in hiring and conducts annual cultural competency training. The College created and administered an LGBTQ climate survey to ensure it was being responsive to the needs of students, faculty, and staff and implementing best practices, and this fall, New Paltz welcomed its highest number of trans students. In 2016 New Paltz hired its first Chief Diversity Officer, as well as a new Deputy Title IX Coordinator. Thus the hallmarks of a New Paltz education have long been in place: innovation and free exploration of ideas, a responsive learning environment, and celebration of lifelong learning, respect for diversity, and inclusivity.

### **Location and Campus**

New Paltz is a vibrant, historic village (pop. 14,003) in New York State's Hudson Valley region, midway between Albany and New York City. The locale offers a variety of outdoor activities from rock climbing, hiking, biking, skiing, and swimming in glacial lakes, to sampling the seasonal bounty of New Paltz's many farms, orchards, and wineries. New Paltz is also close to many cultural, artistic, and historic attractions, including the contemporary sculpture gardens of the Storm King Art Center, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the Vanderbilt Mansion, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt home and presidential library. The campus' 75-mile proximity to Albany and New York City provides educational opportunities for students through clinical experiences, internships, and access to bountiful artistic, historic, government, and international resources.

The SUNY New Paltz campus covers 216 acres. The physical plant has improved dramatically since 2000, including: new and renovated residence halls; the opening of the Athletic and Wellness Center; the construction of a new science building; the planning for a new "engineering innovation hub" (scheduled for completion in 2018); and the renovation of the Student Union Building, several academic buildings,

and the Sojourner Truth Library. These changes represent the most significant investment in infrastructure to support the College's educational mission since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Mission Statement**

*In the proud tradition of SUNY, the State University of New York at New Paltz is committed to providing high quality, affordable education to students from all social and economic backgrounds. We are a faculty and campus community dedicated to the construction of a vibrant intellectual/creative public forum which reflects and celebrates the diversity of our society and encourages and supports active participation in scholarly and artistic activity. SUNY New Paltz is an active contributor to the schools, community institutions and economic/cultural life of our region. We are selective in admitting students who show promise of thriving in a learning environment which is challenging, student-centered, and personalized. Our goal is for students to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to contribute as productive members of their communities and professions and active citizens in a democratic nation and a global society.*

## **SUNY NEW PALTZ TODAY**

### **Academics**

Over the past decade, New Paltz has strengthened its academic profile, gained greater recognition, and built a national reputation for high-quality, intellectually engaging undergraduate education in a personalized and student-centered environment. The College competes successfully for strong students with excellent public and private colleges and universities across the Northeast. Retention rates (87% first year to second year) and graduation rates (73% for 6-year graduation rate) have steadily increased over the past decade, and three new initiatives are being piloted this year to further increase retention and completion.

New Paltz has more SUNY community colleges within a 45-mile radius than any other SUNY baccalaureate campus, and has a long tradition of serving transfer students. Each fall, while the College typically admits about 1,100 first-year students, it also welcomes 750 transfer students. Another 300-350 transfer students matriculate each spring. About half of each year's graduating seniors came to New Paltz as transfers. Retention and graduation rates of transfer students are among the very highest in the SUNY system.

The College also has a robust and award-winning study abroad program that offers students the opportunity to study in 120 countries. New Paltz student participation in study abroad has increased from 14 percent in 2013 to 23 percent in 2016. In 2015, the College received the Heiskell Award from the Institute for International Education, recognizing its success in creating study abroad opportunities for economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented students. To support this effort, more than 90 New Paltz students have received a total of over \$300,000 in Gilman Scholarships, an award that supports international study for students with limited financial needs. New Paltz has the most Gilman Scholars of any public institution in New York State.

New Paltz has a diverse faculty of distinguished scholars and artists who collaborate across the disciplines and professional areas to inspire students to a love of learning, a meaningful engagement with the life of the mind, and an involvement in public service. Approximately 350 full-time faculty and 300 part-time faculty support a student-to-faculty ratio of 15 to one across six colleges: the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Science & Engineering, the School of Fine & Performing Arts, the School of Education, and The Graduate School. New Paltz has had a longstanding commitment to active, hands-on, collaborative, and inquiry-based teaching and learning, and students' individual needs

are met through course offerings enriched by opportunities for independent study, research, self-designed majors, and high-impact teaching pedagogies.

Course offerings have continued to expand and all students build upon a liberal arts core curriculum with the option to choose from nearly 100 majors in the liberal arts, the arts, the sciences, or a pre-professional offering. SUNY New Paltz is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the National Association of Schools of Music, the National Association of Schools of Theatre, and is approved as a degree-granting institution by the Trustees of the State University of New York and the Regents of New York State. New Paltz recently underwent its mid-way progress visit from Middle States and received a positive preliminary report as it prepares for its next review in 2021.

## **Students**

New Paltz students are academically talented, as well as passionate, vocal, and activist about the wide-ranging issues that are important to them. Since 2009, more than 40 percent of incoming first-year students have come from the highest selectivity group used by SUNY to assess student academic preparation. Nearly 75 percent of students were in the top quarter of their high school graduating class and the average high school grade point average for all degree-seeking, first-year students is 3.6. New Paltz students have a strong sense of school pride and truly value their education; they are hardworking and involved, and want to give back to the community and fight for the causes they believe in.

New Paltz has a strong commitment to diversity, inclusion, and the success of all members of its diverse student population. Current students come from 45 foreign countries and approximately 31 percent of undergraduate students and 18 percent of graduate students are from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups—figures that grow each year. The College’s student population is 62 percent female and 38 percent male. Nearly 80 percent of students apply for need-based aid and 28 percent of students are first-generation college students. The College has been recognized for high retention and graduation of students from historically underrepresented groups, which are well above state and national averages for both public and private institutions.

## **Budget and Finances**

New Paltz’s endowment is approximately \$19 million and the annual operating budget is approximately \$100 million for 2016. Like all public colleges and universities, New Paltz has had to grapple with declining state funding. Since tuition revenue accounts for 75 percent of the College’s total operating budget, enrollment management is of key importance. Fortunately, undergraduate enrollment consistently meets its targets and tuition revenue in that area is sound. Graduate enrollments are declining, however, forcing the institution to operate in a resource-constrained environment.

Despite tight budgets, New Paltz places a high value on access and continues to be one of the most affordable institutions in the Northeast. Approximately 58 percent of full-time undergraduates receive some kind of need-based financial aid and the average need-based scholarship or grant award is \$4,943. New Paltz is working to support additional scholarship funds and is entering its third year of a major gift initiative that aims to double its previous annual averages of private fund-raising to \$10 million over three years. The College is on pace to achieve that goal, and is working to expand its engagement with alumni, friends, and donors.

## **Leadership and Governance**

Donald P. Christian was appointed as the eighth President at the State University of New York at New Paltz in June 2011 after serving as Interim President during 2010-11. Previously, Christian served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the College for the 2009-2010 academic year. Prior to his arrival at New Paltz, Christian was Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and served as Associate Dean for the Biological Sciences at the University of Montana. Christian is a member of the boards of directors of Central Hudson Gas and Electric, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, and the Mohonk Preserve.

The President is advised by: the College Council (a group of 10 members, nine appointed by the Governor and one by students); a 24-member group of senior campus leaders; an approximately 120-member Administrative Council; and his Cabinet which includes: the Chief of Staff/Vice President for Communication, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Vice Presidents for Administration and Finance, Development and Alumni Relations, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs.

## **THE FUTURE OF NEW PALTZ**

Among New Paltz's most prominent characteristics today are its strong and growing academic quality, the value it places on close intellectual engagement between students and faculty or staff, the comprehensiveness of its academic programs, its diverse student population, and its deep connections to the culture and economy of the mid-Hudson region. In 2013-14, the College began implementing a strategic plan developed under President Christian's leadership. The primary goals of the plan are to take specific actions that improve the quality of the student experience and the College's educational contributions, strengthen the College's role and visibility in the region, enhance alumni relations, improve philanthropic success, and enhance institutional effectiveness. New Paltz has also prioritized sustainability and has recently completed an array of projects to expand these efforts. The College is well underway to achieving and surpassing its goals.

New Paltz's rising reputation has been acknowledged in college rankings publications. US News and World Report ranked New Paltz 5<sup>th</sup> among the "Best Public Regional Masters Universities" in the Northeast, up from 7<sup>th</sup> in 2010. New Paltz also ranked 20<sup>th</sup> among "Public and Private Regional Masters Universities" in the Northeast. Kiplinger and The Princeton Review have named New Paltz a "Best Value" in higher education. The College has also been ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Affordable Colleges Online list of "Top 50 Affordable Colleges with a High ROI," a list of the nation's most affordable colleges with the biggest return on investment (ROI), and Business Journal also ranked New Paltz among the top 75 public universities in the nation.

## **THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

The mission of the College's student affairs division is to "promote the overall growth of the individual." To this end, the division has five learning outcomes: 1) intrapersonal and interpersonal development, 2) social responsibility, 3) life competencies, 4) cognitive skills, and 5) diversity and inclusiveness. The student affairs office staff act as ombudspersons for community problems and conflicts, and as catalysts for educational programs to enhance the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of students.

The division's departments work collaboratively to enhance the formal curricula through the creation of a learning environment where knowledge, tolerance, and social concern are basic values. The division also sponsors programs and services which facilitate student development, responsible citizenship, and positive contributions to the global community. The division includes:

**Student Health Services:** The Health Center provides non-emergency primary medical care with an emphasis on preventative health care.

**Psychological Counseling Center (PCC):** The PCC provides preventative and clinical services to the campus community with the goal to enhance students' ability to succeed academically and participate fully in the college experience. Reflecting nationwide trends, the utilization of psychological counseling services has increased dramatically in recent years and the demands for services are high relative to the number of staff in this department.

**University Police Department:** New Paltz is a safe and low-crime community. The University Police Department works closely with the local New Paltz town police to ensure a safe and secure environment.

**Center of Student Development:** The Center is dedicated to fostering student success and a sense of belonging for all students and families. It aims to provide a positive transitional experience; maximize the retention and success of students; offer opportunities for leadership and social development; serve as a primary link to campus for family members; and foster a campus environment that promotes healthy and responsible decision making. The Center oversees first-year orientation, parent and family weekend, and other programming targeted towards first-year students.

**Judicial Affairs:** When college policy is violated, the Dean of Students, the Vice President of Student Affairs, and various judicial bodies oversee a judicial process that is designed to meet essential standards of reasonableness and fairness.

**Student Activities and Union Services:** This department approves student events, supports student clubs, oversees fraternity and sorority life, manages a leadership development program, and runs the Student Union. The College offers 800 leadership opportunities for students through more than 200 recognized clubs and organizations.

**Career Resource Center (CRC):** The CRC assists students with exploring, formulating, and implementing career plans; securing pre-graduation experiences (internships, summer jobs and volunteer positions); and determining and identifying post-graduation options. The CRC promotes and supports effective professional relationships between the college community and employers.

**Residential Life:** Nearly half of New Paltz's students live in the 14 residence halls on campus. Students live in a combination of corridor and suite-style housing, as well as special interest group housing. There are multiple living-learning communities, including groups focused on: sustainability, LGBTQA+, Asian studies, and romance languages, as well as programs for first-year students centered around leadership, health and wellness, service learning, and career exploration.

**Campus Media Program:** This program is overseen by a staff advisor and encompasses *The Oracle* (the student newspaper), the radio station, and the television station.

**Educational Opportunity Program (EOP):** EOP provides academic and financial support to New York State residents with a high school diploma or its equivalent, and who face academic and financial challenges to college success but have the academic potential to earn a college degree. It provides diagnostic testing; tutoring services, personal, academic, and career counseling; and pre-first-year summer programs. The New Paltz EOP is the second largest

program of its kind in the SUNY system, serving approximately 600 students. New Paltz EOP students have first-year retention rates higher than the overall student body and graduate at rates above national averages for all students, at public or private institutions.

**Athletics:** The New Paltz Hawks are a Division III athletic program with six men's and nine women's varsity sports. The program has won 30 conference championships and one national championship. The Athletic and Wellness Center also supports an array of club and intramural sports, several fitness centers, group exercise classes, an indoor track, racquetball courts, an indoor pool and outdoor pursuits such as skiing and hiking.

**Student Association:** The Student Association is the official student government that represents and advocates for students, and oversees all of the recognized student organizations. It is completely student run by 30 New Paltz students and is funded by the Student Activity Fee charged to all students.

**Disability Resource Center:** The Disability Resource Center provides services to students with permanent or temporary disabilities to ensure access to programs and activities in the pursuit of attaining their educational objectives. The philosophy of this office is to encourage independence, to assist students in realizing their academic potential, and to ensure recognition of their abilities – not disabilities – as they become active participants in a diverse and global society.

## THE ROLE

The VPSA will provide oversight and stewardship of fiscal and human resources within the student affairs division. In a budget constrained environment where nearly 60 percent of student affairs departments and activities are funded through designated fees, the VPSA must be creative with the \$11 million budget. S/he will manage an array of departments that provide student learning and development opportunities. The full organizational chart can be found here: <https://www.newpaltz.edu/media/president/ORG%20Chart%20-%20Dec.2.2016.pdf>

The new Vice President of Student Affairs will advise and collaborate with colleagues across the College on all matters that shape the New Paltz student experience and campus culture. The VPSA will be a thought partner and leadership voice within the President's senior staff; an advocate, role model, and mentor for students; and the senior leader of a large and core division within the College, delivering a complex array of services and programs.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The new Vice President for Student Affairs will join the institution at a critical and exciting juncture in its history: reputation and reach is on the rise, the student academic profile is becoming more competitive, the staff and faculty are excellent, the College leadership is engaged, community relationships are strong, and there is a heightened sense of school pride on campus. To support this momentum, the VPSA will need to address the following opportunities and challenges during the first years of his or her tenure:

### *Provide visionary leadership for the Division of Student Affairs.*

As the chief student affairs officer, the VPSA must be a strategic and visionary leader with a thorough understanding of major trends, challenges, and best practices in student affairs. S/he will work collaboratively to implement the priorities of the College's strategic plan by leading a proactive, nimble, and responsive student affairs division that is united around the College's needs and aspirations. The VPSA must be innovative in finding ways to support the academic life of the institution while nurturing

student personal growth and development. S/he will provide leadership in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies and regulations pertaining to student life, and will spearhead ongoing assessment, evaluation, and improvement of student affairs programs and services.

***Work across departments and divisions to promote a fully integrated student experience.***

The VPSA will work to support the academic, social, emotional, and physical elements of student success and development. Few offices on campus have as broad and consequential a set of constituent groups as the division of student affairs, so s/he must seek partnerships across the campus. In a naturally siloed-environment, the VPSA will work deliberately to collaborate with the Provost, other administrators, and faculty, as well as departments across the university including: facilities, development, enrollment, communications, and finance. S/he will promote the vision of a fully integrated student experience that creatively merges student and academic life. The incoming VPSA will help students strike the right balance between the rigor of the classroom and the challenges outside, providing extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities for them to be responsible young adults and active citizens within and beyond the College community. This includes building on the existing living-learning community structure and working with community leaders to develop and manage co-curricular learning initiatives and outcomes.

***Support an increasingly diverse student body and build an inclusive environment.***

The next VPSA will work to foster a culture in which all students recognize and benefit from the educational and cultural value of a campus that is growing in diversity with regard to race, gender, academic preparation, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical ability, and gender identity. With a strong foundation, the VPSA, in collaboration with others including the Chief Diversity Officer/Associate Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity, and Inclusion, will envision new programming that encourages student social engagement focused on bringing people together across lines of difference. The VPSA will lead efforts to maintain a safe and secure campus environment and promote a culture where students learn to respect differences, take responsibility for their actions, and exercise leadership in inclusivity. This includes not only responding to, but anticipating the changing social and academic needs of each generation of incoming students.

***Manage and develop an exceptionally strong student affairs team.***

In a division with highly experienced staff and a strong sense of comradery, the VPSA must work with each of the 12 departments to understand their individual cultures and needs, and to ensure that all departments are supported. S/he will unite the entire division around a sense of shared mission, providing clarity of purpose in advancing the strategic goals of the College. It is paramount that the VPSA be a visible, accessible, and supportive leader who builds relationships with staff at every layer of the organization. In an environment where some staff are recent alumni and a large proportion of others have been at the institution for decades, s/he must provide ongoing professional development opportunities and place a high value on internal growth. Perhaps most importantly, the VPSA will work as an advocate for staff and promote understanding of the work of student affairs across all campus divisions.

***Engage personally with the student population.***

The incoming VPSA must be a highly visible, involved, and transparent student-centered leader. A successful VPSA will encourage and engage students on a personal level to earn their trust and respect, and provide a model of engagement with students for other administrators and faculty. Most importantly, the VPSA will follow the New Paltz tradition to encourage students to “come as you are” and will embrace the activist and vocal student body. The VPSA will also bolster parent involvement, which is

currently minimal, and provide compassionate and timely assistance to students and their families in crises.

***Serve as an ambassador and advocate for students beyond the College.***

The VPSA will play an important external role, continuing to foster close relationships with neighbors, community leaders, the local police, village and town municipal leaders, alumni, and parents. The College currently enjoys a strong relationship with the community, but in an environment where over half of students live off campus in the surrounding neighborhoods, it is important that the VPSA forge useful connections that bridge students to the outside world. This includes working with local organizations to create service-learning, internship, and other development opportunities.

**QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

The Search Committee understands that no single candidate will have all the ideal qualifications, but it seeks candidates who bring many of the following experiences, abilities, and qualities:

- A doctorate or master's degree (minimum) with a record of substantial and increasingly responsible experience in student life, expertise in student development theory, considerable policy development and implementation experience and expertise, and an understanding of the culture and values of residential colleges.
- Proven skills as a senior manager; a demonstrated ability to mentor and support staff and provide successful oversight of people, budget, and space; a track record for inspiring a diverse staff with energy and a dedication to their professional development, as well as a commitment to clarity and accountability.
- A deep understanding of the educational value of a diverse community; a demonstrated track record of advancing diversity and enhancing inclusiveness; an ability to bring groups and individuals to common ground across lines of difference, including race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.
- An enthusiasm for collaborating with other departments and with the faculty to integrate extra-curricular and co-curricular life with the intellectual life of the campus.
- Demonstrated capacity to communicate broadly across the College and create cross-campus partnerships, cultivate and sustain collegial relationships, and build unity around difficult issues as an active listener, facilitator, convener, and mediator.
- The liveliness of intellect and the commitment to engage collaboratively with faculty and academic leadership, and respond effectively to their needs and concerns.
- Proven ability to manage through crises with equanimity, discretion, and a sense of responsibility and respect for students, families, and the institution; a commitment to providing responsive service to students and their families.
- A student-centered approach to leading and a deep commitment to full and visible participation in the formal and informal life of the campus community.
- Outstanding communication skills (both written and oral) demonstrated by the ability to interact comfortably with a wide range of diverse people.
- Wisdom and superb judgment; the capacity to make and stand by difficult decisions while remaining mindful of the need for fairness and consistency, and the potential impact of each decision on individuals and the broader community.
- A management style characterized by the highest personal integrity and ethics, warmth, accessibility, and openness to students.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and resumes with cover letters, should be sent electronically and in confidence to:

Kate Barry, Principal  
Randi Alberry, Associate  
Isaacson, Miller  
[www.imsearch.com/6075](http://www.imsearch.com/6075)

*All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, gender, gender identity or protected veteran status. Candidates who bring diverse cultural experience and who are especially qualified to mentor and advise all members of our diverse student population are especially encouraged to apply. The State University of New York at New Paltz is an AA/EOE/ADA employer.*