SEARCH PROSPECTUS:

President and Chief Executive Officer

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
NWCCU
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The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) seeks a collaborative, forward-thinking, visionary, and innovative President and Chief Executive Officer who will be a respected voice in the regional, national, and international conversation for independent accreditation in the rapidly changing higher education landscape.

Full consideration will be given to candidates whose materials are received by February 9, 2018.

THE COMMISSION

A distinguishing hallmark and advantage of American higher education is the existence of regional institutional accreditation bodies that operate independently of and in collaboration with state and federal agencies. Regional accreditation helps ensure the variety and richness of higher education institutions, including private and public, along with proprietary and non-profit frameworks.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is one of seven accreditors of postsecondary degree-granting institutions that serve the national interest through advocacy and voluntary self-regulation. An independent, not-for-profit membership organization, the NWCCU is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the regional authority on educational quality and institutional effectiveness of higher education institutions in the Northwest. Committed to serving the public and member institutions, the NWCCU oversees regional accreditation for 162 institutions. Its decision-making body is a board of commissioners.

The membership and organization of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities may be found in its bylaws at http://www.nwccu.org/about-nwccu/bylaws/.
MISSION OF THE COMMISSION

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is a regional accrediting agency serving a diverse membership of public and private higher education institutions throughout the seven-state region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, as well as a limited number of institutions in Canada. Through its work of peer review, based upon standards agreed to by the membership, the Commission encourages continuous institutional improvement and assures the membership and its constituencies, including the public, that accredited institutions are fulfilling their missions in service to their students and the public good.

HISTORY

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities replaced the Commission on Colleges and Universities that was originally part of the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities, a voluntary, nongovernmental organization for the improvement of educational institutions founded in 1917. The NWCCU and its predecessors have been listed since 1952 by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for institutions offering programs of at least one academic year in length at the postsecondary level. The Commission’s recognition was most recently reaffirmed by the Department in 2016.

NWCCU GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

With headquarters in Seattle, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities covers the largest geographical area of all regional accreditors, encompassing the vibrant and diverse seven states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, as well as including some institutions in British Columbia, Canada. Its 162 member institutions include public, private, tribal, and international colleges and universities, serving about 1.3 million students. A full list of institutions accredited by the NWCCU may be found at http://www.nwccu.org/member-institutions/directory/.
**NWCCU COMMISSIONERS**

Individual commissioners reflect diversity in institutional characteristics such as mission, size, geography, funding, and sponsorship, as well as ethnicity, gender, and experience. All are deeply committed to higher education and volunteer countless hours to the duties of the Commission. The NWCCU currently consists of 15 commissioners, a chair, and the president who is ex-officio. Commissioners are elected to staggered three-year terms. A list of current commissioners may be found at [http://www.nwccu.org/about-nwccu/commissioners/](http://www.nwccu.org/about-nwccu/commissioners/).

**NWCCU STAFF**

The president manages a professional and administrative staff of nine, three of which are vice presidents who serve as institutional liaisons and perform other commission work. The six administrative staff members support the accreditation processes and institutional reviews, serve as staff to the Commission, and offer programs and support to help institutions enhance their effectiveness.
Regional accreditation of postsecondary institutions is a voluntary, non-governmental, and self-regulatory process of quality assurance and institutional improvement. Regional accreditation recognizes higher education institutions for performance, integrity, and quality to merit the confidence of the educational community and the public. Accreditation or pre-accreditation by a postsecondary regional accrediting agency qualifies institutions and enrolled students for access to federal funds to support teaching, research, and student financial aid. This distinction is extended through recognized accrediting bodies that establish accreditation standards and eligibility requirements, evaluate institutions against those criteria, and approve institutions that meet the criteria.

Institutions accredited or pre-accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities are required to examine their own missions, goals, operations, and achievements. NWCCU provides expert analysis by peer evaluators with commendations for accomplishments and recommendations for improvement. Because the accreditation status is reviewed periodically, institutions are encouraged toward continued self-study and improvement.

While accreditation criteria and procedures of regional accrediting agencies differ, the principles underlying eligibility and levels of expectation are similar in their intent to:

- Foster excellence through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational quality and institutional effectiveness;
- Encourage institutional improvement through continuous self-study and evaluation;
- Ensure the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that an institution has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives; has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected; appears in fact to be substantially accomplishing them; and is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and
- Provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions.
The twenty-first century has brought fundamental and profound shifts in the nature, values, and control of higher education—and its very place in society. In light of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission seeks a thoughtful, collaborative, and creative president and chief executive who understands that the delivery, acquisition, and accountability of postsecondary learning are rapidly changing.

Embracing the pioneering and innovative spirit of the Northwest, the president will be a leader who works collaboratively with the Commission, its membership, and regional and national accrediting bodies and governmental agencies to assure the quality and vitality of the 162 institutions accredited by the Commission.

The president will be passionately dedicated to the value derived from a diverse network of postsecondary institutions voluntarily engaged in institutional effectiveness and student learning assessments to support high-quality academic programs and foster student success. The president will be a strong and articulate spokesperson for the values and viewpoints of the Commission to stakeholders, the public, and government agencies regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Committed to expanding the quality and diversity of postsecondary education, the president will be a strong believer in the power of education to change lives, to elevate families, and to build better futures. The new president will be dedicated to high standards of academic quality and success rates among the diverse populations of students served by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.
The president is the chief executive officer of the organization, reporting to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Board of Commissioners and providing strategic leadership to the Commission in matters of research and policy development in accreditation and administrative effectiveness internally. The president contributes regionally, nationally, and internationally to ongoing discussions on quality assurance in postsecondary education.

The president will possess an earned terminal degree and extensive experience in administration and accreditation and will have:

- Passion for the support of student learning and student retention and completion;
- A broad and deep understanding of the higher education environment (non-profit, proprietary, and online education, for example), as well as the contemporary issues facing higher education providers;
- Experience with accreditation and a grounded sense of student, faculty, and institutional interests in its enactment;
- Extensive administrative experience, including some at a senior level, preferably at a regionally accredited academic institution;
- Appreciation of the diversity of institutions within the NWCCU region and a demonstrated commitment to fostering equity and inclusion in higher education;
- Familiarity with current statutes and regulations related to accreditation and a willingness to stay current and contribute to ongoing changes in the legislative and regulatory landscapes;
- A proven record of success in working with engaged and active boards;
- The ability and willingness to lead and oversee changes needed in the Commission’s standards and procedures that align with the needs and demands of current and future students;
- Evidence of incorporating strategic approaches to problem-solving;
- The ability to balance the leadership and management of internal commission operations and engagement in national issues and activities;
- The disposition and political acumen to provide leadership for national and regional conversations about accreditation’s role in quality assurance;
- The integrity, diplomacy, and presence to represent the Commission before multiple audiences and constituencies;
- Demonstrated leadership skills that will advance a commission-led association with institutional membership and volunteers;
- Strong managerial and supervisory skills;
- Demonstrated ability to attract, retain, and inspire talented staff and volunteers in the ongoing work of institutional review and to build and manage successful teams;
- Compassion, a sense of humor, and respect for co-workers at all levels of the organization;
- Excellent written, analytic, and communication skills; and
- The willingness and ability to engage in significant travel throughout the U.S. and occasional international travel.
Nominations, applications, and inquiries may be made in confidence. Full consideration will be given to all applications received by February 9, 2018. Application materials that include a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and the full contact information for five references (who will not be contacted without permission) must be electronically submitted to NWCCUPresident@academic-search.com.

Assisting the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in this search are Ann Die Hasselmo (Ann.Hasselmo@academic-search.com) and Jay Lemons (jay@academic-search.com), Academic Search, Inc., Washington, D.C. Further information about NWCCU is available at http://www.nwccu.org.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is committed to equal employment opportunity and makes employment decisions on the basis of merit. It will not discriminate based on race, color, creed, gender, religion, marital status, registered domestic partner, age, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, and medical condition (including pregnancy or childbirth), genetic characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.
ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search, Inc. is assisting the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services exclusively to institutions of higher education. Academic Search was founded on the principle of strengthening higher education leadership through professional search services. We are the only search firm in the nation with a formal relationship to a premier leadership development program. As the subsidiary of the American Academic Leadership Institute (AALI), Academic Search provides substantial financial support to a number of leadership identification, development, and support programs across all sectors of public and private higher education. For more information, visit http://www.academic-search.com/.

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