



President and CEO

Leadership Profile

April 2026



Opportunity Summary

The West Virginia University Foundation seeks an accomplished, strategic, and mission-driven leader to serve as its next President and Chief Executive Officer, succeeding Cynthia Roth who is retiring in late 2026 and who has served in this position with great distinction since 2014. This role offers an incredible opportunity to guide a nationally respected foundation that plays a critical role in advancing West Virginia University, WVU Medicine and the broader Mountaineer community. Reporting directly to the Foundation's Board of Directors, the President and Chief Executive Officer provides vision, direction, and oversight for all Foundation functions.

The WVU Foundation was established in 1954 and is an independent 501(C)3 entity. The WVU Foundation is home to a talented and dedicated team of professionals committed to maximizing charitable support for West Virginia University, its faculty and students, as well as WVU Medicine and its patients. As a land-grant institution, WVU is deeply committed to the state's education, healthcare, prosperity, and purpose. In recent years, the Foundation has achieved results unprecedented in its history, positioning the organization for its next phase of growth and continued impact across the academic and medicine enterprises. WVU's future is rooted in purpose, focusing on market-driven programs that deliver in-demand skills, advance health and wellness, and generate solutions to real-world challenges. The Foundation's next strategic chapter will align closely with these priorities.

The President and Chief Executive Officer will lead a complex organization of approximately 150 professionals with responsibility for strategic planning, fundraising, investment management, financial stewardship, organizational culture, board relations and community engagement. This leader will work closely with the University President, Provost, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the WVU Hospital System, and Deans, including the Chancellor and Executive Dean of Health Sciences, to ensure strong alignment between institutional priorities and philanthropic strategy. Building and sustaining trusted relationships across a decentralized, matrixed academic and health environment will be a central expectation of the role.

The President and Chief Executive Officer will bring a broad and balanced portfolio of executive leadership skills, including organizational management, relationship building, and change management. The CEO will work closely with the senior leadership of West Virginia University and the WVU Medicine to strengthen collaboration, deepen trust, and align philanthropic strategy with the University's mission and long-term vision. This is an exceptional opportunity to influence the future of West Virginia University and its affiliated organizations and the State of West Virginia by leading a Foundation that serves as a trusted partner, connector, and steward of philanthropic resources.

The ideal candidate will bring significant senior-level leadership experience in fundraising or related fields, with a background in mission-driven sectors such as higher education, healthcare, or nonprofit organizations. An advanced degree is preferred. They will have experience working with independent governing boards, along with strong financial and operational acumen and the ability to lead through complexity and growth. While deep expertise in fundraising is important, the Board ultimately seeks a chief executive with the breadth, judgment, and leadership presence to guide the organization as a whole. To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this profile.

Role of the President and CEO

The President and Chief Executive Officer is fully accountable for the direction and results of the Foundation, with responsibility for the strategic leadership, management, and financial and operational performance of the organization. Reporting directly to the Foundation's Board of Directors, the President and Chief Executive Officer provides vision, direction, and oversight for all Foundation functions.

This leader is responsible for establishing and executing strategic fundraising initiatives and overseeing personnel, systems, and support mechanisms that enable the procurement and stewardship of private support for West Virginia University, its students, and affiliated organizations. The President and CEO leads and supports a senior executive leadership team and oversees an organization of approximately 150 professionals dedicated to fundraising, investment and asset management, finance, compliance, technology, donor engagement, and organizational operations.

As of June 30, 2025, the total Foundation assets were \$3.29 billion. Included in total assets are endowed assets, non-endowed assets, and assets managed by the Foundation for WVU-affiliated agencies including WVU Hospitals, WVU Research Corp., and other University affiliates. Fundraising resulted in \$260.7 million for the fiscal year made by more than 22,000 donors in over 47,000 transactions.

The President and CEO works closely with West Virginia University leadership, including the University President, Provost, President and Chief Executive Officer of the WVU Hospital System, and Deans, including the Chancellor and Executive Dean of the WVU Health Sciences Center, to ensure strong alignment between institutional priorities and philanthropic strategy. The role also requires close partnership with the Board of Directors in governance, policy development, and strategic planning.

Key responsibilities include enterprise-wide strategic planning, financial and investment oversight, talent management and succession planning, major gift fundraising, board relations, and representing the Foundation in the community and beyond.

In addition, the President and CEO's duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Provide visionary and values-based leadership for the Foundation, modeling integrity, transparency, accountability, and service.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate organization-wide long-range strategic plans encompassing fundraising, investment management, financial operations, talent management, technology, and enterprise risk.
- Lead the planning and execution of comprehensive fundraising campaigns in partnership with the Board, University leadership, and senior advancement leaders.
- Actively participate in major gift fundraising and donor engagement, managing a select portfolio of principal and leadership-level prospects.
- Provide executive leadership over the Foundation's financial assets, investments, and overall fiscal health.
- Formulate policies and strategic recommendations for Board consideration and ensure effective implementation of Board-approved policies and directives.
- Serve as the primary liaison to the Board of Directors, maintaining open, timely, and transparent communication about major developments and organizational performance.

- Ensure a high-performing organizational structure supported by strong leadership, clear accountability, and top-tier talent.
- Foster a culture that promotes exceptional performance, collaboration, professional development, inclusion, and employee engagement.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with donors, alumni, University leadership, WVU Medicine, faculty, staff, volunteers, community leaders, and governing bodies.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The President and Chief Executive Officer of the West Virginia University Foundation will have the opportunity to lead a highly regarded, mission-driven organization that plays a pivotal role in advancing West Virginia University and its affiliated organizations and programs. Building on a strong platform of philanthropic success, an engaged Board, and a dedicated staff, the President and CEO will provide strategic, collaborative, and service-oriented leadership to deepen the culture of philanthropy, strengthen institutional partnerships, and ensure that the Foundation continues to deliver meaningful resources in support of WVU's mission. Beyond day-to-day responsibilities, the CEO is expected to place a heightened emphasis on the following priorities:

- **Champion WVU's Mission, Values, and Impact**

The President and CEO will serve as the Foundation's chief ambassador and storyteller, articulating the power of philanthropy to advance WVU's land-grant mission and elevate its impact locally, nationally, and globally. This includes engaging donors, alumni, community leaders, and partners with authenticity, warmth, passion, and credibility. Internally and externally, this leader will embody Mountaineer values, reinforce pride in WVU, and champion the Foundation's role as a trusted steward of philanthropic resources. Through leadership, vision, and service, the President and CEO will help ensure the Foundation continues to amplify WVU's promise and purpose for generations to come.

- **Closely Align the Work of the Foundation with the University, Health Sciences, and WVU Medicine**

A core expectation of this role is ensuring deep and durable alignment between the Foundation and the institutions it serves. The President and CEO will engage in regular, high-level partnerships with the University, President, Provost, Deans, including the Chancellor and Executive Dean of Health Sciences, the President and CEO of the WVU Hospital System (WVUHS) and the University's Board of Governors. Through these relationships, the President and CEO will help translate institutional priorities into compelling philanthropic opportunities, ensuring donor intent and institutional need are thoughtfully aligned. This leader will also continually educate these partners on the Foundation's fiduciary responsibilities, independent structure, and its role in delivering resources to fund WVU's varying initiatives. In November 2025, the University launched a third comprehensive five-year strategic plan that will establish its priorities and aspirations. The Foundation President and CEO should ensure the Foundation's strategic plan aligns with the University's.

- **Deepen and Sustain a Strong Culture of Philanthropy**

The President and CEO will champion philanthropy as a core expression of WVU's values and mission—one that is embedded across the University and Health Sciences rather than siloed within the Foundation alone. This leader will work to strengthen a culture in which philanthropy is understood as a shared responsibility and opportunity, supported by clear communication, strong partnerships, and a service-oriented mindset. The President and CEO will help ensure that faculty, clinicians, academic leaders, and administrators feel supported and equipped to engage meaningfully in philanthropy, and that donors clearly understand the impact of their generosity. This work will require fostering trust, aligning expectations, and reinforcing the Foundation's role as a collaborative partner and steward of philanthropic intent, while ensuring donor-centered fundraising as a central focus. While fundraising has achieved record levels in recent years, there is additional giving capacity that should be qualified and pursued. Given the growth and reach of WVU and WVU Medicine, this is an opportune time to broaden and diversify the donor base.

- **Strengthen Relationships Across the University System**

The Foundation's effectiveness depends on strong, trust-based relationships across a complex and decentralized environment. The President and CEO is expected to sustain and build on collaborative partnerships with administrative and health sciences executives, deans, faculty, clinicians, and athletics leadership, reinforcing the Foundation's role as a responsive, service-oriented partner while ensuring that stakeholders clearly understand the Foundation's processes, priorities, and constraints. By listening deeply, being highly visible and present, and engaging proactively to ensure a first-class customer service ethic, the President and CEO will foster a culture of partnership that supports shared goals, reduces silos, provides transparency, and strengthens institutional alignment across all constituents. It should be noted that this is a period of new faces at WVU, as many of its leaders (including the President and Provost) have been appointed only within the past year.

- **Serve as a Trusted Partner to the Board of Directors**

The President and CEO works closely with an engaged, diverse, committed, and strategic Board of Directors to advance the Foundation's mission and ensure strong governance. This includes supporting effective Board engagement, development, and succession planning, and cultivating a constructive, respectful Board culture. The successful leader will demonstrate sound judgment, political savvy, and the ability to manage governance dynamics thoughtfully, knowing when to seek input, when to provide counsel, and when to set appropriate boundaries. Clear communication, transparency around results and finances, and trust-based partnership will be central to this relationship.

- **Steward the Comprehensive Campaign and Advance a Shared Vision**

The President and CEO will serve as a visible steward, champion, and a top "face and voice" of the next comprehensive campaign. This \$2.5 billion initiative is designed to propel WVU forward and built around guiding pillars that reflect WVU's commitment to fueling opportunity, enhancing vitality, and addressing the needs of the state and beyond. As the campaign transitions toward its public launch in October 2026, the President and CEO will work closely with the Board of Directors, University leadership, and Foundation staff to sustain momentum, reinforce alignment, and support continued engagement among donors and partners. This leader will help articulate a compelling philanthropic narrative that connects institutional priorities with donor passions and reinforces WVU's role as a catalyst for education, research, healthcare, and community impact.

- **Manage and Lead a High-Performing Organization**

The President & CEO will provide stability, clarity, and inspiration to a talented Foundation staff and a developing senior leadership team (the top executives all having been appointed within the past year). This leader will focus on culture—reinforcing accountability, open communication, collaboration, and continuous improvement—while supporting professional growth and retention. Key areas that will benefit from "fresh eyes" include strengthening organizational structure, clarifying roles, optimizing use of data and technology, and ensuring that the Foundation is well-resourced to meet its strategic objectives. The President and CEO will lead with presence, accessibility, and consistency, creating a professional environment where people are empowered to do their best work and do so under a well-defined framework of accountability.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The President and Chief Executive Officer will be a strategic, values-driven leader with the ability to lead a substantial, complex enterprise and possessing the professional background necessary to evaluate, guide, and advance all facets of the Foundation's operations. The President and CEO is expected to lead with an innovative, strategic, and results-oriented approach that aligns with the Foundation's mission and long-term objectives. This leader will build, mentor, and inspire a high-performing executive and professional staff while fostering a culture of integrity, collaboration, accountability, continuous quality improvement, and excellence.

In addition, the successful candidate will ideally possess the following:

- **Education and Experience:** Advanced degree strongly preferred. Minimum of 10–15 years of progressive senior leadership experience in development/fundraising (or related areas), with an evident record of leading large, complex, matrixed organizations. Proven success in securing major gifts and leading large-scale fundraising or comprehensive campaigns. Demonstrated experience working effectively with boards and senior leadership. Strong business and financial acumen, including familiarity with endowment or asset management.
- **Integrity and Values-Based Leadership:** Exemplary integrity and character; authentic and genuine; grounded and mission-driven; strong values-based leader who balances confidence with humility and demonstrates a servant-leader mindset. Conveys a genuine and personal passion for the mission.
- **Strategic and Results-Oriented Thinking:** Strong enterprise-level strategic planning skills matched with accountability driven performance; goal- and outcomes-focused; data-driven; committed to continuous quality improvement; creative and forward-thinking.
- **Executive Leadership and Judgment:** Decisive leader with the ability to set clear priorities; strong critical-thinking skills, especially in complex or high-pressure situations.
- **Business Acumen and Political Savvy:** Sophisticated understanding of business, finance, and organizational dynamics; politically astute and effective across diverse stakeholder environments.
- **Communication and Presence:** Executive presence and polish; exceptional verbal and written communication skills; well-refined listening skills; personable and approachable; conveys a calm confidence and credibility to internal and external constituents.
- **Emotional Intelligence and Team Leadership:** Intuitive and perceptive leader with the ability to understand underlying dynamics; strong team and people-builder; customer-service oriented; resilient; able to navigate scrutiny and competing demands; comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity; and capacity to establish boundaries and to thoughtfully push-back against demands that exceed those.
- **Change Management:** Leads through complexity and change; develops workable implementation plans; builds commitment, overcomes resistance, and supports stakeholders through transition.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Thinks beyond conventional approaches; embraces new ideas and calculated risks in service of mission and impact.
- **Professionalism and Accountability:** Dependable, adaptable, and composed under pressure; demonstrates sound judgment, strong work ethic, high energy, stamina and follow-through.

About West Virginia University Foundation

Overview

The WVU Foundation, established in 1954, plays a key role in West Virginia University's progression, particularly in its educational and healthcare missions. Now in its 72nd year, the Foundation has experienced notable growth, particularly in the past 12 years under the leadership of President and CEO Cindi Roth.

As of June 30, 2025, the Foundation's total assets under management have impressively grown to \$3.29 billion. This period also marked a significant increase in philanthropic support, with the Foundation receiving gifts from more than 22,000 donors. In fact, gifts and pledges exceeded \$260 million indicating an expanding support base and a growing impact of the Foundation's work. The Foundation Board permits up to 31 Elected Directors, which has furthered its ability to support WVU effectively. Its contributions are vital in education, research, patient care, and program development. Additionally, the Foundation's operations are supported by nearly 150 professionals, demonstrating its significant role in supporting the broader University system.



Mission

The mission of the WVU Foundation is to enrich the lives of those touched by West Virginia University by maximizing charitable support and providing services to the University, its students, and affiliated organizations.

Vision

The WVU Foundation will be the model for excellence in fundraising, investment management, and stewardship.

Core Values

- Relationships - We value relationships, teamwork, and community involvement as fundamental to achieving our goals and at the core of our mission.
- Integrity - We conduct our activities in an independent, fair, trustworthy, and honest manner.
- Accountability - We are responsible for our actions.
- Courage - We support an environment where people feel safe to speak up and take bold, appropriate action with open communication.
- Innovation - We encourage creative, effective ideas in a collaborative environment to drive successful outcomes.
- Exceptional Performance - We lead by setting new standards of excellence.

For additional information, please visit <https://www.wvuf.org/>

Governance

The WVU Foundation is governed by the [Board of Directors](#) elected by its members.

Strategic Plan

The WVU Foundation has experienced a remarkable transformation over the past decade, driven by a series of ambitious five-year strategic plans. When the Foundation Board adopted its first-ever strategic plan in 2015, it established bold expectations centered on core pillars: maximizing private support for West Virginia University, strengthening and diversifying revenue streams while improving operational effectiveness, aligning all WVU entities under a unified “One WVU” vision, and enhancing Board effectiveness at every level. These priorities served as a North Star, guiding the Foundation toward a new era of philanthropy in support of WVU’s students, faculty, researchers, and patients.



Building on this momentum, the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan elevated the Foundation to unprecedented levels of achievement. The success of these first two plans positioned the organization for continued growth, deeper engagement, and greater institutional impact across the WVU and WVU Medicine community.

Now, the WVU Foundation has launched its third five-year Strategic Plan (2025–2030), marking the next phase in this evolution. This plan aligns closely with the broader WVU and WVU Medicine community. At its core is a Strategic Compass built on four key quadrants: Purpose, Engagement, Talent, and Impact.

Rooted in purpose, the plan emphasizes support for market-driven programs that equip students with in-demand skills while strengthening the University’s role as a leader in education, healthcare, and research. Like its predecessors, this roadmap is intentionally ambitious and designed to guide the Foundation to even greater levels of excellence.

Together, the success of the first two strategic plans and the forward-looking vision of the 2025–2030 plan position the WVU Foundation to reach new pinnacles of achievement continuing to expand its philanthropic impact and serve as a vital partner to WVU and WVU Medicine.

View the complete WVU Foundation Strategic Plan [here](#).

WVU’s Next Comprehensive Campaign

The WVU Foundation is in the quiet phase of its next comprehensive campaign. The Foundation’s Board of Directors recently increased the working goal to \$2.5 billion, with over \$1.5 billion already in hand and a public launch planned for October 2026. The WVU Foundation collaborates closely with WVU and WVU Medicine leadership to set financial (production) goals as well as fundraising priorities. Establishing these priorities for the campaign was a three-step process initiated prior to campaign counting that led to creation of a campaign case statement for each unit.

About West Virginia University

Overview

WVU is a family of distinctive campuses united by a single mission. From the groundbreaking research of our flagship in Morgantown to the career-oriented programs of WVU Potomac State in Keyser to the technology-intensive programs at WVU Tech in Beckley — we are leveraging our talents and resources to create a better future for West Virginia and the world.



Mission

At West Virginia University, pride in our land-grant mission runs deep, success is earned, and life-changing experiences prepare Mountaineers to serve others and lead in West Virginia and the world. Your bold future starts here. Let's Go!

Vision

As one West Virginia University, we are purposeful in our studies and our work so that we can partner with our communities – both near and far – to bring needed and valued solutions to real-life problems within the pillars of education, healthcare, prosperity, and purpose.

Core Values

- **Integrity-** Honest, transparent, and accountable in all interactions.
- **Collaboration-** Partnerships with government officials, community leaders, policymakers, business and industry, and stakeholders.
- **Advocacy-** Advocating for policies supporting the University's land grant, research, education, and service missions.
- **Respect-** Valuing all perspectives, we work to foster open dialogue and build strong partnerships.
- **Impact-** Focusing on measurable improvements for WVU, its faculty, staff, and students, and West Virginia citizens.
- **Responsibility-** We are responsible for our advocacy outcomes, and we align our actions with the University's values and goals.

Governance

The [WVU Board of Governors](#) is the governing body of WVU. The Higher Education Policy Commission in West Virginia is responsible for developing, establishing and overseeing the implementation of a public policy agenda for the state's 4-year colleges and universities.

Campus Locations and Facilities

The [WVU System](#) is a family of distinctive campuses united by a single mission. From the groundbreaking research of our flagship in Morgantown (ranked R1, the highest research category institution) to the student-centered focus of WVU Potomac State College in Keyser to the technology-intensive programs at WVU Institute of Technology in Beckley, we're leveraging our talents and resources to create a better future for West Virginia and the world.

The [WVU Morgantown campus](#) offers over 300 majors in a college town named “#1 Best Small City in the East” by Guide to Life in America’s Small Cities. [Morgantown](#), population 30,855, was also among Livability’s top 10 best places to raise a family and is within easy traveling distance of Washington, D.C., to the east; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the north; and Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio, to the northwest. Other rankings: Southern Living included Morgantown as one of the South’s best small towns; One of the “Top 15 College Football Towns in the Country” by Bleacher Report.

[WVU Potomac State College](#) in Keyser is one of the nation’s most affordable 4-year colleges, as ranked by the U.S. Department of Education. Offering more than 60 majors, this campus combines the personal attention of a small college with the benefits of a major university.

The [WVU Institute of Technology](#) in Beckley offers more than 30 programs of study, including 6 ABET accredited engineering and computer science programs.

The WVU System also includes Health Sciences campuses in Charleston and Martinsburg, as well as 7 farms and 5 forests throughout the state and [WVU Jackson’s Mill State 4-H Camp](#). The WVU System includes 518 buildings on 15,880 acres. The Morgantown campus has 245 buildings (11 on the National Register of Historic Places) on 1,892 acres.

Research Funding

In fiscal year 2025, WVU received a record \$264 million in research funding. The University receives research funding from a variety of sources, including federal, state, industry, and private donors.

Enrollment

Fall 2025 WVU System enrollment is 26,046:

- Morgantown campus - 23,532
- Potomac State College - 1,304
- WVU Tech - 1,210

WVU Morgantown Campus

Students at the Morgantown campus come from 95 nations, 49 U.S. states (plus D.C.) and all 55 West Virginia counties; 46% are West Virginia residents.

Academic Excellence

WVU recipients of prestigious scholarships include 25 Rhodes Scholars, 142 Gilman Scholars, 87 Fulbright Scholars, 53 Goldwater Scholars, 27 Truman Scholars, 30 Boren Fellows and Scholars, and 41 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships (to name just a few).

Faculty and Staff Profile

Excellent faculty, 19 of whom have been named Carnegie Foundation Professors of the Year, guide and mentor students.

53 faculty members have received the National Science Foundation Career Award.

39% of WVU Morgantown classes are taught by full-time instructional faculty.

Instructional Faculty: 2,355 full-time

Staff (Classified and Non-Classified): 3,060

Academic Programs

[12 Morgantown colleges and schools](#) offer [300+ majors](#) in agriculture and natural resources; applied human sciences; arts and sciences; business and economics; creative arts and media; engineering and mineral resources; law; medicine; dentistry; nursing; pharmacy; public health. [WVU Online](#) offers 13 online undergraduate degrees and 32 certificate programs, as well as 32 master's, 2 doctoral, and 2 associate degrees.



Freshman Class Profile

WVU's fall 2025 freshman class had an average cumulative GPA of 3.72 on a 4.0 scale, an average ACT score of 23.9, and an average SAT score of 1079. WVU does not require ACT/SAT scores for admission.

Student Organizations

Students can choose from 450+ student organizations, or participate in an active intramural program or a variety of club sports.

Service and Learning

The Center for Service and Learning develops and organizes service learning and volunteer opportunities for students and faculty. WVU is one of only 75 schools recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for Community Engagement (recognized since 2010). During the 2024-25 academic year, WVU students recorded 130,000 hours of service, for a value of nearly \$3.8 million.

Scholarships and Aid

In 2024-25, the WVU System disbursed over \$466 million in financial aid (\$171.9 million in scholarships). At WVU Morgantown, 92% of freshmen received grants or scholarships.

The WVU System has granted 4,311 Promise Scholars (2024-25) \$22+ million in funding.

The 2025 freshman class at Morgantown includes over 1,000 Promise Scholars. Annually, the WVU System educates about half of all West Virginia Promise recipients.

WVU is developing new programs like [WVU Guarantee](#) to make it easier, more accessible, and more affordable for students to pursue higher education.

Athletics

A member of the Big 12 Conference since 2012, WVU competes in 18 [intercollegiate varsity sports](#).

WVU Health System

- The WVU Health System is West Virginia's largest health system and the state's largest employer with more than 35,000 employees.
- The WVU Health System is comprised of 25 hospitals, including WVU Medicine Golisano Children's Hospital, and five institutes: the WVU Cancer Institute, the WVU Critical Care and Trauma Institute, the WVU Eye Institute, the WVU Heart and Vascular Institute, and the WVU Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute.
- The WVU Cancer Institute is making strategic investments in cancer care and research to achieve the state's first National Cancer Institute designation. Alongside its flagship hospital, J. W. Ruby Memorial Hospital, WVU Medicine is in the early stages of updating its Morgantown campus master plan with the goal of building a multi-story cancer hospital. This transformative effort was made possible by a \$50M gift from the Hazel Ruby McQuain Charitable Trust.
- Over the last two years, the WVUHS Board of Directors approved nearly \$1 billion in strategic capital projects that will accelerate the Health System's growth and infuse West Virginia and the surrounding region with several new healthcare facilities.
- The System's true north remains its commitment to its patients and the ability to serve them in a caring and healing environment, and by expanding the breadth and depth of its programs and infrastructure, it ensures the Health System is well-positioned long-term to meet the needs of patients



Leadership

Michael T. Benson, President of West Virginia University



Michael T. Benson, a veteran higher education administrator, became the 27th president of West Virginia University on July 15, 2025. He brings 3 decades of academic and administrative experience in higher education to his role leading West Virginia's flagship, land-grant, R1 institution into a new era.

WVU is Benson's 5th presidency. Prior to his arrival at Coastal Carolina in 2021, Benson led Snow College, Southern Utah University, and Eastern Kentucky University. During his tenure at Coastal Carolina, Benson secured a \$10 million gift, the largest in the school's history. He worked closely with community partners and policymakers to advance initiatives there, including the successful renewal of a local option penny sales tax to support public and higher education through the year 2039, the only tax of its kind in all of South Carolina.

In 2024, under his leadership, Coastal Carolina enrolled its largest number of students ever — 11,225 — while also setting a record retention rate.

As the 14th president of Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, he helped raise more private money for the institution during his tenure than had been secured in the previous 115 years of the college's history combined. Appointed at age 36, Benson was the youngest college president in the history of the Utah System of Higher Education.

Benson has also held faculty appointments at the University of Utah, the University of Notre Dame, and Johns Hopkins University, and has taught at each institution where he served as president, including Coastal Carolina where he was a professor of history.

His scholarly work has focused on the development of the research university and its impact on society. Benson's book, "Daniel Coit Gilman and the Birth of the American Research University," was released by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2022. He was a visiting professor in the Department of the History of Science and Technology at Johns Hopkins in 2020. Benson's biography of Gilman was named to the list of Best Higher Education Books of 2023 by Forbes magazine.

Benson is also the author of "Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel," and, with co-author Hal Boyd, published "College for the Commonwealth: A Case for Higher Education in American Democracy" with the University Press of Kentucky.

Nationally, Benson serves on the Council of Presidents of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and is a trustee for the National 4-H Council. He also is the past board chair of Omicron Delta Kappa, the national leadership honor society and is the former chair of the NCAA Honors Committee.

Benson is sought after for public speeches and appearances. He was a featured contributor to the Huffington Post for 5 years; has written articles for The Jerusalem Post, Lexington Herald-Leader, Louisville Courier Journal, The Kansas City Star, Deseret News, and The Salt Lake Tribune, among others; and appeared on ESPN's The Paul Finebaum Show

Born in Utah and raised in Texas and Indiana, Benson has worked and studied abroad for nearly 7 years in Italy, England, and Israel. He graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in political science and double minors in English and history from Brigham Young University in 1990. He completed his doctorate in modern history from the University of Oxford (St. Antony's College) in 1995, where he was a Rotary Foundation Scholar and recipient of the Oxford Graduate Overseas Fellowship.

He also earned a master's degree cum laude in nonprofit administration in 2011 from the University of Notre Dame Mendoza College of Business, where he was the recipient of the prestigious Father Theodore Hesburgh Founder's Award. Benson graduated with a Master of Liberal Arts from Johns Hopkins University in August 2021 and was elected to the Honor Society of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs.

An accomplished athlete, President Benson played basketball at both BYU and Oxford, and his best marathon time – 2 hours and 41 minutes – won his age division in the St. George (Utah) Marathon. He also finished among the top 25% of all runners in the 1984 Boston Marathon, one of only 19 teenagers from around the world to compete in the race.

An avid traveler, he has visited all 50 states and 5 of the 7 continents.

He and his wife Debi are the parents of 3 children – Truman, Tatum, and Talmage. He also has 2 older children from a previous marriage. Emma is a TV reporter for KSL in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Samuel writes for Politico in Washington, D.C. Sam's wife, Keylla, is in her first year at Georgetown Law School.

Albert L. Wright, Jr. President & CEO of West Virginia University Health System



Albert is the president and CEO of the West Virginia University (WVU) Health System, the state's largest private employer. Before joining the Health System in 2014, he held several senior-level leadership positions at some of the nation's most prestigious healthcare systems and academic medical centers, including Ohio Health and UPMC.

As president and CEO, Albert has transformed the WVU Health System into a fully integrated network of 25 hospitals and clinics spanning a four-state region that includes West Virginia, Western Maryland, Eastern Ohio, and Southwest Pennsylvania. He has significantly expanded the Health System's specialty and sub-specialty care and directed greater than \$3.0 billion in capital investments to build new hospitals and clinics or refurbish existing ones while modernizing the Health System's infrastructure and electronic medical record.

Today, the WVU Health System is West Virginia's largest network of hospitals, clinics, and specialty institutes, with over 3,000 licensed beds, 3,000 providers, 35,000 employees, and \$7 billion in revenue. An 881-bed, Magnet-recognized academic medical center anchors the network of hospitals and clinics. In 2023, the Health System launched Peak Health, its health insurance company, with Albert as its board chair.

Albert obtained his Master of Health Administration degree at The Ohio State University, a Doctor of Pharmacy at the University of Florida, and a Doctor of Public Health at the University of North Carolina. He is involved in several charitable and civic organizations and serves on numerous boards.

Clay B. Marsh, M.D. Chancellor & Executive Dean of the WVU Health Sciences Center & Dean of the School of Medicine



Dr. Marsh a physician-scientist, higher education leader and chief health officer for West Virginia University (WVU). Serving as the Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Health Sciences Center (HSC) and Dean of the School of Medicine. He not only shapes the direction of the University's five health professions schools of dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy and public health and its statewide allied health programs and clinical operations, he also serves as the state's lead representative and spokesperson, both nationally and internationally, in the areas of health, health education and academic medicine. He is the joint leader of WVU Medicine, West Virginia's largest, national ranked healthcare enterprise and largest employer. In addition to these responsibilities, Dr. Marsh serves as the Executive Director of the WVU Research Corporation, where he oversees university-wide research and commercialization.

Academically, throughout his time at WVU and The Ohio State University, Dr. Marsh has published 170 papers in peer-reviewed journals, has served on NIH study sections and received, as PI or co-PI, over \$25M in NIH grants. He holds numerous U.S. patents and has served as a national leader in personalized medicine, on the board of the Coalition for Personalized Medicine; in cardiovascular medicine as the Chair of the Scientific Board and Board of Directors for the Stanley Sarnoff Research Foundation; and as a member of the Scientific Board, Caris Life Sciences. He has sponsored or served on the committees of more than 50 MD, PhD, or MD/PhD candidates. In partnership with Ohio State's Athletic Department, Dr. Marsh and his colleagues focused on collaborative research efforts to enhance player performance and wellness, later applying these same methods to United States Navy Seals.

In addition to his national roles, Dr. Marsh continues to serve in a statewide consultative role to West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey for health-related issues after being named the state's COVID-19 Czar in 2020. He led the coordination of West Virginia's successful COVID-19 response. The leadership team was commended nationally and internationally for its use of rapid-cycle learning models that changed the vaccine distribution strategy and enabled West Virginia to be the first state in the country to immunize its most vulnerable population with first and second vaccines.

As Chancellor, Dr. Marsh manages a yearly budget of over \$1B and has grown to employ more than 1,800 faculty (over 50% of the total university's faculty); generates over half of the university's research funding; produces more than half of the philanthropic resources raised by WVU and retains a financially profitable health sciences enterprise while continuing a strategic growth trajectory.

Since joining WVU in 2015, Health Sciences has grown in scope and capability with a strategic business plan focusing on educational programs that meet workforce demand for high paying jobs in the healthcare sector. The Health Sciences Center offers 140 undergraduate, graduate, professional, and graduate medical education programs and has seen unprecedented growth in the number and quality of faculty, students and trainees who have joined the university. After implementing a signature program strategy, the physician faculty has grown by more than 1,000 doctors and researchers serving patients throughout the state and region. Dr. Marsh has recruited nationally

Morgantown, West Virginia

Morgantown, the county seat of Monongalia County in West Virginia, is situated along the Monongahela River, close to the Pennsylvania state line. The city, within the Appalachian Basin, is known for its natural landscapes, offering activities like hiking, biking, kayaking, and fishing.

The city is growing in areas such as housing, manufacturing, research, and commerce, leading to a population increase in one of West Virginia's fastest-growing counties.

Culturally, Morgantown features attractions like museums, wineries, and the West Virginia University Art Museum, which houses about 4,000 works of art. West Virginia University plays a significant role in the city, especially with its popular college football games at the 60,000-seat Milan Puskar Stadium.

Morgantown also benefits from a lower cost of living compared to similar metro areas. Strategically located approximately 75 miles south of Pittsburgh, PA, and 200 miles west of Washington, D.C., at the intersection of Interstates 79 and 68. The city places it within easy reach of a large portion of the U.S. population.

For more information on the area, visit: <https://www.morgantownwv.gov/> <https://wvtourism.com/morgantown/>



Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting West Virginia University Foundation in this search, which will remain open until an appointment is made. Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#). For ideal consideration, candidate materials should be submitted by June 1, 2026. Absolute confidentiality throughout the entire search process will be provided to all applicants and interested parties.

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

John K. Thornburgh and Ashlee Musser

WVUFCEO@wittkieffer.com

West Virginia University Foundation acts in a manner that supports a diverse, equitable, and inclusive Foundation. We are a world-class Foundation that embraces every community member, donor, volunteer, and employee to create a meaningful impact for those touched by the WVUF.