



Western Technical College

# **PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROFILE**

La Crosse, Wisconsin

**Western**  
Technical College



## THE OPPORTUNITY

Western Technical College is entering a defining chapter in our long history of serving students, employers, and communities across western Wisconsin. Established in 1912, Western has grown alongside the region we serve and is recognized today as a trusted public institution with a strong reputation for workforce alignment, student outcomes, and community partnership.

Western seeks a president who can lead with vision, focus, and steadiness. This leader will guide the college at a time when higher education faces funding uncertainty, workforce disruption, and an increasingly complex political environment. At the same time, Western is well-positioned. We have modern facilities, strong partnerships, and a committed group of co-workers who care deeply about student success and community impact.

This is not a moment for disruption for its own sake. Western is looking for a leader who can set direction, build alignment, and sustain momentum in ways that are thoughtful, transparent, and achievable.



## ABOUT WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Western serves learners across an 11-county district that includes Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Sauk, Trempealeau, Vernon, and portions of Buffalo, Clark, and Crawford counties. Our main campus is located in La Crosse, with Regional Learning Centers in Black River Falls, Independence, Mauston, Tomah, Viroqua, and a Public Safety Training Facility in Sparta.

Western provides associate degrees, technical diplomas, certificates, short-term credentials, apprenticeships, and customized training designed to meet regional workforce needs. Our mission is to provide relevant, high-quality education in a collaborative and sustainable environment that changes the lives of students and grows our communities.

### ***Western is widely viewed as:***

- A reliable workforce and economic development partner
- An inclusive, accessible, and student-focused institution
- A college that delivers practical, career-connected education



## COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH

Western's relationship with our communities is built on trust, accountability, and shared investment.

In 2012, voters across our district approved a \$79.8 million referendum, affirming the college's role as a public asset and workforce partner. That investment supported campus facilities, instructional environments, and infrastructure that continue to benefit students, employers, and communities today. More than a decade later, the return on that investment is measurable.

According to a 2025 economic impact study, Western generated \$370.5 million in added income to the regional economy in fiscal year 2023–24. That impact is equivalent to 2.2 percent of the region's total gross regional product and supported 5,077 jobs, or approximately one out of every 35 jobs in the Western District.

### ***This impact reflects three primary drivers:***

- College operations and employee spending, which added \$52.4 million in regional income
- Student spending by relocated and retained students, which added \$6.1 million
- Alumni impact, with former students contributing \$312.1 million in added income through their work in the regional economy

### ***The study also demonstrates strong returns on public and private investment:***

- Students realize an average return of \$6.60 in lifetime earnings for every dollar invested in their education
- Taxpayers receive \$1.10 in public benefits for every dollar invested
- Society benefits from \$7.80 in combined income and social savings for every dollar invested

These outcomes reflect Western's long-standing commitment to aligning education with workforce needs, stewarding public resources responsibly, and contributing meaningfully to regional vitality.

The next president will inherit not only strong facilities and partnerships, but also a clear responsibility to sustain public trust and demonstrate the value of technical education to students, employers, and taxpayers alike.



*"Community-based learning provides our students with the opportunity to take what they are learning in the classroom and apply those skills with resume-enhancing projects that benefit our community partners. These are defining moments that shape their journey here. While our students come to Western for an education, they leave with experiences, and it's these community-based and work-based learning experiences that make Western stand out."*

**Julie Christensen,**  
Community Engagement  
Coordinator

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION: EXPERIENCE 2027

Western's work is guided by Experience 2027, a strategic plan focused on "every student, every day." The plan is organized around four strategic directions: first choice service, workforce and community engagement, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and co-worker engagement.

### **Key goals include:**

- Increasing student engagement with support services
- Expanding work-based and community-based learning across all programs
- Implementing a comprehensive workforce sector development strategy
- Increasing co-worker engagement and leadership capacity
- Eliminating equity gaps in course completion, retention, and graduation for Black, Hispanic or Latino, and Native American students

The plan is supported by clear measures and targets designed to place Western among the top quartile of Wisconsin Technical College System institutions. Progress is monitored through data and shared openly to support accountability and continuous improvement.

Western approaches equity as an institutional responsibility tied directly to student success. Strategies focus on guided pathways, evidence-based practices, poverty- and trauma-informed approaches, and creating environments where students and co-workers experience belonging and support.

## NATIONAL RECOGNITION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Western's commitment to student success and equity has earned national recognition. The college was named an **Aspen Prize Semi-Finalist for 2025**, placing us among the top community and technical colleges in the nation.

Western is also a leader college and an active participant in **Achieving the Dream**, a national network focused on improving outcomes for all students, particularly those historically underserved. Through this work, we have strengthened our use of data, cross-functional collaboration, and equity-focused practices. We were recently invited to apply for the **Leah Meyer Austin Award**, Achieving the Dream's highest recognition for sustained, evidence-based improvement.

These efforts reflect a culture that values reflection, accountability, and evidence-based learning.



## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND ENROLLMENT

Western serves a diverse population of learners across credit, non-credit, dual credit, adult education, and workforce training.

### *In 2023:*

- Western served **14,438 total students**, including **4,944 program-declared students**
- The median age of credit students was **22**
- **68 percent** of program students attended part time
- **48 percent** of program students received financial aid
- Approximately **500 students** were parenting students

### *Program student demographics in 2023 included:*

- **79 percent White students**
- **10 percent Hispanic students**
- **4 percent Black students**
- Remaining students identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, multiracial, Pacific Islander, or unknown

Western's student population reflects the region it serves, with increasing racial and ethnic diversity and a strong presence of adult learners, part-time students, and first-generation college students.



## ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Academic innovation at Western is driven by workforce needs, employer partnerships, and student outcomes. Work-based and community-based learning is embedded in **100 percent** of associate degree and technical diploma programs.

A major focal point of innovation is the **Wanek Center for Innovation**, a state-of-the-art facility designed to provide education and training in advanced manufacturing, automation, robotics, and emerging technologies. The center strengthens our ability to prepare students for high-skill, high-demand careers and supports regional economic growth.

Western has also invested in immersive learning through its **virtual and extended reality lab**, which supports simulation-based education in areas such as healthcare, public safety, and technical training. These tools allow students to practice complex skills in safe, controlled environments that mirror real-world conditions.

### ***Additional innovation includes:***

- Seven-week instructional sessions designed to increase flexibility, reduce time to completion, and better support working learners and part-time students
- Basic needs support, including food access, emergency funding, and connections to housing and other resources that help students persist and complete
- Strong transfer pathways, with more than **600 students** transferring to universities annually
- Integrated SuccessAbilities that emphasize professionalism, resilience, communication, and ethical practice
- A residence hall that supports student life and engagement
- Robust Business and Industry Services serving more than **200 employers** annually

Innovation at Western is measured not by novelty, but by outcomes. Graduates achieve strong employment results, with **96 percent employed, 85 percent working in related fields, and 91 percent employed in Wisconsin.**



## CULTURE AND CO-WORKERS

Western strives to create a culture where people feel empowered to make a difference; where co-workers are passionate about collaboration and student success; where equitable actions respect differences; and where students, partners, communities, and one another are served from a place of unconditional positive regard.

This culture is grounded in shared values of learning, excellence, accountability, diversity, student success, teamwork, integrity, and respect. These values shape how work is done, how decisions are made, and how the college shows up for students and communities across its eleven-county district.

*"Our sense of purpose is defined by the moments we make a difference in our community and even more for our most vulnerable students. But that impact is rarely a solo effort. It is a deep, campus-wide collaboration. I am only able to be my best 'teacher self' because of the support staff who serve as the foundation of our community. They are the unsung heroes who work behind the scenes and alongside our community partners to ensure our students have the holistic support they need to thrive. To truly value our mission is to recognize and celebrate the employees who make it possible every day."*

**James Bushman,**  
Digital Media Production  
Instructor

Our co-workers are deeply committed professionals who care about their work and about one another. Recent results from the Fall 2025 Gallup Q12 engagement survey reflect a positive and improving workplace culture.

### **Survey results highlight several areas of strength:**

- Strong connection to mission and purpose, with employees reporting that Western's mission makes their work feel important
- High levels of commitment to quality, with co-workers expressing pride in the work done across the college
- Positive perceptions of care and support, with employees indicating that supervisors and colleagues care about them as individuals
- Continued growth in opportunities to learn and develop, reflecting Western's investment in professional growth and leadership development

Results also point to areas of ongoing focus, including recognition and continued clarity during periods of change. These insights are used intentionally through college-wide engagement action plans and leadership development efforts aligned with Experience 2027.

Like many institutions, Western has navigated significant change in recent years. Co-workers are clear about what they value moving forward: transparent communication, clear priorities, and leadership that builds trust through consistency and follow-through.

The next president will join a college community that is engaged, reflective, and ready to move forward together, guided by shared values and a strong sense of purpose.



## COMMUNITY PROFILE

Western serves an 11-county district in western Wisconsin that stretches along the Mississippi River and into the heart of the Driftless Region. Shaped by rolling bluffs, river valleys, farmland, and small towns, the region offers a distinctive blend of natural beauty, economic productivity, and community connection.

At the center of the district is La Crosse, a vibrant regional hub situated along the Mississippi River. La Crosse offers the cultural, recreational, and professional opportunities of a mid-sized city, including healthcare systems, higher education institutions, arts organizations, and a growing downtown. Surrounding communities such as Black River Falls, Tomah, Viroqua, Mauston, Independence, and Sparta reflect the character of western Wisconsin, with strong local identity, civic pride, and close ties between schools, employers, and residents.

The region's economy is diverse and resilient. Healthcare, advanced manufacturing, transportation, business services, education, agriculture, and tourism all play critical roles. Employers value technical skill, adaptability, and reliability, and they look to Western as a key partner in developing and sustaining the regional workforce. Small and family-owned businesses are common, alongside large regional employers that anchor local economies.

Quality of life is a defining feature of the district. Residents enjoy access to outdoor recreation year-round, including hiking, biking, fishing, boating, and trail systems that connect communities and landscapes. Arts, music, local festivals, farmers' markets, and community events contribute to a strong sense of place. Commutes are manageable, housing is relatively affordable, and neighborhoods reflect a balance of urban, rural, and small-town living.

Community engagement runs deep across the district. Volunteerism, local governance, school activities, and civic organizations play an important role in daily life. Education is widely valued, and technical colleges are seen as essential contributors to individual opportunity, workforce strength, and regional vitality.

For the next president, western Wisconsin offers more than a place to lead. It offers a place to live well, build relationships, and make a lasting impact. The region's people value authenticity, service, and collaboration, creating an environment where leadership is grounded in trust and connection. It is an ideal setting for a president who wants to guide a mission-driven institution while enjoying a high quality of life rooted in community and purpose.



## **WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE PRESIDENT POSITION LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES**

The next President will lead with humility and deeply understand and commit to an open access college and its mission, vision, and values. The President will report directly to the Western Technical College Board and champion Western Technical College as the College of Choice to meet educational needs and advance student success within the region the institution serves.

The most competitive candidates will have a strong record of leadership success; academic, executive, and/or administrative leadership experience is required, preferably in a technical or community college; a minimum of a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution with an emphasis in higher education, educational administration, or other appropriate discipline is required; and a minimum of six (6) years of experience in education is required.

An earned doctorate from a regionally accredited institution and a record of teaching experience are preferred.

### ***Additional leadership attributes, skills, and experiences include:***

The ability to be agile and lead through the rapid changes impacting higher education, particularly in technical colleges.

- A deep understanding of an open access technical college with regional centers that serve individual counties within an institution's service area
- Demonstrated experience in strategic planning and the capacity to build a shared vision to meet the current and emerging educational needs of all the communities that a college serves
- A track record of increasing enrollment, student retention and success, and college completion while maintaining academic excellence
- Evidence of being student centered and providing an accessible, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for students of all backgrounds and academic levels
- Exceptional skill in financial planning, stewardship, and decision making that charts the course toward long-term fiscal stability and sustainability of an institution
- High emotional intelligence and compassion for colleagues to support the institution's organizational health, employee engagement, and a positive work environment

- A collaborative, inspirational leadership style, demonstrated through the ability to communicate, listen, be visible, and actively engage with all stakeholders to build trust and nurture a strong sense of community
- Demonstrated experience of successful working, collegial relationships with a Board of Directors or similar governing body
- A deep understanding and experience in developing productive working relationships with faculty, staff, and administrators to support academic excellence, student support, collaborative decision-making, and effective communication across the college
- Evidence of building successful relationships and partnerships with community organizations, business and industry, K-12 school systems, and other educational institutions to create sustainable support for diverse student populations, workforce development programs, and the overall college mission
- The proven ability to be a key leader in the community who represents an institution and tells a compelling story to garner increased support for the institution
- Demonstrated experience navigating the political environment and effectively advocating for the college with elected officials and government entities at the local, state and national levels
- A track record of working with Foundations and developing relationships with donors to advance major gifts and fundraising
- A working knowledge of technology infrastructure relevant to supporting academic, student learning, and administrative functions sufficiently; the capacity to remain current and support assessment of emerging technologies for appropriate use in an educational setting
- Effective and clear oral and written communication skills, including the ability to listen to different groups and communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Exceptional skill to achieve consensus but make tough decisions when appropriate
- Strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and the ability to utilize quantitative and qualitative data to inform decisions
- Professional and personal integrity and ethical conduct



## THE LEADERSHIP AGENDA

- **Strategic Enrollment Management** – Colleges and universities across the nation face headwinds and Western Technical College is no exception. Moreover, Western’s target market is particularly challenging from a demographic perspective. Nevertheless, the College’s total enrollment is up over last year and its all-college retention rates are also higher. The next president will collaborate with colleagues on recruitment strategies, new programs of all types and student success initiatives aimed at continuing the College’s forward progress on enrollment.
- **Strategic Planning** – Western is implementing its dynamic strategic plan “Experience 2027”, with its four strategic directions and corresponding goals. You can view the Plan [here](#). The new president will continue the Plan’s execution and lead preparations for a shared vision and a new plan.
- **Wanek Center of Innovation** – Western is proud of the Wanek Center of Innovation, which opened this past fall, a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to advanced manufacturing education and training. The exciting new facility will transform the student experience and enable Western to enhance the way in which it meets the evolving workforce needs of the region.
- **Visibility and Partnerships** – The president will be visible in the markets Western serves to learn the needs of employers. Such visits will set the stage for new ways in which Western may collaborate to meet the workforce needs of today and tomorrow. During such visits, the president will also be attuned to potential new partnerships with other educational institutions and non-profit entities. Such partnerships will help rejuvenate the College’s Regional Learning Centers.
- **Finances** – Western has a planned operating deficit of approximately \$1.85 million underwritten by prudent reserves. On the other hand, and more generally, in 2025 the College increased its net position by \$8.7 million over the previous year’s totals. The administration has planned to eliminate the deficit over the next three years. The plan offers the new president a suggested blueprint for continuing the strong tradition of fiscal stewardship for which Western is known.
- **Federal Regulatory Changes** – The regulatory landscape in Washington is changing at speeds not seen before. The president and their team will need to monitor these changes closely and ensure compliance.

- **Public Funding** – Federal and state appropriations as well as property taxes provide a significant percentage of Western’s budget. Accordingly, the president will be an advocate with public officials and local taxpayers for funds that will enable Western to continue its exemplary service to the region.
- **Fundraising** – The Western Foundation is integral to support the College in pursuing ambitious, mission-aligned growth. In 2024, the Foundation received its largest gift. This year the Foundation initiated two campaigns. The College launched both the Advanced Manufacturing Campaign and the Basic Needs Campaign.

The Advanced Manufacturing Campaign strengthens workforce development while building a long-term K–12-to-career pipeline in high-demand technical fields.

The Basic Needs Campaign has been elevated as a college-wide priority, engaging alumni, corporate partners, and community supporters to address food insecurity, housing instability, transportation, and emergency financial challenges—supports that are essential to student persistence, completion, and equity.

The new president will have the opportunity to build on these campaigns and reach even higher levels of success.

- **Technology** – The College has a new ERP that holds considerable potential for improving the quality of work life and service to students. The president will collaborate with colleagues to ensure the system delivers the promised ROI. Obviously, artificial intelligence is already transforming the workplace and will continue to do so for years to come. The president will be an advocate for the new ways in which the College will operate through further utilization of AI.
- **Relationships** – The College has a relationship-oriented culture. The new leader will find colleagues ready to build strong relationships grounded in trust, keys to Western’s continued success. The president will be highly visible on campus, a strategy integral to this process.
- **Reputation in the Region** – Western is well regarded in the region for its contributions to economic development and social mobility. The business community and the K-12 system have a positive view of the College. The president and their colleagues will build on this platform of goodwill to usher in a new era of success for Western.



## NOMINATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

AGB Search is pleased to assist Western Technical College with this Presidential Search.

To ensure full consideration, applications should be received by April 10, 2026. Application materials should be submitted in PDF format through the AGB Search portal at: [President – Western Technical College](#) and must include the following:

- A letter of interest addressing the strategic objectives and qualifications identified in the profile;
- A curriculum vitae; and
- The contact information for five professional references, including email address, phone number, and relationship to the candidate. No references will be contacted without prior explicit approval.

Please direct nominations, confidential inquiries or any questions regarding the application process to: [WesternTechPres@agbsearch.com](mailto:WesternTechPres@agbsearch.com) or one of the AGB Search consultants listed below.

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## COLLEGE MISSION

Western Technical College provides relevant, high quality education, in a collaborative and sustainable environment that changes the lives of students and grows our communities.

## COLLEGE VALUES

We value the success of our students and hold ourselves accountable for providing excellence in student learning, based on the diverse needs of each student and built on a foundation of integrity, teamwork, and respect.