



**Alma College
Presidential Prospectus**



Alma College Presidential Search Profile

Alma College seeks a dynamic, collaborative, and visionary leader to serve as its 14th President and invites nominations for and expressions of interest in the position. The next President will sustain and build upon a record of success at Alma, promote the distinctive quality of the institution in a competitive landscape, and develop a shared vision for growth and sustainability. This will be an exciting opportunity for a leader who can think innovatively and creatively about the challenges and opportunities in higher education and lead the College into a thriving future.

Alma College has a long history of providing transformative opportunities and access to social mobility for students in the region and beyond. The next President will have the opportunity to expand the Alma brand and visibility while continuing to promote its values of academic excellence and leadership. The successful candidate will demonstrate a deep commitment to students, the institution's mission, and community engagement.



Mission

The College community is proud of its mission “to prepare graduates who think critically, serve generously, lead purposefully and live responsibly as stewards of the world they bequeath to future generations.” The next President will embrace and champion this mission.

The core values of the College are:

- Student-centered education in a residential setting
- Disciplinary expertise within an interdisciplinary context of learning
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Engaged learning
- Ethical integrity, aesthetic appreciation, and spiritual sensitivity

About the College

Alma College is a private, four-year liberal arts institution located in the city of Alma in the geographic center of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The College is situated on 125 acres and owns a 200-acre ecological research station.

Enrollment averages 40 graduate students and 1,250 undergraduate students, typically drawn from approximately 25 states and 10 countries. The average high school GPA of entering students is 3.5. Most of Alma's students are of traditional college age and live in campus housing.

The College currently awards nine degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Bachelor of Music, Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, Master of Science in Communication and Information Technology, Master of Arts in Special Education with Learning Disabilities Endorsement, and Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. The faculty have designed over 45 programs of study, including the addition of more than 18 new majors since 2010.



History

Alma College was founded in 1886 by the Presbyterian Synod of Michigan and is governed by an independent Board of Trustees. In 1931, a contest was held to come up with a new nickname, and "the Scots" — a nod to the Presbyterian Church's roots in Scotland — was chosen. Today, the College expresses its Scottish tradition through many programs and symbols, including the Alma College Pipe Band, Kiltie Marching Band, Kiltie Dancers, and its own trademarked tartan.





Academic Program, Faculty, and Staff

An Alma College education seeks to instill a love of learning and celebrate the joy of discovery. Each student experiences a deeply interdisciplinary education that provides opportunities for self-reflection, hands-on learning, and personal and professional development. An Alma education provides students with engaged learning opportunities in local, national, and global contexts; facilitates strong mentoring relationships; and integrates rapidly changing technology essential for current and future career paths.

The College is committed to providing programs and activities for students to:

- Study across a broad academic spectrum;
- Cultivate lifelong intellectual, spiritual, and vocational discovery;
- Study in-depth within a disciplinary area;
- Focus on shared human values foundational to the worth of individuals and the welfare of society; and
- Appreciate the knowledge and value judgments that are basic to wise decision-making.

Alma College employs 103 full-time teaching faculty, of whom 82 percent hold a doctorate or other terminal degree. The student–faculty ratio at Alma is 12:1, and the average

class size is 18. Because of Alma’s small class sizes, faculty are actively engaged with student learning and develop deep relationships with students that positively impact their success at the College and life after graduation. The faculty are organized into three divisions — humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

In 2022, Alma introduced a reimagined core curriculum, designed to better support its mission. In addition to its undergraduate offerings, Alma currently offers four master’s degree programs and anticipates adding certificate programs in fall 2025.

Alma College’s chapter of Phi Beta Kappa — the nation’s oldest and most widely known academic honor society — is one of eight in Michigan and 293 across the nation. Thirty Alma College students, including three since 2022, have won the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

Accreditation

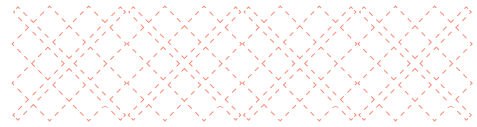
Alma College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, having received re-accreditation in 2019-20. Specific programs of the College are also accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, and the American Chemical Society.



Points of Pride

Recent national recognition for the college include

- No. 8 in Regional Colleges Midwest by *U.S. News & World Report* (2024)
- Princeton Review's Best in the Midwest listing (21st year)
- *Fiske Guide to Colleges* listing of the 300 "best and most interesting schools in the U.S., Canada and Great Britain" (38th year)
- Colleges of Distinction (16th year)



Strategic Planning

In 2020, the college revised its strategic plan, entitled Evergreen, with five priorities:

- **Purpose and Place** - modeling citizenship for students and improving the communities around us;
- **Creating a Just and Inclusive Community** - accountability, transparency, and building a holistic culture of inclusion;
- **New Programs and Innovation** - developing new programs and new markets;
- **Experiential Learning** - expansion of service, hands-on, internship, externship, and global learning opportunities;
- **Financial Viability** - finding efficiencies across campus and investing strategically in growth and infrastructure.

The Evergreen plan is designed to be continuously updated, to meet the needs of an ever-changing world.

Student Body, Achievements, and Outcomes

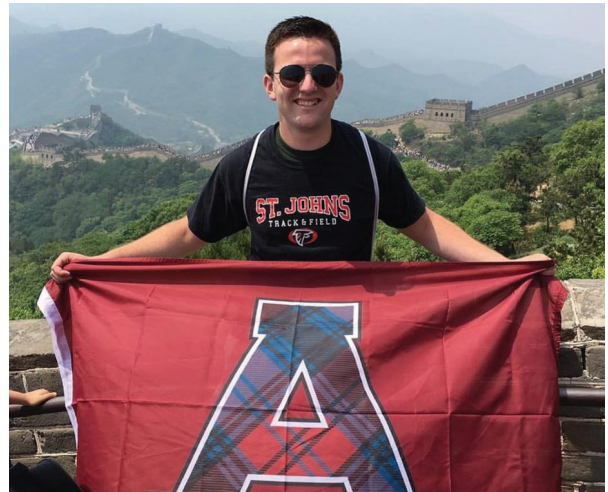
Alma fosters a highly personalized journey for each student – surrounding them with people who can challenge them, encourage them, and guide them to achieve their own definition of success, personally and professionally. Students at Alma College have strong academic backgrounds, a diverse array of interests, and deep engagement in campus life.

Experiential learning is a critical part of a transformational Alma education. As part of the Alma Commitment, every Alma student qualifies for up to \$2,500 to pursue an original research project, internship, or off-campus study experience designed to meet their personal and professional development goals.

Spring Term provides further opportunities for intensive, hands-on learning. Alma has a 4-4-1 academic calendar with one-month Spring Term courses in May that cross geographical, cultural, or disciplinary boundaries.

Alma offers STEM research opportunities not typically available to undergraduate students, including through an on-campus cadaver lab, 200-acre ecological station, and the Dow Science Center.

The Center for College and Community Engagement (3CE) empowers students to engage, learn, and grow in partnership with the local community. They might mentor local youth, implement a social media campaign in a political advocacy class, or support ecological restoration during an Alternative Break.



Co-curricular organizations also invite students to practice their newly acquired skills in real time. The Alma College Model United Nations (MUN) program was used as a clue on an episode of “Jeopardy!,” and the Huffington Post in 2012 referred to Alma’s MUN program as a “superpower.” Its reputation is well-deserved, with 26 consecutive years of top honors from the National MUN conference in New York City. Other active and successful student organizations include International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) and the Business Professionals of America (BPA).

Alma’s Career Services Office provides year-round programming and support to help students prepare for life after Alma. Fifty percent of Alma students complete at least one internship before graduation, and 94% of 2022 graduates were working full time or attending graduate school within six months of graduation. Alma College was ranked No. 27 in the Midwest for the “Social Mobility – Regional Colleges” category by *U.S. News & World Report* for the 2024-25 academic year.



Notable Alumni

With more than 130 years of history, Alma College has many notable alumni. The Reid-Knox Administration Building on campus is named for Frank Knox and his wife Annie Reid. Knox was a member of the Class of 1898 who served as Secretary of the Navy under President Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II. Gary Peters '80 is a current United States Senator and Chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and active in many college activities. Dr. Julie McKay '81 is a physician, humanitarian, and volunteer in disaster areas and for the uninsured homeless. Mary Hakken-Phillips '03 is an attorney and member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives.



Athletics

Alma College is a member of the NCAA Division III Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA). The College currently offers students the opportunity to play 30 sports, 15 each for men and for women. Some of the most prominent recent offerings have been competitive dance, competitive cheer, STUNT, eSports, and women's wrestling. More than 70 percent of incoming first-year students participate in a sport of some kind.

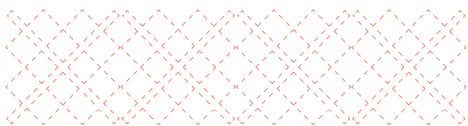
To complement Alma's rich tradition of academic excellence and celebration of the performing arts, athletics is a key driver of alumni and student engagement. In 2023, Alma's football team reached the third round of the NCAA Division III tournament for the first time in its history, drawing large crowds to the College's historic Bahlke Field. In 2024, Alma's competitive cheer team won a fourth-consecutive National Cheerleaders Association (NCA) Division III championship. In 2022, Alma's dance team won its ninth overall National Dance Alliance (NDA) Division III championship, winning first in Hip Hop and first in Jazz.



Governance

The Board of Trustees is the legislative body that determines the broad policies of the College. The Board appoints the President, approves the mission statement and strategic plan, and oversees academic and financial planning by authorizing an annual budget. The Board is currently led by Chairman Darryl G. Schimeck '82, and Vice Chair Erika K. Powers Appelt '91. Faculty members appoint a chair, who leads regular meetings of the faculty, and Alma's Student Congress is an active organization, with elections typically drawing large numbers of students to vote for several positions.

Alma College has a senior leadership team composed of a Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Operating Officer, Vice President for Communication and Marketing, Vice President for Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Finance, Vice President and Director of Athletics, Vice President for Enrollment, and Vice President for Advancement.



Finances and Fundraising

With a strong history of generous philanthropic giving and a healthy unrestricted endowment fund, Alma College enjoys a financial position that many institutions would find enviable. In 2021, Alma completed the most ambitious and successful fundraising campaign in its history, "Our Time is Now: The Campaign for Alma College," which inspired more than \$125.2 million in giving over the course of eight years. "Our Time is Now" surpassed the previous record for donations raised in an Alma College philanthropic campaign.

Some 10 years ago, the College availed itself of a little-known loan program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that supports new capital investments in rural areas to renovate residence halls at a very low interest rate. Such renovations are helping the College maintain its residence halls while pursuing development in other areas, including a redesigned College library/student union and a new athletics fieldhouse facility.

Like most peer institutions, Alma faces a rising discount rate as it seeks to be an affordable option for the region's most talented students. However, its endowment remains healthy at \$136 million, and its operating budget of \$45 million has been balanced with an additional endowment draw of 3.5% (for a total draw of 8.5%).



Belonging and Inclusion

A liberal arts education has its greatest impact when it embraces a community of people with a wide range of perspectives from a wide range of experiences. Alma College has made considerable gains in recent years with respect to the strength and diversity of its student body, as well as resources for faculty and staff, and financial and academic support for all students. The College is currently in the process of creating a comprehensive strategic plan to foster belonging, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for the whole campus community.

The Alma College Diversity and Inclusion Office is an active area on campus in many respects. It hosts workshops for students, staff, and faculty on various topics; hosts events dedicated to celebrating heritage and raising awareness; and helps organize cultural and affinity student groups. The Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board (DIAB) is a

committee of faculty, staff, student allies, and advocates who work together to develop, evaluate, and collaborate on the various diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives happening across campus.

The Julius Chatman Living Learning Community, the King-Chavez-Parks Mentor Program, and the Campbell Scholars Program provide students of color and their allies with financial, academic, and social support on campus. Nearly 18% of the student body at Alma College are students of color and/or international students.

The College's intentional efforts around student belonging resulted in 94.2 percent first-year student retention from fall to winter in 2023-24 academic year; an increase of 0.8% from previous year and 3.9% from year before that. The College achieved an 85% retention rate for the Fall 2023 cohort.

Location and Regional Highlights

Alma College is located in a small-town setting, the city of Alma having slightly fewer than 10,000 residents. Its primary academic buildings, built in the Prairie School architectural style utilizing red brick with limestone capstones, are centered around a large square, McIntyre Mall. West of this mall is picturesque Thomas Anderson Chapel, which was renovated in 2021. The Greg Hatcher Learning Commons, a student union/library, was remodeled in place of the former college library in 2022.

In addition to the main campus, the College also owns a 200-acre ecological research area containing woodlands, a willow marsh, a sphagnum bog, and a glacial kettle lake, with a full research facility and a bird observatory, located about 15 miles west of Alma. The College is currently building a fieldhouse, located two miles west of campus, to complement its athletic facilities.

Alma is located in the middle of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, and boasts a charming downtown with an arts center, bookstore, brewery, community theater, restaurants, coffee shops, and apartments. Several "big box" stores and a movie theater are located just off the freeway into town. The campus is bordered by the 41-mile Fred Meijer Heartland Trail for walking and cycling.

The College and the town enjoy excellent "town and gown" relations and have endeavored to be strong partners

to each other. Notably, the restoration of the Wright Leppien Opera House Block was concluded in 2019, its redevelopment fueled entirely by community and college benefactors. The revitalized Opera House is a shared space for campus and community events as well as student housing. The relationship between town and gown was further deepened with the founding of the Center for College and Community Engagement in 2021. The 3CE, as it is informally known on campus, offers myriad engaged learning opportunities for students and collaborations for faculty and staff.

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan is based in nearby Mt. Pleasant, and the College has worked in recent years to partner on various activities celebrating indigenous heritage and supporting our belonging and inclusion efforts.

Faculty and student excursions and internships in Michigan's state capital, Lansing (located about 45 miles south of Alma), and Michigan's largest city, Detroit (110 miles southeast of Alma) are regular occurrences. The thriving cities of Mt. Pleasant, Grand Rapids and Midland are all within driving distance and offer rich opportunities for dining, arts, and entertainment. Michigan's Great Lakes also represent an abundant opportunity for research and recreation.



The Opportunity

The President is the Chief Executive Officer of the College and principal advisor to the Board of Trustees, and is an ex-officio member of all Board and College governance committees. The President provides empowering leadership and direction for the management of all external and internal affairs of the College in keeping with its mission of promoting the College's values of personalized education, social mobility, and transformative opportunities for students. This includes the direct supervision of a leadership team overseeing the areas of Operations and Strategic Initiatives, Enrollment, Communication and Marketing, Academic Affairs, Finance, Student Affairs, Advancement, and Athletics.

Agenda for Leadership

Alma College is an institution with myriad strengths and attractive features. Alma's next President will inherit an outstanding foundation for future growth and evolution and will have the opportunity to work with the entire Alma community to develop a shared vision based on the following opportunities.

Establish a Shared Vision for Continued Success and a Thriving Future

Alma College has a celebrated past and the foundation for a thriving future. The next President will be charged with defining a vision for the College that will help Alma emerge as a model for liberal arts institutions across the country. Alma lays claim to academic rigor, one of the most successful Model UN programs in the country, dedicated and talented faculty and staff, committed and hard-working students, and very successful alumni. All the key ingredients for a flourishing institution are in place, and the College now seeks a clearly defined, innovative, and inspiring vision that will harness its positive energy and guide the College into the future.

Focus on Enrollment Management and Fiscal Health

In an atmosphere of rising tuition costs and student debt, which has led students and families to question the value of higher education, Alma seeks a President who understands both the academic and financial aspects of leading an institution. The next President will be a strong financial manager, knowledgeable about academic business models, keenly aware of the broader higher education landscape, innovative about forging new revenue streams, and capable of adjusting the business plan to improve the College's financial security. The President will need to make important decisions regarding the future of the College, based on sound data, to ensure its future success. The candidate of choice will understand the dynamics of a residential liberal arts environment, including the necessary diversification of revenue streams through effective enrollment strategies, and the crucial supports needed for optimal student retention and success.

Expand Opportunities for Fundraising and Engagement

The next President will have many opportunities to effectively engage external partners including donors, alumni, and community organizations to support the institution. The next President will serve as Alma's chief fundraiser and the face of the College in building crucial relationships both within and outside of higher education. Alma has a strong, successful, and highly committed alumni network, and will look to the next President to strengthen outreach to alumni to increase their engagement with the College. An ongoing commitment to fundraising, endowment growth, strategic investment management, and disciplined spending will help Alma thrive in the current climate.

Enhance the College's Value Proposition and Institutional Brand

Alma will look to its next President to be innovative in developing strategies to communicate the College's value proposition more effectively and attract new students. Alma seeks a President to lead a new phase of strategic growth in enrollment and programming. This includes the ability to evaluate market demand and strategically expand and diversify academic programs as well as enrollment pipelines. Alma is constantly working to market its points of distinction, and the messaging will be further refined by the next President. There will also be opportunities to move Alma forward via tailored social media marketing efforts that will showcase the unique and successful programs and events at the College.

Invigorate the Community and Strengthen Communication

The President will cultivate a culture that is supportive and appreciative of every member of the Alma community. The new President will have an intuitive capacity to engage the campus in genuine and thoughtful interactions that inspire the best in all. By modeling and encouraging transparent decision-making, the President will promote trust and cultivate the spirit of mutual respect that is fundamental to the College's identity. The next President will also be expected to promote regular and transparent communication to the community and be an active listener to constituent groups across the campus. While Alma will expect the next President to relish highlighting campus accomplishments large and small, the President will also be willing and able to say "No" when appropriate and deliver challenging news in an empathetic and straightforward way. The President will play a central role in signaling the ongoing importance of the College's commitment to be an open and inclusive community. Moreover, the President will champion a culture in which diverse values, experiences, identities, and ideas are intentionally embraced as essential to the development of academic excellence and ethical action. Exuding a servant leader approach to all members of the Alma community, the new president will be an engaged and visible presence across all areas of campus, the community, and when representing the College in national and global environments.



Desired Qualifications and Characteristics

The successful candidate will preferably possess an advanced/terminal degree from a regionally accredited institution and display demonstrated success in senior leadership roles in a college/university setting or comparably complex organizations, such as private industry, finance, law, government agencies, or healthcare. The Board of Trustees and the Search Committee are open to considering candidates with leadership experience that may go beyond the traditional higher education setting.

The candidate of choice will embrace the College's academic portfolio, where a strong liberal arts core curriculum is combined with professional programs. In addition, the ideal candidate will possess:

- Passion and enthusiasm for the mission of Alma College;
- A strong focus on the holistic student experience;
- Unquestionable integrity and the capacity to model ethical decision-making and transparency;
- Deep appreciation for shared governance/decision-making, along with the ability to serve as a collaborative and inspirational leader for faculty, staff, and students;
- The capacity to embrace and foster innovation and creativity to advance an organization;
- A track record of programmatic growth and transformative leadership;
- Strong financial acumen and a history of achieving balanced budgets while generating new revenues;
- Proven fundraising success;
- Outstanding team-building and mentoring skills;
- The capacity to be both consultative and decisive;
- A willingness to take calculated risks;
- Excellent relationship-building skills;
- A deep commitment to belonging and inclusion;
- A genuine interest in others coupled with authenticity and approachability;
- A proclivity for data-informed decision-making; and
- Charisma, energy, and optimism balanced with pragmatism.

This is a full-time position that will be performed on-site in Michigan. Salary is competitive, commensurate with experience, and will be accompanied by a generous benefits package. There is also a well-appointed and entertainment-ready President's home on campus.

It is anticipated that the next President of Alma College will assume responsibilities in summer 2025. All applications and nominations for the search will be held confidential. The committee will begin reviewing materials in late October 2024.

For best consideration, please send a cover letter and CV/resume to:



Julie E. Tea, Managing Director
Brian Bustin, Senior Associate
Storbeck Search
AlmaPresident@storbecksearch.com

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