

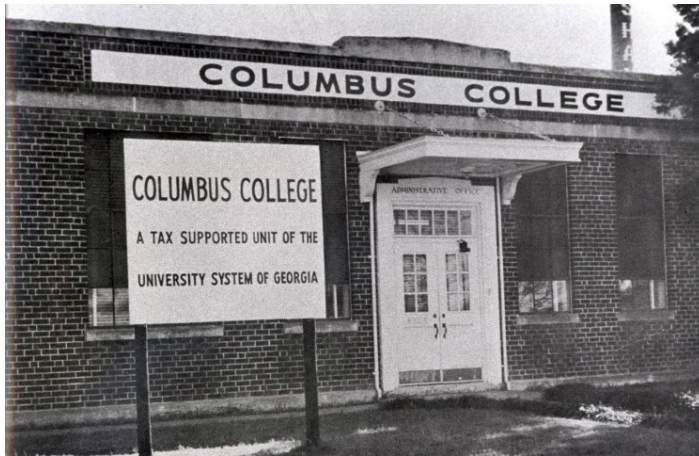


COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY



Leadership Profile

Dean, College of Letters and Sciences
2026



OUR HISTORY

As early as the 1940s, local leaders identified that having a Columbus-based college was a priority. They began collecting money, looking for a site, and lobbying the state for a local college. Through their persistence, donations of nearly \$100,000, and the support of two voter-approved bond issues, Columbus College first opened on Sept. 22, 1958, in a temporary location – the Shannon Hosiery Mill on Talbotton Road.

Nearly 300 students enrolled under the care of 15 faculty members and six

administrators. Those humble beginnings began a story that spans more than six decades of a deeply rooted relationship between what is now Columbus State University and the Chattahoochee Valley. Columbus College moved to its current Main Campus location in 1963 and became a four-year institution just two years later.

Campus master planning hit its stride in the early 1980s as construction expanded to match the growth in CSU's new collegiate structure and academic offerings. The late 1980s marked additional capital growth on campus, including the school's signature clock tower—completed in 1991 and named after its first president, Dr. Thomas Whitley. In 1996, the college was designated as a university and became Columbus State University. Despite widespread higher education budget cuts marking the late 2000s, Columbus State University continued to prosper. This included establishing several new graduate programs – including its first doctoral degree – and its inaugural appearance on U.S. News & World Report's list as one of the top 50 comprehensive public universities in the South. During this time, CSU also strengthened its relationship with U.S. Army Fort Benning, expanded its online degree offerings, added NCAA and club sports, and established the Honors College.

Since 2000, Columbus State has concluded two successful comprehensive fundraising campaigns. The "Investment in People" Campaign, which exceeded its \$67 million goal by nearly 50%, wrapped in 2005. In 2012, CSU's "First Choice" Campaign concluded after exceeding its \$100 million goal by 20% with the support of more than 8,000 alumni and community donors.

CSU experienced additional integration with the Columbus community in 2007 with its new RiverPark Campus near the banks of the Chattahoochee River in historic Uptown. Today, the urban campus includes much of the university's fine, performing and communication arts programs and facilities; is home to the College of the Arts, the College of Education & Health Professions and many of its outreach centers; and offers students learning, living and dining options in addition to those on Main Campus. In recent years, CSU has broadened its creativity, innovation and efficiency in its academic, operational and outreach efforts. This includes an intentional focus on servant leadership as both an institutional core value and an academic discipline. This innovative spirit has led to new workforce development-focused degree programs and increased standings in many national educational ranking programs.

During its 60-plus-year history, the university has been under the leadership of six presidents – including its current president, Dr. Stuart Rayfield, who began her tenure on June 1, 2023.

About Columbus State

Columbus State University offers one of the **most affordable educational options in the Southeast**. This is especially true for students who use Georgia's HOPE and Zell Miller scholarships, receive university scholarships or maximize their military tuition benefits.

The university offers its students a **variety of degrees, programs, minors and certificates in 90-plus undergraduate and graduate academic programs** across fine and performing arts, business, education, health professions, humanities, social sciences and STEM fields. Other academic experiences, like the Honors College, Servant Leadership, ROTC and study abroad, enable students to personalize their college journey, making it both challenging and career-oriented.

Columbus State is a member of the University System of Georgia (USG), which is comprised of 25 public institutions of higher education. The USG is led by a chancellor who reports to the USG Board of Regents.

The university's endowment surpassed **\$100 million in 2024** for the first time and is now valued at more than \$112 million—making it the largest among the USG's nine state universities and seventh largest in the entire system. The CSU Foundation ended FY26 having secured \$23.6 million in philanthropic gifts and commitments, which ranks among the three most-successful fundraising years in university history, and its most successful outside a public comprehensive fundraising year. Each academic year, more than 1,200 CSU students receive approximately \$3 million in scholarships, with awards ranging from \$100 to \$5,000.

In 2025, the university instituted a multi-year, multi-million-dollar upgrade to its student success model, centered around adding International Coaching Federation-certified academic and career success coaches. Academic success coaches partner with students throughout their college experience to clarify goals, navigate academic decisions, and stay on track to graduate on time. Their

career success coach counterparts provide tailored guidance to connect students with internships and build the professional mindset needed to leverage classroom knowledge and experiential learning to increase their career competitiveness and readiness. Students are assigned one of each and retain that assignment throughout their enrollment.

Columbus State is frequently lauded as a military-friendly institution and military-friendly spouse institution. This reputation is fostered through its Military-Connected Student Services team of admissions and financial aid counselors, as well as programs tailored to active-duty soldiers, veterans, retirees and their families at Fort Benning and installations around the country.

CSU's **7,600-plus students** have two distinct campus environments where they learn, live and lead. The traditional Main Campus covers more than 130 acres and features the Whitley Clock Tower quadrangle and other large green spaces where students can study, relax and play. Fifteen minutes away, the RiverPark Campus blends student learning and living with a robust downtown retail, dining and arts scene along the banks of the Chattahoochee.

Introduced to enhance student engagement, retention and success, "The River" core curriculum first-year-student sequence leverages the city itself as a dynamic classroom where community partnerships and hands-on project learning that bring their chosen majors to life. This program undergirds strategic plan priorities focused on increasing students' experiential learning, institutional community impact and regional economic competitiveness.

Columbus State University Cougar Athletics features 275-plus student-athletes who compete as part of **13 NCAA Division II** teams and a competitive cheer program in the **Peach Belt Conference**, alongside over 10 club/intramural sports and an eSports team.

Read more about these and more at columbusstate.edu/about.



Mission, Vision and Core Values

Mission

Columbus State University empowers its community, drives innovation and creates opportunities. To accomplish this, we will focus on: Student Success, Responsible Stewardship, Community Impact, and Economic Competitiveness.

Vision

Columbus State University aspires to be a leader in student success, academic excellence, economic development and community engagement through transformative education and strong partnerships.

Core Values

- **Excellence:** Actively engaging outstanding methods in teaching, academic discovery, creative pursuits, student success, cultural enrichment and the overall campus community.
- **Creativity:** Pursuing distinction through inquiry and innovation, challenging convention and focusing on solutions.
- **Engagement:** Dynamic civic involvement and participation of students, faculty, staff and alumni in the university experience.
- **Sustainability:** Advancing fiscal responsibility, well-being, innovation, lifelong learning and environmental stewardship.
- **Inclusion:** Cultivating and championing a campus environment that welcomes diverse backgrounds, ideas, perspectives and practices.
- **Servant Leadership:** Leading through ethical empowerment and service.



About the College of Letters and Sciences

The College of Letters and Sciences is the academic heart of Columbus State University, offering a majority of the General Education core curriculum; undergraduate programs in the sciences, engineering (robotics), mathematics, humanities, and social sciences; and master's degrees in natural sciences, public administration, public safety administration, and robotics engineering. Students completing degrees in our programs pursue careers in such diverse fields as law, education, public service, public safety, food science, medicine, journalism, scientific research, engineering, and criminal justice.

- [Department of Biology](#)
- [Department of Chemistry](#)
- [Department of Earth and Space Sciences](#)
- [Department of English](#)
- [Department of History, Geography and Philosophy](#)
- [Department of Mathematics](#)
- [Department of Psychology](#)
- [Department of Society, Culture and Languages](#)
- [School of Policy, Justice and Public Safety](#)

Students learn in the classroom and well beyond it. Professional mentorships, lab work, study abroad opportunities, and a variety of internship programs create a learning environment that's holistic and hands-on. Across curricula, students are encouraged to think critically, engage in informed and respectful debate, and consider the merits of different perspectives.

College faculty members are skilled educators and active professionals in the disciplines, conducting new research, publishing, and advancing scholarships at every level. We believe the best education should not only teach; it should spark a curiosity about the world that fuels a lifetime of independent learning.



The Opportunity

The Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences is the central administrator of the college and reports directly to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. The dean provides vision, academic leadership, direction and expert administration, and fosters excellence in teaching, scholarly activity and community engagement and service. The dean positively represents the college and university to all constituents and is active in advancement activities.

Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership in establishing and achieving the CSU's vision, mission, goals and expected academic program outcomes
- Oversee administrative functions including but not limited to staffing, budgets and facility management
- Partner with enrollment management and student success leaders to develop, implement and evaluate student recruitment and retention strategies
- Inspire confidence and motivate others for engagement and innovation
- Serve as an advocate and mediator for students, faculty and staff
- Direct problem-solving involving students, faculty, staff and others
- Maintain visibility on campus, among relevant industries and partners, with alumni and donors, and in the community
- Represent the university positively in interactions to build and sustain effective relationships with a broad range of constituents

Faculty and Staff Oversight

- Provide oversight for recruiting, hiring, orientating, motivating and retaining faculty and staff to effectively manage the college's human capital
- Inspire faculty and staff to work together to build and sustain outstanding academic programs with the capacity for growth
- Facilitate the achievements of faculty expectations related to teaching, scholarly activity, community engagement and service and professional practice
- Facilitate the accomplishments of staff related to student success and professional expectations
- Oversee an effective evaluation system for faculty and staff

General Responsibilities

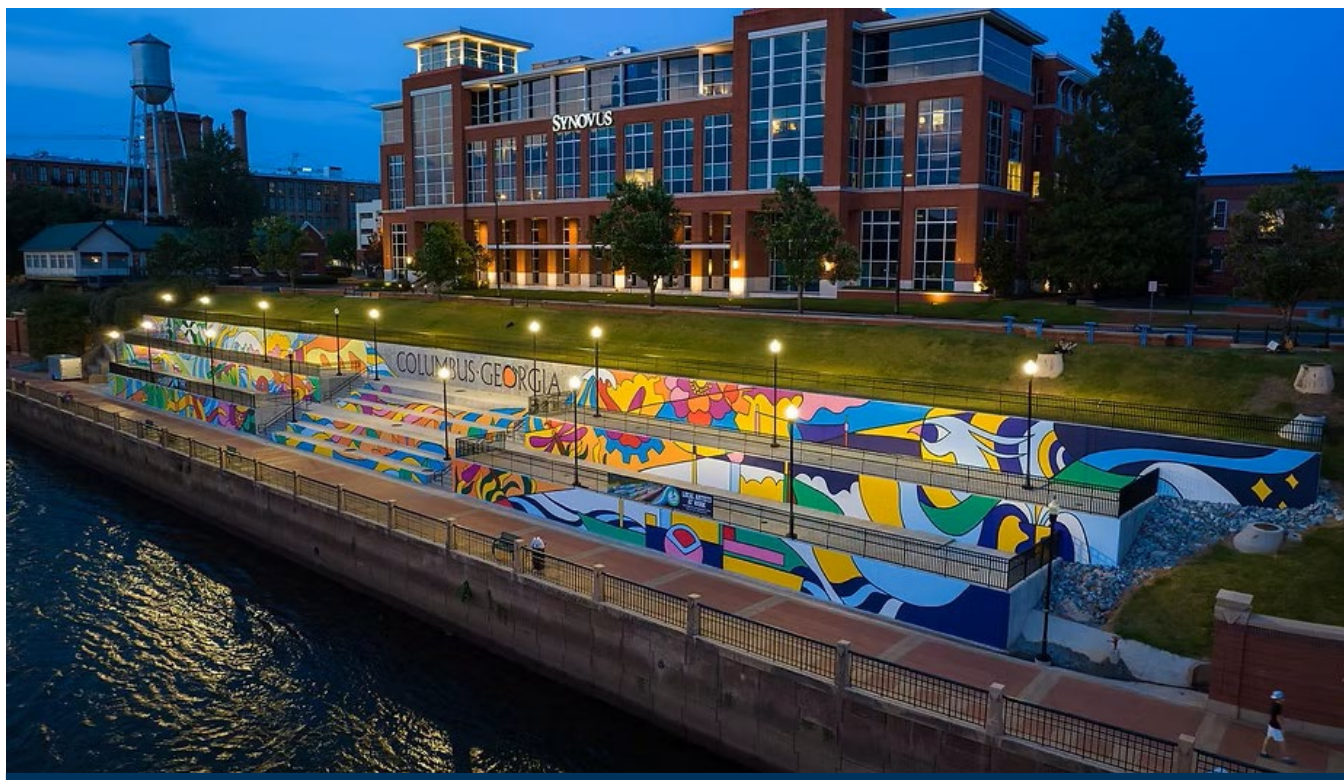
- Participate in all official CSU functions as determined by the president or provost
- Develop and maintain a systematic evaluation plan for the CSU's academic programs to ensure congruence with national standards, professional guidelines or expected competencies and to evaluate program outcomes
- Oversee delivery of classes in a manner to achieve cost-effectiveness and meet student and program needs
- Oversee college, department and program procedures related to faculty and student success
- Ensure compliance with regulatory and accrediting bodies for academic programs (currently SACSCOC for the university)
- Provide support for national and statewide student recruitment and retention activities
- Attend and participate in professional conferences and meetings on and off campus
- Ensure effective management of financial resources (state funding, foundation accounts, etc.) including strategic budget planning which aligns financial needs with the mission and vision of the University
- Direct college alumni engagement and fundraising in collaboration with University Advancement
- Interact with alumni and community partners to raise funds for the college and university to enhance the reputation of the CSU
- Remain current on university, college and department policies and procedures and state and federal regulations affecting higher education

Required Qualifications

- A terminal degree in a discipline within the college
- Three to five years of experience as an academic administrator (e.g., dean, associate dean, department head or director)
- Accomplishments and credentials in teaching, service and scholarly publications sufficient to meet the requirements of the rank of professor at CSU, which includes a minimum of five years of experience in higher education

Knowledge, Skills & Abilities

- Knowledge of university mission, goals and expectations as well as university and college policies, procedures, rules, etc.
- Understanding of university accreditation requirements
- Familiarity with expectations for teaching, scholarly activity, community engagement and service and collegiality
- Organized and attentive to detail
- Effective oral and written communication skills to advocate for the college and university
- Strong active listening, analytical and problem solving skills
- Ability to work cooperatively with faculty, staff, colleagues at all levels, students and external constituents
- Ability to use diplomacy and discretion when providing information to others
- Experience with or potential to fundraise with alumni and external partners



About Columbus, Georgia

Columbus' blend of old and new, wild and mild, entertainment and experiences make it a getaway destination. Just 100 miles southwest of Atlanta and minutes from the Alabama state border, Columbus has a strong and diverse economy, with numerous companies and entrepreneurs thriving. The top employer in the region has long been Fort Benning, with about 45,000 military and private employees. Other major companies here include Aflac's Worldwide Headquarters, Synovus/Pinnacle Financial Partners, FIS (fka TSYS) and Pratt & Whitney. Columbus is a thriving metropolitan statistical area of more than 325,000 in West Georgia and East Alabama. The region benefits from easy access to major metro areas in the Southeast through a network of interstates and four-lane highways. It is also just 90 miles from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Set along the Chattahoochee River on the border with Alabama, Columbus has become a popular spot for outdoor lovers with the longest natural urban whitewater course in the world and a zip line across the river. Nowhere else can you raft or kayak the white waters of the Chattahoochee River, zipline between states, enjoy outdoor recreational facilities – including walking trails, bike riding and cultural events – visit world-class museums, dine at top-flight restaurants, catch Broadway-caliber performances, and then groove to live music late into the night. Sports fans can head to Synovus Park to cheer for the Columbus Clingstones (an MLB AA affiliate of the Atlanta Braves), as well as in-town professional hockey and indoor football teams.

Learn more about what makes Columbus, Georgia, a desirable place to live and work at www.visitcolumbusga.com.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Confidential inquiries, nominations and applications are invited. Review of applications will continue until the position is filled.

For fullest consideration, application materials should be received no later than October 23, 2026. Candidates should provide a curriculum vitae and a letter of application that addresses the priorities outlined in the search profile. Nominations and application materials should be sent electronically via email to Columbus State University's search consultants Martin Baker and Dinah DeWitt at COLSDeanCSU@buffkinbaker.com.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Columbus State University is proud to be an equal employment, equal access, and equal educational opportunity institution. It is the policy of our institution to recruit, hire, train, promote and educate persons without regard to race, color, national or ethnical origin, age, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or veteran status as required by applicable state and federal laws.