Position Specification

Southwestern University
Georgetown, TX
Director of Advising and Retention

Institutional Background

Situated on 701 beautiful Central Texas acres, Southwestern University has its own “100-acre wood,” also known as the academic campus, where students enjoy everything from Ultimate Frisbee games to studying on the academic mall; getting their hands dirty in the community garden to swimming laps, shooting hoops, or lifting weights in the recreation center; performing in one of two live-performance theaters to star gazing at the on-campus observatory.

For 175 years, Southwestern University has been engaging minds and transforming lives. In 2015, we celebrated our storied history and our boundless future.

In 1835, Col. William B. Travis penned a letter to the New York Christian Advocate calling for the establishment of a Methodist presence in the new Republic of Texas. Five years later, the first of Southwestern’s four root colleges was born from the vision of Methodist missionary Martin Ruter.

In addition to being the first institution of higher learning in Texas, the university is noted for several other distinctions:

- Holding the first Homecoming on record.
- Defeating UT-Austin in the first college baseball game played in the state.
- Being home to three of the first five Rhodes Scholars in Texas.
- The A. Frank Smith, Jr. Library holds the papers of long-time U.S. Senator John Tower, who graduated from Southwestern in 1948.
- Founding the first student literary journal in the state.
- Legendary folklorist and author J. Frank Dobie graduated in 1910 and went on to national acclaim.
- Establishing the nation’s first chapter of Alpha Chi, in 1922.

During World War II, Southwestern prospered through participation in the Navy’s V-12 program, and later by eliminating its graduate programs and concentrating on the liberal arts and sciences and the education of undergraduates only.

As the university’s reputation grew, so did its enrollment, which reached 1,000 students by 1978. The biannual Brown Symposium was established in 1977 and brings world-renown scholars to the university campus to engage with students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors. By the early 1980s, Southwestern University began to appear in national college guidebooks, and in 1988, U.S. News & World Report named Southwestern the top regional liberal arts college in the nation. More recently, the magazine has included Southwestern in its more competitive “National Liberal Arts College” category.
Throughout the ’80s, ’90s, and early 2000s, the physical campus experienced many changes, including the construction of new residence halls, academic buildings, a new campus center, and a new building to house the offices of admission and financial aid. Additions were also added to the library, the fine arts building, and the science building; and renovations were made to numerous other buildings. Financially, Southwestern was the beneficiary of The Brown Foundation of Houston, Inc.’s Matching Challenge, which concluded in 1995 with 34 percent of alumni participating.

Athletics changed dramatically through the years as well. In the fall of 1993, all of Southwestern’s varsity athletics teams joined the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference and became fully participating members of the NCAA Division III. The number of varsity teams grew to 20 over the years, with football being reinstated in fall 2013. A women’s lacrosse team was added in spring 2014.

Of many significant milestones, receiving a Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society charter in 1995 is particularly noteworthy for its rarity and prestige.


Georgetown, TX

The Georgetown/Austin area, on the edge of Texas Hill Country, offers unlimited outdoor recreational activities for Southwestern students.

From horseback riding, canoeing, and hiking to cycling, camping, and rock-climbing, you will find an abundance of natural resources here. Central Texas also offers an enormous benefit: almost year-round warm weather for getting outdoors and accessing the state’s best parks, rivers, and lakes, Gulf of Mexico beaches, and Hill Country trails and climbing spots.

Just north of Austin, Georgetown (population 49,000) includes the “Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas,” where the Williamson County Courthouse serves as the centerpiece to the finest collection of late Victorian commercial architecture in the state. Georgetown was the first city in Texas to be named a Great American Main Street City in 1997, the highest honor bestowed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Today, three National Register Districts host more than 180 historic businesses and homes.
An important thing to know is that Georgetown is only a stone’s throw from Austin. Aside from being Texas’ state capital and the “Live Music Capital of the World,” Austin is one of the country’s top five “intellectual capitals,” according to Fortune magazine.

You can learn more about Georgetown and the area at http://georgetownchamber.org/.

Mission Statement and Core Values

Southwestern University’s Mission Statement

Southwestern University, under the auspices of the United Methodist Church, is committed to undergraduate liberal education involving both the study of and participation in significant aspects of our cultural heritage, expressed primarily through the arts, the sciences, the institutions, and the professions of society. As a teaching-learning community, Southwestern encourages rigorous inquiry and scholarship, creative teaching, and the expression of free human life. The university seeks to involve the student in finding a personal and social direction for life, developing more sensitive methods of communication, cultivating those qualities and skills that make for personal and professional effectiveness, and learning to think clearly and make relevant judgments and discriminations.


Southwestern University’s Core Purpose

Fostering a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions toward the well-being of humanity.

Southwestern’s Core Values

- Cultivating academic excellence.
- Promoting lifelong learning and a passion for intellectual and personal growth.
- Fostering diverse perspectives.
- Being true to oneself and others.
- Respecting the worth and dignity of persons.
- Encouraging activism in the pursuit of justice and the common good.

Strategic Plan - Vision, Direction, and Goals for Southwestern University

Vision: Think, Create, and Connect...To Make Meaning and Make a Difference

Southwestern University is a leader in innovative undergraduate education, offering a life-enriching residential liberal arts and sciences experience for talented individuals who share a passion for intellectual exploration, engagement, and growth. Discovery and creation are intentionally fostered throughout a diverse and inclusive community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni, empowering all to advance research, scholarship, and the creative arts and lead fulfilling lives that contribute to the well-being of humanity.
Strategic Direction for the Next Five and Ten Years

Southwestern University commits to empowering students to think, create, and make meaning through intentional connections, innovative academic pursuits, and a vibrant residential community. This ongoing commitment to the rich experiences essential to intellectual, personal, and professional success in the 21st century requires institutional financial sustainability achieved through collaborative innovation and creativity.

Goals (The bullet points are institutional objectives to achieve each goal.)

**Goal 1**: Enroll and retain students who have significant potential for academic excellence.
- Increase the enrollment of students from the top 10% of their high school graduating class to 35% of the first-year class in five years and 40% in 10 years.
- Increase our first- to second-year retention rate to 88% in five years and first- to third-year retention rate to 85% in 10 years.
- Achieve a six-year graduation rate of 75% in five years and a four-year graduation rate of 75% in 10 years.
- Recruit transfer students of similar academic quality, comprising 15% of the student body.
- Increase the percentages of out-of-state students to a minimum of 20% in five years and 30% in 10 years.

**Goal 2**: Foster the highest standards of scholarship, academic quality, and differentiated educational and co-curricular experiences focused on thinking, creating, and connecting.
- Enhance our collective efforts to secure external funding for both faculty and faculty/student research.
- Align the general education curriculum with Paideia principles to foster intentional connections that bridge ways of thinking and acting across diverse ideas and disciplinary knowledge. Assess the general education program and outcomes over a five-year period.
- Over five years, enhance our existing strength in STEM by prioritizing more intentional disciplinary and interdisciplinary connections that deeply integrate the humanities, fine arts, and the social sciences with the natural sciences.
- Redefine the residential experience to enhance and sustain intellectual engagement, offering students a variety of co-curricular programs that support leadership; entrepreneurship; creativity; and physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- Continue our commitment to inclusive pedagogy and relationship building across our diverse community.

**Goal 3**: Cultivate the culture and practices among faculty and staff necessary to sustain institutional excellence and a community focused on student success.
- Build and sustain a diverse, inclusive community grounded in mutual trust and respect that promotes shared commitments, accomplishments, accountability, and responsibility for achieving institutional goals.
- Implement ongoing programs and activities that educate members of the Southwestern community—students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents—about the university's vision and goals.
- Foster shared accountability and facilitate broad community engagement and awareness of institutional priorities and decisions through the committee and governance structure.
- Encourage students, faculty, and staff to support, lift up, and engage with one another, with our alumni and friends, and with Southwestern as an institution.

**Goal 4**: Continue to develop and implement a sustainable financial model that reflects the new realities for higher education generally and for liberal arts institutions specifically.
- Continue to pursue new opportunities for lowering costs and increasing revenues,
including net tuition revenue that exceeds inflationary cost increases; a discount rate of 50% or less in five years; and new gifts to fund financial aid, academic chairs, deferred maintenance, and endowment growth.

- Achieve an endowment spend rate that safeguards the future while providing stable budget support.
- Enhance our collective efforts to secure new funding to support our commitment to being an inclusive and diverse intellectual community.
- Implement predictive analytics and data-informed decision making that ensures that institutional efforts and resources, and targeted initiatives, are directed toward advancing goals aligned with the strategic direction, such as the continued commitment to phase two of our science center project.
- Practice focused and integrated marketing and communications activities that target specific audiences whose knowledge of Southwestern University can lead to increased revenues and institutional visibility.
- Continue to educate and inform all Southwestern community members to promote understanding of and engagement with our financial reality and strategic direction.

Leadership

Edward B. Burger, President

Southwestern University President Edward B. Burger is a nationally known leader and innovator in education.

A native of New York, Dr. Burger graduated summa cum laude with distinction in mathematics from Connecticut College and earned a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Texas at Austin. He joined the faculty of Williams College in 1990 and held several endowed positions there, including the Francis Christopher Oakley Third Century Professor of Mathematics.

In 1997, Dr. Burger became one of the first individuals to make instructional mathematics videos accessible to a broader audience through mediums such as CD-ROMs and the Internet. Between 1997 and 2013, he created more than 4,000 videos covering the curriculum from kindergarten through Calculus II that are watched by millions of people from around the globe.

In 2010, Dr. Burger received the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching from Baylor University, one of the most prestigious teaching awards in the world. He spent a year at Baylor serving as the Robert Foster Cherry Professor for Great Teaching, after which the university invited him to stay an additional year and serve as vice provost for strategic educational initiatives.

Dr. Burger was among the people the Huffington Post named to its 2010 list of “Game Changers”—a group of 100 “innovators, mavericks, visionaries, and leaders in 12 categories who are changing the way we look at the world and the way we live in it.” The publication cited Burger as an education game changer and highlighted one of his innovative approaches to teaching: encouraging and rewarding effective failure as a means toward greater creativity and deeper understanding.

Dr. Burger has received a number of other national awards, including the 2001 Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics and the Chauvenet Prize from the Mathematical Association of America. In January 2013, he was inducted as one of the first fellows of the American Mathematical Society.
A noted scholar, Dr. Burger has authored or co-authored more than 35 research articles (with 15 undergraduate co-authors) as well as 12 books, including *The Heart of Mathematics: An Invitation to Effective Thinking*, co-authored with Dr. Michael Starbird from the University of Texas at Austin, which is now in its fourth edition. His most recent book, *The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking*, also co-authored with Starbird, has been translated into more than 15 languages and has led to speaking invitations from organizations such as Microsoft, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Dr. Burger has delivered more than 400 lectures worldwide and has appeared on more than 40 radio and TV programs, including an episode of NBC’s *Science of the Winter Olympics* series that was shown throughout the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, which earned him a Telly Award. Burger also served for three years as mathematics advisor for a series of educational programs that were made to accompany the popular CBS television series, *Numb3rs*.

**The Academic Program**

Southwestern hires some of the most impressive and committed professors. One hundred percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty hold doctorates or the highest degree possible in their respective fields. With a student/faculty ratio of 12:1 and an average class size of 15, student/faculty collaborative research and publication is common.

*Degrees*

- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Science
- Bachelor of Education
- Bachelor of Music
- Bachelor of Fine Arts

*Majors*

Anthropology, applied physics, art (studio), art history, biochemistry, biology, business, chemistry, classics, communication studies, computational mathematics, computer science, economics, education, English, environmental studies, feminist studies, French, German, Greek, history, independent major, international studies, kinesiology, Latin, Latin American and border studies, mathematics, music, philosophy, physics, political science, psychology, religion, sociology, Spanish, and theatre

Certification Programs: Education
Pre-professional pathways with specialized advising: pre-dentistry, pre-engineering, pre-law, pre-medicine, pre-ministry, pre-physical therapy, pre-veterinary medicine

*Paideia*

Southwestern University’s Paideia centers on making connections between different ways of knowing and understanding complex issues, between academic coursework and campus life experiences, and between one’s own life and world issues. Paideia encourages students to explore the complexity of life’s challenges through integrating multiple viewpoints and perspectives and by engaging in intensive, varied experiences. All Southwestern students participate in Paideia experiences throughout the curriculum. The first-year or advanced-entry seminar introduces students to the practice of making connections, with a special focus on incorporating perspectives from multiple disciplines. All other courses explicitly acknowledge the connections between ideas within their own course material; many will point to intersections with other courses. In the required social justice course, students connect their learning to issues of diversity and inequality. All majors include an opportunity to consider how various skills and
ideas connect across the department or program and culminate in a capstone experience. In addition to the integrated Paideia experiences, Southwestern encourages students to choose a more intensive Paideia path that includes elements above and beyond the graduation requirements for all students. Any student who is selected to participate and successfully completes both a Paideia seminar and one of the other two approved intensive Paideia options will be recognized as having achieved Paideia with Distinction.

The Student Body

In the fall of 2016, Southwestern welcomed 1,489 men and women, 31 percent of whom were underrepresented students. Forty-five percent of the students who applied were offered admission, resulting in 381 entering first-year students. Of those, 36 percent ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school class and the average SAT score was 1,171. Eighty-nine percent of Southwestern students hail from Texas, while the remaining 11 percent come from 35 other states and 14 countries.

More than three-quarters of all students live in residential campus housing, and everyone—students, faculty, and staff—has access to a fleet of “Pirate Bikes,” a rideshare program that helps people get around campus in a quick and environmentally friendly way.

With approximately 100 student organizations—from scholastic and honorary to government, Greek, special interest and departmental—Southwestern students have a lot to keep them busy.

More than a third of Southwestern students study abroad. A London experience is available each fall along with summer programs in locations such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru, and Spain. Our students have access to universities around the world through the International Student Exchange Program. In addition, Southwestern offers opportunities for semesters in New York (arts) and Washington, D.C. (all majors), as well as internships, both domestic and abroad.

At a rate that is twice the national average, Southwestern students give more than 39,000 service hours annually to more than 100 local nonprofits and agencies.

An Overview of the Center for Academic Success and Records

The Center for Academic Success and Records (CASAR) offers resources empowering students to achieve academic success. The center acts as the primary support for the academic experience of the campus community. Their aim is to provide student-centered services in a supportive and professional setting.

The center offers:

Academic Records
The records office is responsible for maintaining the academic integrity of the Southwestern degree. The records staff maintains the academic and exam calendar as well as the academic catalog and policies. Additionally, the records office coordinates the registration process each semester while also providing
forms for declaring a major/minor, degree plans/audits, transcript requests, and transfer credit information. Classroom space reservations and VA benefits are also managed through this office.

**Academic Coaching**
Students who are experiencing academic challenges are encouraged to seek help from the academic success staff. The Planning for Academic Success (PASS) program provides students on academic probation with one-to-one and small-group support to help students build their academic skills base, maintain academic focus, and gain confidence while learning to overcome specific academic difficulties.

**Services for Students with Disabilities**
Southwestern University strives to provide an accessible environment for students with disabilities. These services may include alternative testing, classroom accessibility, course substitutions, note-taking assistance, priority registration, and assistance with service animal coordination.

**Mentoring & Skill Development**
The academic success program offers all students instruction on strategies to enhance academic performance. Peer mentors provide individual and group instruction on a variety of study strategies. Online tools include helpful tips on time management, active reading, and test-taking strategies, managing test anxiety, and links to academic success websites and writing centers.

**Peer Academic Mentors**
Peer Academic Mentors (PAMs) are upper-level students who work to provide academic counseling to those wishing to enhance their study skills as well as those who are struggling academically. Mentors are a source of academic support for fellow students throughout their time at SU. They work with students to develop effective study skills and strategies on an individual basis, design and facilitate academic skills workshops, aid students in the registration process, introduce students to academic support services, and guide students through short- and long-term planning.
History of the Position

Though this is a newly created position, some of the advising responsibilities have been combined into other positions. This position marks the first time an individual will be solely responsible for the comprehensive advising functions. In addition, this position will serve as the primary, collaborative resource for retention efforts.

Responsibilities of the Position

Reporting directly to the associate vice president for academic affairs, the director of advising and retention is responsible for providing visionary leadership within the university’s primarily faculty-based academic advising system and collaborating with departments across campus, including the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, to strengthen, connect, implement, and assess student retention efforts. Principal responsibilities include coordinating oversight and management of the academic advising system, including managing faculty/staff advising loads; analyzing advising-related data to inform decision making about tools and technologies for advising and retention efforts; planning and facilitating new advisor training and ongoing professional development for faculty and staff advisors; developing effective advising evaluation and assessment systems; and exploring sub-models for specialized advising, group advising, first-year advising, etc., and following through with implementation and evaluation as appropriate. In addition, the director will collaborate with academic success staff on retention/academic success programs including PASS (Planning for Academic Success Seminar, a scholastic probation program), Captain’s Academy (mentoring program for first-generation students), and the Peer Academic Mentors; coordinate advising aspects of pre-orientation day and orientation week; and maintain a caseload of advisees.

Characteristics of the Successful Candidate

The successful candidate will have a master’s degree in higher education, student development, or related field with a minimum of three years of advising/retention experience in a higher education setting. Preferred qualifications include experience with a primarily faculty-based advising system as well as experience in (or familiarity with) a residential liberal arts college/university setting. Other desired characteristics include ability to effectively deliver content through trainings, workshops, etc.; effectiveness in working with faculty and professional staff on best practices in academic advising, and incentivizing the execution of strong advising standards. Proficient data analysis/interpretation skills, including tracking, reporting, and synthesizing data from different sources are also required. The ideal candidate will be a confident, independent, and proactive leader who is comfortable with a high degree of collaboration with multiple departments, displays a willingness to adhere to the university’s core values, and has excellent interaction and communication skills (verbal and written). A strong knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of cultural differences and the diversity within the campus and community are also required.

In addition to the above-stated qualifications and characteristics, Southwestern stakeholders identified the following characteristics as important to the director:
• Compassionate, accessible, transparent, ethical leader with excellent communication skills to clearly articulate vision, direction, and purpose and earn the respect and confidence of the senior administration, faculty, staff, and students.
• Proven track record of advising and retaining top-tier, academically talented students.
• Demonstrated experience working with processes, technologies, and systems to further the effectiveness and efficiencies of all advising and retention efforts.
• Ability to balance both listening and leading a charge to effectively bring about positive change.
• Strong community builder, convener, and collaborator, capable of building bridges to departments, faculty, staff, students, and the campus community.
• Proven record of effectively working with and connecting to faculty.
• Maintain a focus on continual process improvement through effective assessment and analysis of outcomes.
• A holistic understanding of academic advising and retention that demonstrates a strong commitment to students and their success.
• Capable of both initiating and managing change while ensuring that all stakeholders have been appropriately included in conversations and decisions leading to the creation and implementation of these changes.
• A highly collaborative approach to working with key stakeholders across the institution on common goals and objectives.
• Profound interest in student development, advising, and retention with a broad knowledge of academic advising, retention, best practices, and the profession.
• Understanding and appreciation of how academic affairs and student affairs intersect to provide a holistic experience for students.
• Highly energetic individual with a strong sense of self and an ability to appropriately infuse humor and enthusiasm into the workplace and campus community.
• Ability to genuinely connect with and maintain a highly engaged relationship with a motivated, intelligent, and hardworking student body.
• Demonstrated leadership ability with excellent management skills; the ability to manage feedback with constructive action and build a solid framework to effectively develop and manage student-centered advising methods.
• Confident risk taker with a willingness to try new methods and approaches.
• Skilled in the collection of data with the ability to analyze and make educated decisions.
• Demonstrated cultural competence with strong belief in the value of diversity in enriching the learning experience and the quality of life on campus.
• An understanding of and appreciation for the value of a liberal arts education and experience working with this type of institution and curriculum.
• Solid presentation skills and the ability to comfortably deliver information to a variety of stakeholders.
• Demonstrated experience creating and implementing a comprehensive advisor-training program.

Likely Opportunities, Priorities, and Challenges of the Position

In transitioning to Southwestern, the new director of advising and retention will encounter the following opportunities, priorities, and challenges:
• Since this is a new position, the director, working with the associate vice president for academic affairs, will be able to more clearly define the role and specific responsibilities of this position.
• The new director will enjoy strong support from the associate vice president for academic affairs as well as the rest of the campus community. Everyone wants this director to be successful.
• Current advising practices are inconsistent and uneven; the campus is ready for and expects changes to advising processes.
• Retention is viewed as a three-pronged approach: student life, admissions, and academic affairs. The director will have a great deal of support to enhance retention programs and initiatives.
• The new director should develop and foster a strong rapport with the faculty.
The new director will coordinate all retention efforts, designing and implementing programs and consulting with other offices as needed.

Time should be spent gathering information about the faculty’s and students’ perceptions of the current advising structure. This information should inform the exploration of alternative advising models resulting in the creation of an innovative advising approach for Southwestern.

Re-envision pre-orientation day and advisor training.

Place a strong emphasis on collecting and analyzing data to inform all decisions.

Partner with student life to help understand and then repair retention issues.

Create a robust culture of advising built upon best practices and reflective of the institution’s commitment to advising and retention.

This is a one-person shop; the new director will need to learn to effectively balance multiple priorities.

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**Measures of Success for the Position**

At an appropriate interval after joining Southwestern, the following items will initially define success for the new director. The director will have:

- Become a valued and trusted member of the Division of Academic Affairs as well as the Southwestern community. Stakeholders will know who the director is and her/his role as the central person for advising and retention.
- Worked to improve communication about advising and retention efforts to all stakeholders.
- Evaluated and revised advisor training, including providing easy access to up-to-date information and new methods/approaches to ensure the consistent delivery of services across all advisors.
- Evaluated and revised all processes, policies, and procedures, keeping student success at the forefront of all decisions.
- Established strong working relationships and partnerships within the senior leadership team, students, faculty, and key institutional colleagues.
- Taken a leadership role on new and creative initiatives.
- Enhanced services to students, resulting in more satisfaction and less complaints.
Benefits Overview

As part of the university’s overall compensation package, employees may also be eligible to participate in the university’s various benefit programs or other fringe benefits. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Health insurance
- Dental plans
- Vision plans
- Life insurance
- Long-term disability
- Flexible spending
- A variety of leave plans
- Retirement plans
- A variety of fringe benefits including employee tuition assistance and a computer purchase program

For more information about Southwestern University’s employee benefits, visit http://www.southwestern.edu/hr/benefits/.

Application and Nomination

Applications, including a position-specific cover letter and resume, may be submitted online at http://www.spelmanandjohnson.com/open-positions/. Nominations for this position may be emailed to Heather Larabee at hjl@spelmanjohnson.com. Applicants needing reasonable accommodation to participate in the application process should contact Spelman Johnson at 413-529-2895.

Spelman Johnson
Director of Advising and Retention – Southwestern University
Heather J. Larabee, Search Associate

Visit the Southwestern University website at http://www.southwestern.edu/

Southwestern University’s recruitment and admission of students, awarding of financial aid, and operation of programs and facilities are without regard to sex, race, color, religion, age, disability, national or ethnic origin, or any other impermissible factor. The university’s commitment to equal opportunity includes nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Southwestern University is also committed to compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, in federally funded education programs and activities.

Spelman Johnson has prepared this document based on personal interviews and information copied, compiled, or quoted in part from source documents obtained from our client institution, and as such the contents of this document are believed to be reliable. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and factual situations govern, and the material presented here should be relied upon for informational purposes only.