

Position Specification

Vice-President, Finance & Operations
Windsor, ON

November 2021 | Confidential



University
of Windsor



Vice-President, Finance & Operations

Reporting To	President and Vice-Chancellor
Direct Reports	Associate Vice-President, Operations; Associate Vice-President, Finance; Director of Legal Services; Senior Internal Auditor; and an Executive Assistant
Location	Windsor, Ontario

Company Description

University of Windsor

[The University of Windsor \(UWindsor\)](#) is a globally relevant, regionally focused University that welcomes over 16,000 students in a range of comprehensive and research-intensive graduate and undergraduate programs. The University consists of eight faculties and professional schools, which include Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Science; Human Kinetics; Education; Law; Engineering; Nursing; Business, and Graduate Studies, and a medical program offered in partnership with Western University's Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry. With an annual operating budget of over \$250 million, the University employs a passionate and dedicated faculty and staff, numbering approximately 2,500, of whom approximately 600 are tenured or tenure-track faculty.

The University's unique position on an international border between Canada and the United States has contributed to its identity as a diverse university community providing rich cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities for faculty and students. The University is a key player in a wide range of distinctive industrial, entrepreneurial, and cultural activities throughout the City of Windsor and Essex County, and in an evolving network of international academic and industrial partnerships, particularly with leading American universities in Michigan.

It is within this context that the University has also identified its critical strategic role within the local community and beyond by focusing on key priorities such as knowledge creation, economic diversification, labour-force stability, quality of life and cultural vibrancy, contributing to an active, well-informed citizenry and civic leadership. The University has also launched its Strategic Planning Process in the Fall of 2021, [Aspire: Together for Tomorrow](#) that aims to further identify strategic priorities and an institutional vision for the future.

Since 2011, the University has been in the midst of major campus [renewal and modernization](#), which has included the construction of a new Medical Education Building, Centre for Engineering Innovation, Welcome Centre, Entrepreneurship Practice and Innovation Centre (EPICentre), as well as the development of its multi-site downtown campus that houses the School of Social Work and the School of Creative Arts.



Ongoing capital projects aim to re-envision and re-design campus spaces with an emphasis on greener and more pedestrian and student-friendly spaces. The University has begun construction on a new \$73 million [Lancer Sport and Recreation Centre \(LSRC\)](#) with an expected completion date of Spring 2022. The Centre will offer a modern space to support athletic excellence and quality recreational services for students and the community at large. In addition, the university is currently undergoing a major renovation of the [Ron W. Ianni Faculty of Law Building](#) which will result in new classrooms, a reimagined library and new collaborative spaces.

The University is committed to an exceptional student experience in welcoming and inclusive learning environments that foster creativity, critical thinking, and the development of a life-long learning orientation. The University's dedication to research excellence results in positive and far-reaching social, economic, and environmental impacts.

UWindsor Vision and Mission

Vision

The UWindsor is a progressive, student-centred university, where the challenges of communities and of a world in transition inform the education we provide, the research we do, and the creative endeavours we pursue.

Mission

Enabling people to make a better world through education, scholarship, research, and engagement.

Location



Windsor is a culturally diverse and community-oriented mid-sized city. Still small enough for hassle-free commutes and friendly neighborhood living, it's also home to a symphony orchestra, excellent schools, great restaurants, and a vibrant festival calendar. Real estate is still very affordable, but quickly appreciating in value as Windsor was recently identified as one of the top three real estate investment markets in Canada.

With mild winters, warm summers, and kilometers of beautiful, accessible waterfront, it's an exceptional location for water sports and active transportation such as walking and cycling. Explore beautiful city parks and trails, while inexpensive courses and clubs offer golfers and tennis players plenty of choice. Fantastic national and provincial parks located nearby are favourite spots for camping and hiking. The region also boasts incredible agricultural industries and many vineyards that result in locals enjoying fresh, local organic produce and award-winning wines from Essex County wineries.



Windsor is right across the river from Detroit, Michigan, whose skyline Windsorites enjoy every day. The amenities of big-city living, from a world-class art gallery and symphony to championship-winning professional sports teams, to fine dining, festivals, and performance venues, are literally minutes away via the Windsor-Detroit tunnel or the Ambassador Bridge.

To learn more about all that Windsor and Essex County has to offer, please visit [Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island](#).

Opportunity

Appointed in September 2019, Dr. Robert Gordon is the seventh President & Vice-Chancellor of UWindsor. He has pursued a strategic vision focused on enhancing the University's role as a regionally focused, globally connected comprehensive university with an emphasis on high quality research and education, the student experience, and impactful community engagement. Financial sustainability has been a key priority, involving a number of strategic initiatives including the consultative redesign of the internal budget model, strong University engagement in multi-year budget planning, a renewed focus on enterprise risk management, and improved financial planning for on-going capital initiatives. The President is currently launching the University's strategic planning process, [Aspire Together for Tomorrow](#), engaging the campus and external communities in building an inspirational, regionally relevant, and academically engaged vision and strategic direction for the University.

The Vice-President, Finance & Operations plays a key strategic leadership role in collectively determining and advancing the priorities of the institution and in charting a course that ensures its sustainability and stability. This role is particularly critical given the challenges and unpredictability involved in successfully and proactively navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current areas of strategic emphasis include excellence in research, teaching and service; the student experience and student recruitment; leadership and faculty renewal; equity, diversity, and inclusion; environmental sustainability; governance; infrastructure development; regional partnership, and financial performance. Farsseeing and collaborative financial leadership is critical to this transformation, and the President and leadership team look forward to working in partnership with the new Vice President, Finance & Operations. ***Integrity, an entrepreneurial spirit, an innovative mindset, openness to collaboration, strategic leadership and, preferably, public sector experience are critical to being an effective member of the Executive Team.***

Overseeing a team of five direct reports, the Associate Vice-President, Operations, the Associate Vice-President, Finance, the director of Legal Services, Senior Internal Auditor and an Executive Assistant, including more than 240 employees, the Vice-President is an effective team leader whose areas of responsibility have a profound impact on the campus experience, student opportunity, scholarly practice, and institutional efficiency.

Key Priorities

After consulting with key stakeholders at the University, the following priorities were identified for the new Vice-President, Finance and Operations:

- Create a context of open dialogue with the University's academic and administrative leadership, in order to jointly build a comprehensive and evolving understanding of the drivers of the University and its academic mission, the priorities and challenges – and to lay the foundation for positive, ongoing relationships, acknowledging the anxieties/uncertainties that come with change;
- In support of UWindsor's academic mission, the Vice-President Finance & Operations will provide leadership in all areas of institutional financial activity:
 - play a leadership role in planning for the University's long-term capital and resource needs to achieve the University's academic mission;
 - work with other members of the executive team in ensuring that resources are allocated as effectively as possible in support of strategic priorities;
 - oversee the successful implementation of the new activity-based budgeting framework in collaboration with campus stakeholders;



- drive efficiencies and find ways to contain costs – savings that could be redirected to education delivery;
 - build strong relationships with government officials, with a clear emphasis and evaluation of impact of the University on the regional economy and context;
 - help ensure transparency in decision-making, through clear analytics, reporting, budgeting, dialogue and communication, including accurate budget and variance analysis reporting so leaders can make timely and effective decisions;
 - take a leadership role in the further development of a culture of informed institutional financial data awareness and decision making through proactive and collaborative engagement in training and mentorship; and,
 - ensure streamlined and well-supported procedural and technological infrastructure of financial and business operations on campus.
- Work closely with their team to complete the Campus Services transformation - Campus Bookstore and Print Shop, Student Health, Parking, Food and Catering – to ensure they are consistent with leading edge best practices;
 - Provide leadership and technical support for the development and support of capital transformation projects;
 - Develop a deep understanding of all revenue streams and work collaboratively with University leaders to seek new sources of funding, identify opportunities, and build strong business cases to achieve buy-in for these initiatives from the appropriate members of the University community;
 - In collaboration with the executive leadership team, continue to build and operationalize the enterprise risk management strategy;
 - Support the further development of a framework for internationalization and the international student experience, particularly with regard to the business and financial implications and risk factors involved in sustainable growth;
 - Engage with the University's evolving efforts to ensure a welcoming, safe, equitable, and inclusive campus for all, both through ensuring a proactive financial framework for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Truth and Reconciliation focused initiatives, and through direct leadership of culture and procedural change related to these priorities in their own areas;
 - Finalize and operationalize the University's Sustainability Framework and strategy in collaboration with the Vice-President, Academic; and,
 - Continue to develop and operationalize a nimble post-COVID recovery strategy that is responsive to changing conditions and ongoing assessment of institutional outcomes.

Scope and Responsibilities

The Vice-President, Finance & Operations reports to and advises the President on all financial matters, and provides fiscal and administrative services and leadership to the University to support the achievement of its overall academic mission and strategic priorities. The individual will oversee and manage a high volume and variety of work that is of a highly complex and sensitive nature and which has a significant impact to UWindsor and its community and assets.

The Vice-President will ensure the Office of Finance & Operations is well run and effectively administered on a day-to-day basis, and the appropriate people and resources are in place to support the academic enterprise. This will involve leading a team that must be client focused, agile, efficient, connected, innovative, and not afraid to challenge the status quo. Given the multi-generational nature of the workforce, it will require skilled management of varied perspectives and expertise in the workplace environment.

In addition, the Vice-President works with the President and other executives as needed, on the preparation and presentation of material for governance and public accountability, including materials for the University's Board of Governors and Senate or Committees of the Board and Senate, financial statements and records, and other provincial accountability documentation.



Specific Responsibilities

This is a critical role in UWindsor's continued success and growth. The role is accountable for critical portfolios which enable the University to achieve its academic mission, more specifically for the following:

- **Senior Leadership:** As a member of the University's executive leadership team, the Vice-President helps shape and implement the strategic goals of the University and provides financial leadership and resource allocation support to make sure they are aligned with institutional priorities and the complementary goals of UWindsor's strategic plan and Strategic Management Agreements (SMAs). The individual will ensure optimal management of investments, assets, liabilities, business opportunities, financing, contracts, and loans. The Vice-President will ensure the principles and practices related to sustainable development and equity, diversity, and inclusion are integrated into decision-making process related to their areas of responsibility, and will lead efforts to ensure a positive, inclusive, and respectful work environment. In addition, the individual will participate with other executive team members in developing risk mitigation strategies and providing input into strategic communications for internal and external audiences;
- **Financial Leadership:** The Vice-President will serve as principal advisor to the President on matters of finance and general business administration, recommending policies, procedures, and best practices governing fiscal and administrative operations. Collaborating with the senior management team, the individual will facilitate budget and resource allocations to achieve the University's mission and strategic priorities. The Vice-President will ensure the current and long-term effectiveness of all financial functions of the University including accounting, investments, asset and debt management, financial statements/annual reporting, insurance, operation and capital budgeting, University payments, supply management chain, and audit. The individual will provide administrative oversight of all Treasury functions and work with the Committees of the Board that provide oversight to these areas, as well as student awards and financial aid;
- **Planning and Budgeting:** The Vice-President will lead in the projection and development of the University budgets, advise the Deans, Directors and their designates to help them make informed decisions regarding management of funds for their respective areas, and support the University community as a technical and administrative resource for financial information and institutional financial awareness and strategy;
- **Legal Services:** The Vice-President oversees the internal legal services provided to the President, administration, faculty, and staff on matters involving or affecting the University, and provides input to other University Vice-Presidents in the formulation of administrative policies;
- **Campus Services:** The Vice-President oversees Campus Services and Police to provide valuable, supportive and integrated services to enhance the campus experience of our students and create a vibrant university community;
- **Facilities Services:** In support of the University's mission and goals, the Vice-President oversees services to plan, operate and maintain the buildings, grounds and infrastructure to standards that are sustainable and supportive of high -quality education and research;
- **Infrastructure and capital planning and development:** Working in close collaboration with the President and other senior leaders, the Vice-President plays a lead role in the development of partnerships and funding strategies to support capital projects and provides primary oversight in renovation and new builds;
- **Compliance:** The Vice-President works to ensure compliance with the University's internal administrative policies as well as with government reporting requirements through related controls and procedures. The individual supports University governance through participation, as required, on the Board and Board Committees;
- **External Relationships:** The individual will manage banking, lending, investment, legal and auditing relationships. In addition, they establish and maintain effective working relationships with all appropriate levels of government, represent the University on relevant committees, and play an active role in representing the University within the broader Windsor community;
- **Board Relationships:** Working with the President and other executives, the Vice-President will interact with a variety of Standing Committees of the Board, providing reports and presentations in support of decision making and public accountability, including the Resource Allocation committee, Audit Committee, Investment Committee, and Pension Committee.



- **Research Accounting:** Oversees the post-award financial administration of over \$35M in sponsored research and restricted funding; and,
- **Other:** Assumes any duties and responsibilities that may be assigned by the President.



Key Selection Criteria

Given the role this individual will play in UWindsor's continued growth and success, it is essential that the successful candidate possess the following education, experience, and personal characteristics:

Education

- A Bachelor's degree in Business, Economics or other related discipline;
- A CPA designation is required; and,
- A Master's degree or a CFA is strongly preferred.

Experience

- A track record of progressive and successful leadership in a complex organization, preferably within the university environment or at a minimum in the public sector; an understanding of, and sensitivity to university administration and government funding structures for postsecondary education is highly sought after;
- Exceptional vision, a service orientation, and strategic leadership abilities, with a demonstrated ability to effectively support the organization's core mission and values;
- A well-developed talent for overseeing highly sophisticated, complex budgets, finances and investments as well as exposure to other functional areas of the portfolio;
- Possesses a combination of generalist and specialist experience having gained a broad exposure to most financial disciplines;



- Experienced in championing change initiatives and processes, from beginning to end, that have contributed to strong results and clearly supported the organizational mission;
- Demonstrated leadership skills and success in developing a vision and leading people to achieve exemplary performance and outcomes;
- Prior experience overseeing large infrastructure and capital projects, including both new builds and large renovations;
- Excellent knowledge of the treasury function and working knowledge of investment management;
- Proven track record in supporting, managing, and leading teams to inspire engagement and high-quality performance;
- The capacity to build effective relationships with a variety of constituents, and at all levels. Strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to work in a highly collaborative and productive manner with stakeholders both inside and outside the university (administrative staff, faculty, students, community and industry partners, donors, government, and other universities, etc.);
- The ability to engage in risk and opportunity management and preventative counseling, including the identification of high-risk activities and enterprises conducted by the University and the articulation of methodologies or strategies for managing or mitigating those risks;
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills, including the ability to communicate complex financial information to a variety of audiences in a clear, concise and actionable manner;
- A proven ability and the willingness to make the kinds of difficult decisions that will be necessary to maintain excellence at UWindsor within the current economic situation and to ensure the sustainability of the university in the future;
- Accustomed to working in a large, complex unionized environment, and able to foster and promote constructive relationships with the union leadership and members;
- A career history demonstrating deeply held personal values such as integrity, equity and inclusiveness, mutual respect, trust, respect for diversity, and a caring and respectful approach to all interpersonal relationships;
- Dedication to supporting the mission of the University, and its role in teaching, learning, and research. A commitment to student success, placing students and their success at the center of decision making; and,
- Willingness to put the mission and needs of the institution first.

Personal / Professional Attributes

- Possesses superior leadership, people management, and coaching/mentoring skills;
- A solutions-oriented leader with the ability to make difficult decisions;
- Is direct, articulate, pragmatic, socially and politically astute and trustworthy;
- Has a reputation as a leader who advances and applies rigorous professional standards;
- Is a strong communicator with the ability to influence;
- Is viewed as a highly credible professional, is ethically uncompromising and exhibits the highest level of integrity;
- Sophisticated and discriminating problem-solving abilities, and applies a creative approach to presenting and recommending multiple solutions to problems;
- Ability to create structure without rigidity, to assess and improve processes, and to maintain high levels of self-initiative and motivation;
- Excellent judgement and an ability to develop and nurture key relationships, work under pressure, juggle multiple timelines, negotiate with others, and interact with a diverse client base; and,
- Values and respects people and is a team builder who is able to work effectively with peers at all levels throughout the organization.



Attractions

This role provides an opportunity to join an established organization that is poised for continued significant growth. Other attractions include the opportunity to:

- Work at one of Canada's highest ranked Employers in 2021;
- Join a new leadership team that is collaborative and forward looking;
- Engage with the strategic planning process and future vision of UWindsor, leading a rejuvenation and transformation of the institution;
- Work with a relatively new Decanal team that is engaged and eager to make an impact; and,
- Live and work in one of Ontario's best kept secrets – lakefront living, temperate climate and small-city lifestyle with big-city amenities.



Contact Information

UWindsor is partnering with the executive search firm, DHR International on this important search. All deliberations of the Vice-President, Finance & Operations Search Committee will be conducted with full confidentiality for all candidates. Inquiries, nominations, and applications are invited. Interested candidates should submit confidentially, in electronic form (Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF files preferred) a Curriculum Vitae, a summary of relevant accomplishments, and a letter of interest to uwindsorvpfo@dhrglobal.com by December 31, 2021.

UWindsor is a welcoming community committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in their teaching, learning, and work environments. In pursuit of the University's Employment Equity Plan, members from the designated groups (women, Indigenous/Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) persons, racialized persons/visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons of a minority sexual orientation and/or gender identity) are encouraged to apply and to self-identify. If you need an accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please notify DHR International at uwindsorvpfo@dhrglobal.com. Should you require further information on accommodation, please visit the website of the Office of Human Rights, Equity & Accessibility (<http://www.uwindsor.ca/ohrea>). All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority.

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