



YORK
UNIVERSITY

SINCE 1890

Presidential Search

JULY 2024

The mission of York University is to transform lives through Christ-centered education and to equip students for lifelong service to God, family and society.



The York University Board of Trustees has opened a nationwide search for its twenty-second president to succeed Dr. Sam Smith.

Thank you for inquiring about the search for a new president at York University.

This information packet provides guidance on the search process and offers potential applicants a wide-angle view of York and the role which the next president will play. The search committee welcomes questions from any applicant or would-be applicant. Inquires may be addressed to presidential-search@york.edu.

York University President

Criteria and Qualifications

The York University Board of Trustees, in consultation with the faculty and staff, has developed the following set of qualifications for York's next president.

- Faith and spiritual maturity
- An advanced degree (terminal degree strongly preferred)
- A track record of success in demanding management/leadership roles
- Demonstrated skill in operational management
- Acumen in financial management
- A thorough understanding of fund-raising (significant experience in fund-raising preferred)
- A heart for students
- Someone who treats faculty and staff with respect and honor
- A good communicator, both publicly and in writing
- A long-time member of the Churches of Christ
- A history of engagement in local congregational life
- Committed to maintaining close affiliation between York University and Churches of Christ
- Capable of advancing York's relationships with various communities and constituencies
- An entrepreneurial spirit

The board is receptive to applicants, both male and female, from any ethnic or racial background. Past involvement with York University and its campus culture will be considered a plus, and York University alumni will receive special consideration. A full job description for the president is available at york.edu/presidential-search.php.

Expectations and Challenges

York University's twenty-second president will be expected to build on the momentum that has developed over the past decade under the leadership of both Dr. Steve Eckman and Dr. Sam Smith. Under Dr. Eckman's guidance, York reestablished a stable financial footing and made major additions to campus facilities. Capitalizing on these milestones, Dr. Smith then oversaw record-breaking fund-raising campaigns and led the campus through its transition to university status. The school officially changed its name to York University in 2022.

In recent years, student enrollment has been at all-time highs, with an average of 450 students in residence and 200 taking courses online. But neither the resident nor online potential has been fully exploited.

York was later than other schools in offering online courses. Through intensive effort, however, online programs are now a well-established part of the curriculum. York's graduate degrees are offered entirely online, and enrollment has grown steadily for both the M.A. in Education and the M.A. in Organizational and Global Leadership. York's next president will be expected to foster a broader and more extensive online program.

Like all small schools with limited endowment, York must be expeditious in managing costs and tireless in its efforts at fund-raising. As the CEO, York University's president must make cost containment a priority, while working within fiscal constraints to optimize classroom excellence and the quality of student life, along with salaries and benefits for staff and faculty. The president must also take a prominent role in gift solicitation, especially with current or prospective major donors.

The president should also bring an entrepreneurial spirit to the campus. In order to limit the amount of debt that students incur, York has not accelerated tuition as aggressively as other institutions. While this aids student recruitment, tuition revenue and fundraising strain to cover the cost of operations. Finding alternative ways to generate revenue will therefore be of prime interest over the next decade.

Administratively, York's president faces the challenge of not having an executive vice-president to assist with oversight of day-to-day operations. The net effect is that the president wears two hats as both the chief executive officer and the chief operational officer.

This dual tasking is eased by virtue of York's proven and veteran staff in finance and operations. Still, the president must shoulder significant on-campus responsibilities without sacrificing the time and effort required for fund-raising and building external relations.

Because York is a small campus, the president is widely known and must be a role model of York's ideals. The president has an opportunity to build close connections with faculty, staff, and students on an individual basis. Past presidents have taken advantage of this opportunity and have been highly visible in their support of campus life. The campus community has openly expressed its hope that the next president will continue this tradition.





The Search Process

At its April 2024 meeting, the York University Board of Trustees appointed five of its members to anchor the presidential search committee. The committee also has two members drawn from the faculty. Members of the committee are:

- Dr. Mike Armour, chair
- Dr. Erin DeHart (faculty rep)
- Dr. Bryan Kretz (faculty rep)
- Marilyn S. Locus, Esq.
- Ben Smail
- Dr. Charles Stephenson
- Dr. Kimberly Williams

Process Outline:

1. Applicants are asked to express their interest by email to presidential-search@york.edu.
2. On receipt of this expression of interest, the committee will provide the applicant with specific guidance for completing an application packet, to include, among other things, a complete CV (curriculum vitae), references, and a short statement about his or her motivation for seeking this position.
3. Once the application packet is complete, the entire committee will review it.
4. Following this review, the committee will conduct an initial interview with the applicant, most likely by video conference. The interview will be recorded so that committee members unable to be part of the interview can review it at length.
5. On the basis of this initial interview and the completion of background and reference checks, the full committee will identify a set of candidates for a second round of consideration. These candidates will then undergo more extensive interviews with the committee. These interviews will also be recorded and made available not merely to the committee, but to any board member who wishes to review them.
6. Ideally, the second round of interviews will result in the committee recommending a final list of two or three candidates to the board.
7. The candidates on this final list will be invited individually to visit the campus. The visit will include interaction with members of the faculty, staff, administration, and students, along with further discussions with members of the search committee and the board.
8. Shortly after these campus visits conclude, the committee will make its final recommendations to the board.

This is the tentative calendar for the search process:

July 1-September 30

- Active promotion to surface potential candidates
- Search committee review of applicants
- Initial applicant interviews

September 16 – Application deadline

October 4 – Search committee recommendations to the board for second-round interviews

October 7-11 – Appointments set for second-round interviews

October 14-25 – In-depth interviews with candidates

October 31 – Short list of candidates approved

November 11-30 – Campus visits by finalists

December 5 – Final selection made; offer structured

This is an aggressive calendar, we realize, but it reflects the board's desire to maintain momentum in the search and to have the new president on campus early in the first quarter of 2025.



York University's Mission

The mission of York University is to transform lives through Christ-centered education and to equip students for lifelong service to God, family and society. The principles in this statement consistently shape the University's priorities, messaging, and programming. It is sometimes recast in a four-word summary: Educate, Engage, Enrich, Equip.

By virtue of the office, the president is expected to hold York true to this mission and to draw attention to it as a matter of routine.

York University Overview

York University combines a unique blend of academics, spirituality, and community. Founded in 1890 by the United Brethren Church, it closed in 1954 when its programs were transferred elsewhere. In 1956, the campus and corporate charter passed to Churches of Christ and classes convened in the fall.

York therefore has a heritage of 134 years as a private school with a strong spiritual foundation. Over that period of time, twenty-one presidents have served the university.

While York maintains its historic ties to Churches of Christ, the majority of its students currently come from other religious traditions or from no religious background whatsoever. The student body is also ethnically diverse, more so than any other post-secondary institution in Nebraska.

With that diversity come many students from low-income backgrounds. International students, especially athletes, comprise an increasing component of the student body.

Students are served by eleven academic departments that offer associate and bachelor's degrees, with growing online graduate programs in both education and organizational leadership. Opportunities for study abroad are also offered.

Classroom instruction is in the hands of 65 faculty members, 27 who are full-time, 38 of them adjuncts. Of these, 58% have terminal degrees, with two others presently pursuing terminal degrees.

A vibrant campus ministry undergirds York's mission to transform lives through Christ-centered education. The

student body, faculty, and staff meet daily for a service of reflection and prayer. And students are encouraged to participate in short-term mission efforts, both stateside and abroad.

A member of the NAIA, York fields intercollegiate teams in seven sports for men, eight for women, and three co-ed sports. Roughly 80% of the student body participates in intercollegiate athletics. York competes in the Kansas Collegiate Athletics Conference (KCAC).

The performing arts have long been a strength at York. Currently, 21% of the undergraduate student body participates in choral, musical, or theatrical productions.

Construction of the Bartholomew Performing Arts Center, the newest academic facility on campus, greatly enhanced both rehearsal and performance settings for theater productions, the concert choir, and other musical programs. The 5000-square-foot facility allows flexible staging arrangements, making a variety of events possible for both the campus and the nearby community.

In addition, major physical improvements in the past five years have upgraded the functionality of academic, administrative, and athletic facilities across the campus. A \$2.25 million Federal grant converted the Levitt Library into a thoroughly modern research facility, equipped with the latest in technology. A separate grant of three million dollars permitted complete transformation of Hulitt Hall, erected in 1903 as only the second building on campus. After being completely remodeled, Hulitt Hall now houses all of York's major administrative functions under one roof for the first time in memory.

Both intercollegiate and intramural sports have benefited from recent campus investments in athletic venues. Construction of the Campbell Center created a first-rate intramural facility. Renovation of the gym (the Freeman Center) included new bleachers and a new floor for intercollegiate events.

Construction of the Touchton Clubhouse gave the highly-competitive baseball team an exceptional facility.

Beyond academics and athletics, York's facilities include the Clayton Museum of Ancient History. It contains rare Roman artifacts donated by a benefactor, who gathered them for decades. He also endowed the upkeep of the collection. The state of Nebraska now actively promotes the museum as a recommended site to visit.

Adjacent to the museum's displays, an archival space has been established to hold the apologetics library of John Clayton. The archive will include his own body of work, his research materials, and a hard-to-find journal collection.



Finances and Fundraising

At a time when most small colleges are struggling financially, York enjoys financial stability. For the past decade, the school has consistently reported a net increase in assets on our audited financial statements and has operated within balanced budgets. Since 2009, York University has tripled its endowment to more than \$23 million, with a goal of \$25 million in the near future.

The university's most recent comprehensive gift campaign exceeded its original \$15.9 million goal by more than four million dollars. Alumni are particularly faithful in helping the school, and almost a third of them participated in the recent campaign.

York operates on a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. An experienced finance committee within the board closely monitors endowment investments and recommends changes in portfolio allocations to the board as appropriate.

The Board of Trustees

York's board of trustees consists of highly qualified men and women from far-reaching parts of the U.S. They predominantly have backgrounds in business, law, ministry, academics, engineering, and medicine. Many, including the current chairman, are graduates of York or parents of York alumni.

Trustees serve three-year, overlapping terms, with one-third of the terms expiring annually. There is no limit on consecutive terms, and most current board members have long tenure, giving them extensive knowledge of York and providing valuable continuity in leadership.

Regular meetings of the board occur three times per year, in January, mid-spring, and October. The spring meeting is slated to coincide with graduation. The October meeting agenda centers on major corporate requirements, such as tentative approval of the budget for the next fiscal year, financial review of the previous fiscal year, Trustee elections, and election of board officers.

The January meeting is usually conducted as an off-site retreat. Its purpose is long-range planning and board enrichment. Topics for the retreat usually revolve around key trends impacting higher education, the accreditation process, or best practices in non-profit boards. At this same meeting, the board also gives final approval to the budget initially presented in October.

While the Trustees are predominantly members of the Church of Christ, the bylaws permit up to 20% of the board to be from other religious affiliations. All board members, however, are required to be people of faith who demonstrate devotion to Christian character and principles.



Board Relationships with York University's President

The York University Board of Trustees conscientiously maintains clear lines of distinction between their own authority and responsibilities and those of the president. The board steadfastly holds itself to the role of setting overall university strategy and policies and assuring that the institution's financial viability is maintained. To that end, the board approves an annual budget which is proposed by the president and finalized in a collaborative process between the board and the administration.

Once the board approves an operational budget, implementing it is left entirely to the president. Should significant projections in the budget fail to materialize, the president is expected to recommend timely budgetary revisions to the board for approval. Otherwise, the board's sole involvement with the budget is to monitor its execution.

In providing general oversight of the campus, the board does not involve itself in day-to-day management. Nor does it allow board members to bypass the rightful decision-making authority of the president or those to whom the president delegates that authority.

Instead, the board vests the president with plenary powers as the chief executive officer of the university. Personnel reviews and decisions, promotions, institutional goals, and administrative priorities are all fully

the province of the president. The president is also held responsible for maintaining a campus culture that is conducive to the mission and core values of the university.

As part of its oversight duty, the board expects the president to keep the board apprised of key developments and decisions that may impact the school's reputation, campus well-being, or the university's financial stability.

At all times the board is available to the president or the school's senior administrators for counsel, advice, or recommendations. With that end in mind, the board has organized itself into committees that specialize in staying abreast of developments in specific campus functions (academics, finance, athletics, spiritual life, facilities, etc.). But these committees do not have managerial authority and serve primarily as sounding boards and as conduits of communication between campus communities and the board.

For decades, the relationship between the board and the school's president have been healthy, collaborative, and mutually respectful. Moreover, the board has been eager to maintain a long-term relationship with those who have served in a presidential capacity. Dr. Steve Eckman, one of York's longest-serving presidents, is the current chancellor, and his predecessor, Dr. Wayne Baker, serves as chancellor emeritus.

Board Priorities for the Next Decade

The board of trustees has devoted substantive discussion to its overall vision for York University in the decade ahead. While this vision has not yet been formalized in writing, certain consensus themes have emerged from these discussions. These include the need to:

- Increase on-campus student enrollment to the maximum which can be facilitated
- Provide higher faculty and staff salaries
- Mature and diversified online course offerings and degrees
- Bring endowment to \$30-40 million by 2030
- Identify and implement alternative streams of revenue
- Steadily improve the number of terminal degrees in the faculty
- Upgrade older facilities on campus to bring them up to modern standards
- Reduce dependence on our line of credit
- Fill existing board vacancies with a younger cadre of trustees to reduce the average board member age





The City of York

From its inception, York University has had a unique relationship with the city of York and the people of York County. The original school charter in 1890 provided for the campus to revert to city ownership in the event the college failed. It was thus the City of York that formally passed the campus to Churches of Christ in 1956.

York's presidents have made a concerted effort to build strong ties between the campus and the community. The community has reciprocated with generous gifts to York University and by providing employment opportunities for York students. Major facilities on the campus bear the names of prominent York citizens.

Surrounding the university are quaint homes built a century ago. They face tree-lined streets paved with bricks. The city is quintessential small-town mid-America, with friendly, industrious people and a community which is close-knit and safe.

The [city of York](#) is located at the intersection of Interstate 80 and U.S. Highway 81, a major north-south transit route through mid-America. Because both roads are vital transportation arteries, they have attracted numerous hotels and restaurants to the area. York capitalizes on these housing accommodations by hosting regional events at its modern convention center.

An hour west of Lincoln, York has a population of about 8,000. Yet its [amenities](#) are unusual for a town that size. The city boasts a full-featured daily newspaper, a private airport, and a thriving commercial district. Banking is also prominent. Cornerstone Bank (one of the school's benefactors) ranks among the largest agricultural lending institutions in the nation.

Agriculture, indeed, dominates the economy of York County. The soil in this part of Nebraska is some of the most fertile anywhere in the country. And because of this, major agricultural research centers have chosen to locate to the area.

Nebraska's only correctional facility for women is located in York, housing 275 inmates. York University's Second Chance Program works closely with the prison and offers class work leading to an associate's degree for select inmates.

Application Process

Thank you for your interest in the position of president at York University. To open an application file for you, we need the following items:

1. A completed copy of the brief application form found at york.edu/presidential-search.php
2. A current resume highlighting your academic, management, and leadership background.
3. At least three professional references, including contact information.
4. A letter stating your interest in the position and your motivation for seeking the position.

These items may be submitted by email to presidential-search@york.edu. The deadline for application is September 30, 2024, although it may be extended if we do not have an adequate pool of candidates by that date.

York University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, religion, or disability in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship, loan, and other financial aid programs, athletic and other University-administered programs or employment as required by federal laws, including Title VII and Title IX, except when such distinctions may be appropriate under state and federal constitutional provisions due to the religious identity of York University and its mission, as determined by its board of trustees and the nature of the particular employment position or activity in question.

