



VICE PRESIDENT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

[BENNINGTON COLLEGE](#)

Bennington, Vermont

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

The Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Bennington College in the search for a Vice President for Institutional Advancement.

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement will lead and enhance a high caliber advancement program that reflects Bennington’s culture, mission, goals, and evolving strategic plan. In these efforts, the Vice President will work collaboratively and transparently with the President, Board, senior leadership, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The Vice President will put in place the systems, teams, and structures for advancement planning and decision making at all levels, leading an ongoing institution-wide conversation about vision, strategy, and goals for institutional advancement. The Vice President will serve in a highly visible leadership role with overall responsibility for a comprehensive and integrated fundraising and alumni engagement program and will set the tone for high achievement, moving the advancement team toward reaching audacious goals that align with Bennington’s ethos of innovation and renewal.

BENNINGTON COLLEGE: THE CURRENT MOMENT

Bennington College is a distinguished residential liberal arts college that has, since its founding in 1932, been a laboratory for new ideas and an intellectual home to countless artists, activists, and thinkers who have shaped contemporary culture. The college was the first to include the visual and performing arts in a liberal arts education, and it is the only college to require that its students spend a term—every year—at work in the world. Today, Bennington is home to a community that is engaged with some of the most critical issues facing our country and the world. Bennington’s students work intensively with faculty and staff to forge individualized and hands-on educational paths around their driving questions and interests, and also devote themselves to a number of community outreach efforts, often tied to the endeavors they are pursuing in their coursework.

Bennington is in the midst of an immensely exciting and transformative period in its history and experiencing extraordinary growth. In 2020, Laura R. Walker took office as the 11th President of Bennington College, previously serving as a pioneering media executive as former President & CEO of New York Public Radio for 23 years. Under President Laura Walker’s leadership, the college has launched a community-driven strategic planning process to articulate a unified and shared vision of Bennington’s future. Simultaneously, college-bound students are choosing Bennington at record rates. This past year alone, the college enrolled the largest class ever with a 23% increase in applications, and has received even more applicants this year, this time by 64%, effectively doubling its pool in just two admissions cycles. The community now approaches nearly 800 students—697 undergraduate and 102 graduate.

Bennington is investing in choices that support a radical future for the college: to educate the whole person, tell the stories that matter to the world now, and create innovative partnerships for social impact, on campus and in the larger community and beyond. Funders have embraced this vision: the college has recently received generous support from alumni, including one of the largest donations in its history, as well as support from The Ford Foundation, Endeavor Foundation, and several others to support programs in sustainability, mental health, social justice, and storytelling, and is also poised to double its endowment in the next five years.

Situated on 440 breathtaking acres in Bennington, Vermont, the campus is a convergence of creative minds, distinctive buildings, and expansive spaces. Bennington has been named one of ten college campuses with the best architecture by Architectural Digest. From campus, it is a short drive to MASS MoCA, Clark Art Institute, and other cultural offerings of the northern Berkshires in Massachusetts; Albany, New York; and many of Vermont's top recreational centers. New York City, Boston, and Burlington, Vermont are all within three and a half hours by car.

BENNINGTON COLLEGE: REINVENTING LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION

Bennington College was established in 1932 in partnership with many other New England Colleges as a laboratory for progressive higher education. It was the first college to put the arts at the center of the curriculum and to emphasize self-directed learning, made real through hands-on experience in the field. Bennington was and continues to be a leader among the nation's liberal arts colleges.

All Bennington students receive graduate-style advising from faculty who are active practitioners in their fields, and 100 percent of students graduate with four internships in the field of their choice.

In the late 1920s, Bennington College emerged as an idea—an idea shared by a group of forward-thinking educators and civic leaders who believed that America needed a progressive new college. In 1932, with charter and land secured, the college welcomed its first class of 87 students and this idea was given life.

It did not take long for Bennington to distinguish itself as a vanguard institution among American colleges and universities. Dancers—including Martha Graham and Martha Hill—flocked to the college in the 1930s and 40s to chart the course of modern dance. In the 1940s and 50s, as Bennington was the first college to include the visual and performing arts as an equal partner in the liberal arts curriculum, painters and sculptors gathered on its campus to redefine the visual arts canon. Peter Drucker, Eric Fromm, and Buckminster Fuller taught at Bennington. Always a fertile ground for writers, the 1980s and 90s saw an influx of young talent eager to push the boundaries of contemporary literature. Today, Bennington is a hub yet again, for artists, writers, scientists, scholars—innovators in every field—who want to apply their individual talents to addressing global issues of urgent concern.

Since the beginning, Bennington has viewed students as protagonists in their own education. With the help of a faculty of teacher-practitioners, each student is required to develop, revise, implement, and evaluate an individual academic plan that frames and constitutes their undergraduate trajectory—a process known as *The Plan*. The result is a continuously evolving, and intentionally elastic institution that puts a premium on the creation of new work, personal responsibility, and the contribution of the individual, while ensuring that students learn—perhaps above all—how to merge the ideals of personal freedom with those of public responsibility.

Bennington’s unique innovations in curricula continuously challenge, yet sustain, its students to graduate—regardless of chosen field—notably confident in their capacity to engage and succeed in the world in a manner that is advanced and distinct among peers. There’s a tremendous sense of change and excitement on campus. Bennington is often thought of as a small, rural, and even quirky campus but it is home to a community that is transforming the world around us.

Bennington has, in its persistent reinvention of liberal education, remained true to its founding virtues. It has gained stability not from motionlessness but from constant motion, not from states of rest but from unrelenting restlessness. Yet the underlying purpose of Bennington has been clear from the start: to place students at the helm of their own education; to guide them in the direction of their greatest potential; and to enlarge, deepen, and transform their lives.

Bennington regards education as a sensual and ethical, no less than an intellectual, process. It seeks to liberate and nurture the individuality, the creative intelligence, and the ethical and aesthetic sensibility of its students—to the end that their richly varied natural endowments will be directed toward self-fulfillment, and toward constructive social purposes. Bennington believes that these educational goals are best served by demanding of its students' active participation in the planning of their own programs, and in the regulation of their own lives on campus. Student freedom is not the absence of restraint; however, it is rather the fullest possible substitution of habits of self-restraint for restraint imposed by others. The exercise of student freedom is the very condition of a meaningful education, and an essential aspect of the nurture of free citizens, dedicated to civilized values, and capable of creative and constructive membership in modern society.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement will report to the President, Laura Walker, and will work in partnership with the Advancement team, President’s Office, Board of Directors, key Cabinet leaders, and senior staff, faculty, all college offices including Communications, Admissions and Financial Aid, Business Office, Provost and Dean’s Office, and Library, among others. The Vice President will oversee and grow a team of 17 to 21.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

*I arrived at Bennington in mid 2020 after a career in public media, and immediately fell in love with the stunning Vermont campus and its creative and intellectual community, one that is as comfortable abroad as it is at home. At first glance, public radio and higher education may seem quite distinct. But in truth there are many similarities, beginning with purpose. The mission of New York Public Radio, where I was President, was **“to make the mind more curious, the heart more open and the soul more joyful.”** And I believe that is very much what we do at Bennington as well. I am excited to assemble a talented and diverse team that shares the values of Bennington.*

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement will join the team as we are developing a strategic plan and will have the opportunity to build a future-facing team that will create strategies to take Bennington to new heights. I'm looking for a thought partner and strategist—someone who is ambitious and can toggle between wonder and rigor, and who inspires others to break boundaries and do their best work. I know from my past experiences that a successful Advancement program requires the focus,

commitment, and partnership of the President and I am fully prepared to devote my time and energies to the Vice President's success.

I'm seeking a creative thinker, who can put ideas into action, a masterful storyteller, and one who is going to engage with our faculty, Board, leadership peers, and generous donors, authentically and meaningfully. A visionary, inspirational leader, the Vice President must also be a superb implementer, creating long- and short-term plans, setting targets for milestones and accountability measures. Tolerance of risk and ambiguity will be absolute necessities, but so too will playfulness and a contagious spirit of joy. I welcome applications from those eager to experiment with new ideas, and ones who understand the work of advancement both as a stabilizing force and as a catalyzer for new ideas. I look forward to receiving your application.

—Laura R. Walker, President

BENNINGTON COLLEGE'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Bennington serves a diverse student population—inclusive of ethnic/racial minorities, international and global constituents, sexual minorities, and various social classes, among other identities. Its staff and faculty also reflect diverse backgrounds and identities. All employees are expected to be respectful and responsive to these differences in the service of building community that promotes student and employee success. Each individual (faculty, staff, and students) is accountable for upholding these values. The college's approach to pluralism and inclusivity—both as fields of inquiry and practice—is to prioritize flexible thought, and to invite the examination of access, value, and power through its institutional policies and areas of study. Bennington encourages applicants from diverse realms of interest, backgrounds, experience, and accomplishment to apply.

Bennington has come together in recent months to begin the work of creating forms of teaching and learning that model a truly equitable, diverse, and inclusive institution of higher education. President Walker has established a President's Working Group to create an anti-racist community with staff, students, alumni, and board members. The important work of this task force will be to create a strategic plan for the future, as Bennington continues to inspire more voices, more experiences, and more points of view. It is investing in diversifying the faculty, staff, and student body to include the fullest possible range of experiences in this community.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement will

- instill a heightened level of engagement for prospects, donors, parents, alumni, and other stakeholders within the Bennington community, preparing for the next phase of the college's fundraising and alumni engagement expansion;
- manage a select principal gift portfolio including Bennington's Trustees and other donors and prospects;
- continually strive to improve and extend relationships with all constituencies in ways that have a quantifiable impact on philanthropic revenue;
- with a pre-campaign assessment already underway, partner with consultants who have been engaged to assist in planning and capacity building;
- inspire staff through effective motivation, mentoring, and team building;

- leverage team members' existing capacity while strengthening performance to drive goal-oriented outcomes;
- expand the existing vehicles and practices through which Bennington can capitalize on the energy of a passionate and spirited alumni body;
- work collaboratively and transparently with Bennington's President, Board, senior leadership, faculty, staff, students and alumni to enhance relationships with all constituencies in ways that have a quantifiable impact on philanthropic revenue;
- lead a highly dedicated team that is keenly focused on alumni and parent engagement, annual giving, major and planned giving, foundation relations, and advancement services; and
- leverage team members' existing capacity while strengthening performance to drive goal-oriented outcomes.

LEADERSHIP

Laura R. Walker **President**

Laura R. Walker took office as the 11th president of Bennington College on August 1, 2020. Prior to this appointment, she was the President and CEO of New York Public Radio (NYPR), a position that she held for 23 years.

Walker is a visionary, mission-oriented, and strategic leader who spearheaded the transformation of NYPR from two city-owned local stations to the nation's largest independent non-profit public radio station group, and a groundbreaking producer that serves more than 26 million people each month. Her vision of fearless journalism, that represents the breadth of American experiences, helped establish the station's role as one of the world's preeminent podcast producers. During her tenure, NYPR was awarded ten George Foster Peabody awards and many other honors. Walker built a pioneering staff of innovative journalists and producers at NYPR, including the MacArthur genius, Jad Abumrad, and his colleagues at *Radiolab*, the investigative team that uncovered stop-and-frisk abuses under the Bloomberg administration, the great minds behind *Freakonomics*, and the artists-in-residence at WQXR. Behind NYPR's superlative journalism was a sound and strategic long-term financial model. With regular reexaminations of the media landscape, NYPR was able to consistently adapt to shifting trends and stay ahead of challenges on the horizon. Walker led three separate five-year plan processes at NYPR, translating goals into executable tactics for program production, fundraising, and partnership-building.

Walker began her professional career as a print journalist. She later moved to National Public Radio where she worked as a producer. She has also served as Vice President of Development at Sesame Workshop; and at Carnegie Hall, where she launched the award-winning series, *AT&T Presents Carnegie Hall Tonight*. Following her time at NYPR, she was an Executive Fellow in Residence at the Yale School of Management and an advisor to media startups and nonprofits.

Walker sits on the boards of The Commonwealth Fund, the Eagle Picher Trust, Yale University's Honorary Degree Committee, and the President's Advisory Council of Wesleyan University. She has served on the boards of Tribune Media, Public Radio International, Saint Ann's School and The Women's Forum.

In 2009, and again in 2017, Walker was named by *Crain's* as one of New York City's 50 Most Powerful Women. She has been honored with an Edward R. Murrow Award from the Corporate for Public Broadcasting and a Distinguished Alumna Award by Wesleyan University. She was recognized in May

2020 with the honorable Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Award by the Municipal Arts Society for her notable contribution to the public media landscape.

Walker holds an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a BA in History, magna cum laude, from Wesleyan University, where she was an Olin Scholar.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement will be a strategic, creative leader who is visionary about Bennington's fundraising potential and who can support the President's entrepreneurial initiatives to maximize results.

Furthermore, Bennington College seeks a Vice President for Institutional Advancement with

- a commitment to the mission and vision of Bennington College and a passion for liberal arts education;
- a proven track record of building, managing, and mentoring a highly effective, diverse team, as well as demonstrated success with major gift fundraising;
- outstanding interpersonal competencies, the ability to effectively engage volunteer leadership, and a deep commitment to instilling practices and a culture within advancement that reflect Bennington College;
- deep knowledge of effective advancement strategies, including significant personal experience raising major gifts and a track record of advancement program building;
- a creative, ambitious, and dynamic approach with the ability to attract and animate a strong team;
- demonstrated success with major gift fundraising;
- a desire to embrace technological and analytical solutions with a keen sense of what is possible and an uncommon level of excellence in communication and collaboration skills, together with a demonstrated propensity for weaving advancement into institutional values and aspirations;
- orientation as an engaging leader with strong management and team building skills;
- an ability to thrive in a metrics-driven, entrepreneurial environment;
- a commitment to diversity and inclusion consistent with Bennington's approach to pluralism and inclusivity;
- strong verbal and written communication skills, organizational and analytical skills, and project management skills;
- experience with Board volunteer management and the ability to maintain a high level of diplomacy; and
- technological proficiency (Raiser's Edge, Google Suite and Microsoft Office).

A bachelor's degree is required for this position as is at least ten years of fundraising experience. Individuals with experience in all non-profit sectors and organization types are encouraged to apply.

SALARY & BENEFITS

Bennington College offers a competitive and comprehensive salary and package of [employee benefits](#).

LOCATION

Bennington College is situated on 440 breathtaking acres in Bennington, Vermont. From campus, it is a short drive to MASS MoCA, the Clark, and other cultural offerings of the northern Berkshires in Massachusetts; Albany, New York; and many of Vermont's top recreational centers. New York City, Boston, and Burlington, Vermont are all within three and a half hours by car.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of Bennington College and the responsibilities and qualifications stated in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

Bennington College is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination as defined under applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities. The College does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV test, or any other legally protected status.

To apply for this position, visit:

[Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Bennington College.](#)

To nominate a candidate, please contact Don Hasseltine, donhasseltine@aspenleadershipgroup.com.

All inquiries will be held in confidence.