



## The Search for a President

Fort Lewis College, Colorado's Public Liberal Arts College is launching a national search for a new President. The Chief Executive Officer reports directly to the Fort Lewis College Board of Trustees.

Fort Lewis College is truly a special place as well as a unique institution of higher learning, achieving these distinctions through the confluence of three significant qualities: mission, history and setting.

### MISSION

Fort Lewis College is Colorado's only and one of the nation's relatively few public liberal arts colleges. Attracting approximately 3800 undergraduates to its primarily residential setting, the College has been built on a strong base of liberal arts education, and appropriate faculty and staff are in providing enhanced educational opportunities with 99 major, minor, and certificate programs.

Nationally administered student surveys confirm that faculty are available, helpful, and engaged and that there is a significantly higher level of faculty-student interaction at Fort Lewis than at other institutions. While their focus is on teaching excellence and working closely with their students, the faculty has earned a national reputation for curricular development and for engaging students in scholarly research and service learning programs.

With an extraordinarily rich and diverse environment right outside the classroom, the College offers substantial hands-on learning experiences, including programs such as Environmental Studies, Environmental Biology, Environmental Geology, Archaeology, and Adventure Education. Service-based learning is an integral part of undergraduate education. The Community-Based Learning and Research program facilitates the integration of service experiences into academic coursework.

The College's defining qualities include:

1. The Center of Southwest Studies established over forty years ago and the first such center in the nation. It exists to provide individuals and communities with opportunities to explore, study and experience the Southwest's dynamic heritage. Complemented by a museum and research facility, the Center is a vital and prominent resource for students and the entire Four Corners region.
2. One of the College's academic distinctions is the annual Common Reading Experience where students and faculty read and focus on the important issues highlighted. Among the books recently chosen for discussion are *Folding Paper Cranes: An Atomic Memoir*, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace*, and *The Beast in the Garden*.
3. In 1974, the School of Business became the first business school in a public liberal arts institution to achieve professional accreditation from AACSB International.
4. The College's Honor Program is a rigorous interdisciplinary program the completion of which leads to a minor in the Rhetoric of Inquiry. Requirements include five interdisciplinary seminars and four courses related to the research and writing of interdisciplinary thesis.
5. Recently the College raised its admission standards from "moderately selective" to "selective" resulting in the 2009 freshman class setting the standard as the best prepared freshman class in the history of Fort Lewis College.

## HISTORY

Named for an early 1900's U.S. Army Post, Fort Lewis College began its educational life as an Indian boarding school. After the federal government ended its boarding school programs, the property was transferred to the state of Colorado and was converted into a rural high school and eventually a two-year college. In 1962 the school became a baccalaureate institution. In 1956 Fort Lewis College was physically relocated to its current site in Durango.

The College is committed to offering "accessible, high quality baccalaureate liberal arts education to a diverse student population, preparing citizens for the common good in an increasingly complex world."

Central to this commitment is holding true to its historic mission which provides that the State of Colorado will offer Native American students free tuition while attending Fort Lewis College. Today more than 750 Native American students representing 128 tribes are enrolled on campus. The College is proud of the fact it ranks first among all bachelor degree granting institutions in the number of Native American earning degrees.

## SETTING

Stunningly sited on a mesa beneath the 13,000 feet peaks of the San Juan Mountains, the Fort Lewis campus is heralded as one of the most attractive in the West.

Colorado's nationwide appeal, built around the myriad outdoor activities and its reputation as having one of the nation's healthiest and the most physically active populations, is manifest in this, the southwest corner of the state. Faculty, staff and students enjoy world-class outdoor activities including biking, fishing, hiking and white-water rafting, as well as winter sports including skiing, skating, snowboarding, and snowshoeing.

The campus community has made a concerted effort to use this environment to enhance its educational programming, and to emphasize a culture of sustainability, the benefits of which are apparent to all who here work and study.

Durango, a community of 15,000 residents with a similar number residing in La Plata county outside city limits, is known for its relaxed life style as well as the cosmopolitan interests of its residents, many of whom moved here to enjoy the lifestyle and cultural settings of this area. Durango has been recognized by Outside magazine on its list of "Best Outside Towns" and was named as one of the "Best Adventure Towns to Live and Play In" by the National Geographic Adventure magazine.

Yet this historic town, with many buildings on the National Historic Register and the operating Durango & Silverton Narrow Gage Railroad, is home to numerous art, music, theatre, and cultural attractions, including the San Juan Symphony Orchestra and the Center for Southwest Studies. Its engaged residents support a vibrant civic agenda, a lively commercial sector and several upscale restaurants.

Town and gown relationships remain very strong as the campus and the community recognize and embrace their symbiotic relationship.

## THE AGENDA

### Building the Leadership Team

The new president will have an opportunity to build a leadership team for the campus. After 30 years of distinguished service, the Provost is retiring, and three of the College's four academic deans are in their second year of service. In addition the President's Executive Assistant, who likewise has served with distinction for three decades, has announced her retirement plans.

Structuring the presidency so that the President and the Board will focus on strategic directions for the College while at the same time institutionalizing internal collaboration under the direction of the provost, provides both unusual opportunity and immediate challenge.

### Addressing the State's Fiscal Challenges

Colorado, along with 45 other states has experienced a decline in state revenues during the recent economic downturn. Higher education's revenue shortfall is compounded by structural issues embedded in Colorado's constitution and statutes. There is a growing movement through out the state to address these issues, with members of the Fort Lewis Board of Trustees active participants in that movement.

The new president will need to be engaged in these statewide efforts, working with presidential colleagues at other institutions, the legislature, and leading citizens and business groups across the state to promote higher education's value and achieving public policy reform.

While Fort Lewis' setting has been described by many as the most beautiful in all Colorado, it is distant from the economic and political centers of the state. The new president will need to commit time and leadership to public and governmental relations.

### Advancing Philanthropic Giving

The College, while experiencing much success in securing public funds and private gifts to fund an ambitious and noteworthy campus building program, needs considerable philanthropic support for student scholarships and endowed professorships. Strengthening the infrastructure for an on-going and successful fund raising program, affirming the working partnerships with the Fort Lewis College Foundation and the College's Trustees, and actively engaging with the alumni and friends will be important expectations.

There is a strong need for funds to enhance the academic enterprise.

### Nurturing Fort Lewis's Distinctiveness

As Colorado's only public liberal arts college, Fort Lewis is distinctive in its focus on teaching excellence built upon the foundation of the arts and sciences with opportunities for undergraduate research and civic engagement. Fort Lewis is the proverbial "diamond in the rough".

Giving visibility to the educational enterprise is a challenge inasmuch as the state's population centers are in the eastern half of the state. While the campus has embraced new marketing initiatives, it is important that the faculty and staff be engaged by the leadership on campus to revitalize and promote the value of liberal education in these difficult economic times when vocational coursework garners greater currency.

The appreciable decline in student enrollment – a perceived result of below-the-norm retention rates and the attraction of majors with direct career applications, will challenge the new President not only to evaluate the student recruitment and retention programs recently implemented, but also to provide campus-wide leadership for student admissions and retention programs.

## Centennial Celebration

Fifteen months hence the College will celebrate its Centennial. The new President will have a pivotal role in shaping that celebration – tying these festivities to new programmatic and philanthropic initiatives. The Centennial provides a unique opportunity to communicate to the citizens of Colorado and the four corners region the historic significance of Fort Lewis' founding and its lasting commitment to inclusion for all, and in particular its historic and laudable service to Native Americans.

The short time period between appointment and celebration will once again provide challenge and immense opportunity.

## DESIRED ATTRIBUTES OF FORT LEWIS COLLEGE'S NEXT PRESIDENT

The College's next president should possess a combination of personal qualities and professional experiences that match the agenda of opportunities outlined in the previous section. The College seeks a dynamic, results-oriented leader who will work with the Board of Trustees to increase the College's visibility and enhance its vitality. In addition to strong leaders with administrative experience in the academy, successful executives with experience in managing and energizing organizations in not-for-profit, private and public sector settings are encouraged to apply.

Other attributes will be important. The successful Fort Lewis College president will be:

- A forceful, articulate advocate who understands the challenges of publicly-funded higher education, and with a working knowledge of government and the public sector, will tackle the challenge of building public support and securing resources to support the College's mission.
- A strategic thinker with an abiding commitment to the liberal arts tradition, who can conceptualize, plan and implement institutional priorities with discipline and focus.
- A visible leader and communicator with strong interpersonal skills who can collaborate and build teams; who actively enjoys student perspectives and campus activities as well as participating in the local community; and understands how to favorably influence the statewide and national reputation of the College.
- An effective fundraiser who understands how to build and lead an effective culture of giving that builds long-term financial support for the College's distinctive mission.
- A person of intercultural competence and global perspective, committed to achieving diversity in its many forms, comfortable making it a priority, and who respects and honors the College's historic commitments.
- An individual comfortable in the relaxed lifestyle of the West and who enjoys working with state and local leaders.
- A person knowledgeable about the major issues facing higher education, including enrollment management, student retention, and the identification and implementation of academic best practices.
- An experienced manager with a solid understanding of organizational and financial issues.

### The Application Process:

The presidential search committee will begin reviewing materials in December. It is recommended that applications and nominations be submitted by December 10. The new President will assume office in the summer 2010.

This search is assisted by **Dr. Constantine W. Curris** of **Academic Search, Inc.** in Washington, DC. Interested candidates and nominators may contact him at [cwc@academic-search.com](mailto:cwc@academic-search.com).

Application materials should include a letter of candidacy, an curriculum vitae, and the names phone numbers and email addresses or four relevant references, none of whom will be contacted without the permission of the candidate. Applications will be considered in confidence and should be submitted *electronically only* to:

[FLCPresident@academic-search.com](mailto:FLCPresident@academic-search.com)