

# BENNINGTON COLLEGE



**Bennington College, a private, liberal arts college located in southwestern Vermont, seeks applications for the new position of Senior Vice President for Advancement, Communications, and Marketing to join a visionary new president at a pivotal moment in this great institution's history, and be highly engaged in developing the strategic plan that outlines the next chapter of Bennington's future as a vibrant, sustainable college and leader in higher education.**

## **About Bennington College**

[Bennington College](#) is an innovative and distinguished liberal arts college in Bennington, Vermont that has, since its founding in 1932, dedicated itself to cultivating change-makers and culture-shapers. Bennington 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. Bennington students work intensively with faculty to forge individualized and hands-on educational paths around their driving questions and interests.

Situated on 440 breathtaking acres, the College currently enrolls nearly 800 undergraduate and graduate students (697 undergraduate and 102 graduate) and offers a low student-to-faculty ratio. Most of the undergraduate students live on campus. Bennington has 124 faculty (undergraduate and graduate combined) and 195 full-time and 20 part-time staff, an operating budget of \$40 million and a current endowment value of \$30 million (approximately \$60 million counting all unfulfilled pledges and bequests).

Bennington's campus is known for its expansive beauty, distinctive architecture, and rich history. The College was named one of ten with the best architecture by *Architectural Digest*. 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.

In addition to the Bachelor of Arts degree, Bennington offers an MFA in Dance, low-residency MFAs in Writing and Public Action, and a Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program. Rooted in an abiding faith in the talent, imagination, and responsibility of the individual, Bennington invites students to pursue and shape their own intellectual inquiries, and in doing so to discover the interconnection of things.

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 his or her 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 (and faculty) to graduate tested students, regardless of chosen field, notably confident in their capacity to engage and succeed in the world in a manner advanced and distinct among peers.

## Leadership

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.

Ms. 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 serve more than 26 million people each month. Ms. Walker's 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. Ms. 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. Ms. Walker led three separate five-year plan processes at NYPR, translating goals into executable tactics for program production, fundraising and partnership-building. One measure of that success is the organization's extraordinary growth from two city-owned radio stations with an \$8 million budget and 1 million monthly listeners to an independent nonprofit with a \$100 million annual budget, 26 million monthly listeners on 8 radio stations, 20 nationally distributed programs, and a staff of 500.

Ms. 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.

Ms. 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.

In 2009 and again in 2017, Ms. 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.

Ms. 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.

## Board of Trustees

Twenty-two active members of the Board, including a number of longstanding and incredibly generous donors, are led by Nicholas A. Stephens, Chairman of the Bennington College Board of Trustees and Vice Chairs Barbara U. Deane and James S. Simon. The Board is committed to strengthening the College's unique position in the higher education landscape and is highly engaged with supporting Bennington.

## History And Vision

In the early 1920s, Bennington College emerged as an idea shared by a group of forward-thinking educators and civic leaders who believed that America needed a progressive new college to forge a new direction in higher education. In 1932, with charter and land secured, the College welcomed its first class of 87 women and this idea was given life. The College went co-ed in 1969 and is still flourishing eighty-eight years since its founding.



It didn't take long for Bennington to distinguish itself as a vanguard institution among American colleges and universities. Dancers 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. 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 still a hub for artists, writers, scientists, scholars—innovators in every field—who want to apply their individual talents to addressing global issues of urgent concern.

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.

## Academic Program

Bennington College distinguished itself early as a vanguard institution within American higher education. Bennington graduates are notably confident in their capacity to engage and succeed in the world because, at Bennington, learning and making—on campus and in the field—are inseparable.

Three structures make this possible and set a Bennington education apart:

- First, graduate-style academic advising allows students to map a territory for study and practice that goes beyond the bounds of a traditional major and serves them at Bennington and after graduation, a process known as The Plan. Students work closely with an advisory committee of three faculty to guide their progress over four years and to ensure that their Plan is challenging, academically sound, and significant. By building, articulating, and advocating for the substance of their education, Bennington students hone their ability to thrive in a world without givens, to tolerate ambiguity, and to see clear to a solution even when a path is not laid out before them.
- Second, Bennington is the only college in the country to require an annual internship since its founding. For six weeks each year, students work with an organization or institution of their choosing, anywhere in the world, to apply what they have learned on campus and to focus what they study and make at Bennington. In this way, students join the field that interests them without waiting for graduation.
- Third, Bennington is a highly engaged community of active makers and practitioners, regardless of their field. The faculty and administration are mentors and peers ready to engage with students' work in addition to being subject matter experts.

Bennington has 61 full-time and 63 part-time faculty, including the MFA in Writing program's 20 core faculty. Bennington's teacher-practitioner model is an essential component of the College's mission: scientists, scholars, writers, and artists, active in their fields, develop and share their work with students in the classroom. From lab assistance in faculty research to performance projects as a prelude to professional productions, students encounter faculty members' professional activities in multiple ways.



Bennington students are expected to study broadly, exploring a range of questions and modes of inquiry and progressing to advanced work in at least one area of study. Faculty, conversely, engage students in their own work, but within the context of a wide-ranging liberal arts education. Academic advising, interdisciplinary initiatives, and long-range curricular planning, among other activities, constitute each faculty member's participation in the development of College-wide goals and policies. Faculty discipline groups assume many essential administrative functions, including oversight of guest speaker series, production and capital expense budgets, faculty searches, curricular development, and review of graduate applicants, where appropriate.

The student body consists of nearly 700 undergraduate students and 102 graduate students, the majority of whom are enrolled in low-residency MFA programs. Bennington is involved in a campus-wide effort to improve retention and graduation rates, giving particular attention to advising and academic programs.

### **Campus & Community**

Bennington College sits on 440 magnificent acres of land, of which 300 are wooded. In 2011, *Architectural Digest* named it one of America's Top 10 Campuses with Best Architecture. After an incredible investment in new buildings, the College's focus now is in reimagining our historic buildings for today's students, as well as tomorrow's.

[Community life](#) at Bennington, like academic life, aims high. A Bennington education extends from the classroom into the library, dining halls, recreational spaces, campus organizations, and Vermont outdoors. Bennington students devote themselves to a number of community outreach efforts, often tied to the things they are pursuing in their coursework. [The Center for the Advancement of Public Action](#) provides opportunities for students to engage in the Bennington community through service, local leadership, and global education.

Many students take an active role in campus governance, contributing to and helping foster discussions of academic policy, community living, and other aspects of life at Bennington. Through committee work and ongoing conversation, they join with faculty members and administrators to create a culture informed by tolerance and respect for individual differences, self-discipline, and a commitment to the common good. Students enjoy a variety of fitness and recreational activities on and off campus. Bennington College's fitness center, the Meyer Recreation Barn, has fitness equipment, a climbing wall, sauna, and aerobics room, where students and faculty lead classes in yoga, tai chi, and other activities. Outdoor facilities include three tennis courts, a basketball court, and a soccer field.

[Crossett Library](#) and Jennings Music Library support the creative and collaborative educational tradition of Bennington College by providing outstanding library services that support the academic endeavors of the community. The six guiding actions of the library are: teaching the knowledge needed to create intentional inquiries; promoting opportunities to experience the joy of serendipitous discovery; building collections and services in collaboration with the community; creating environments for solitary contemplation and gregarious collaboration; facilitating the appreciation and celebration of books; and engaging technologies that enhance services and the collection.

The foundation of the library philosophy is to provide highly personalized service focused on the individual needs of faculty and students. The library offers a variety of instructional services, including individual consultations with librarians, library instruction sessions for a class, librarian visits to classes, library tours, online research guides, and more. The Crossett Library and Jennings Music Library collections include approximately 290,000 print and electronic books and 50 databases.

### **Bennington, Vermont**

Bennington is a beautiful Vermont town of 15,000+ people situated at the foot of the Green Mountains. Williams College is only a short drive from Bennington. Bennington is within an hour of some of the best hiking and skiing in the Northeast. Access to the Long Trail, Vermont's oldest long-distance hiking trail, is a short walk from campus. There is trout fishing on nearby Walloomsac River and camping and swimming on Lake Paran. Bennington is an hour from the Albany International Airport and Amtrak station, twenty-five minutes from Williamstown and North Adams, home to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, the Williamstown Theatre Festival and MASS MoCA. The cultural resources of the Berkshires, including Jacob's Pillow dance, Tanglewood, and Shakespeare and Company are just over an hour away. Bennington is a three hour drive from both New York City and Boston.

### **Diversity, Equity & 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. Our 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) will be 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. We encourage 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 what a truly equitable, diverse, and inclusive institution of higher education can be. 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. We are investing in diversifying the faculty, staff and student body to include the fullest possible range of experiences in this community.

### About Advancement, Marketing and Communications at Bennington

Bennington has a long tradition of philanthropic support stretching back to its founding families: the Booths, McCulloughs, and Kilpatricks. The College's alumni have perpetuated this tradition and have been joined by parents and friends to advance Bennington's mission and reputation. The successful candidate will be joining efforts with the President and Advancement



team to complete a \$150 million comprehensive campaign that is currently underway. [The World Needs More Bennington](#) campaign seeks to significantly expand the College's endowment to \$100 million (the endowment was \$20 million at the start of the campaign and now stands at \$40 million) and raise another \$70 million for people, program, and campus investments. To date, \$111 million has been given to the campaign since the silent phase was launched in FY16. Endowment growth is a crucial part of Bennington's long-term fiscal health and the campaign has garnered \$37 million in irrevocable bequest intentions, pledges, and outright gifts to the endowment. Considering currently unfulfilled commitments, the campaign will bring the value in the endowment to approximately \$60 million.

Communications at Bennington is an essential role and is thoughtfully woven into the fabric of each and every constituency. To date, it has been largely focused on internal communications work for the campus community. With the arrival of a new president, the College will leverage this opportunity to create a strong, shared brand strategy, with a refresh of its design and messaging that will tell the stories of Bennington. This storytelling will both reflect and catapult Bennington into the future as a leading liberal arts college, as a prime player in developing the future of higher education, and as an intellectual and creative leader in the US and beyond.

### Key Responsibilities

At this pivotal moment, Bennington College seeks an innovative, entrepreneurial, and proven leader to spearhead fundraising and engagement efforts to position Bennington for its second century as a trailblazer in higher education. A critical member of senior leadership of the college, the Senior Vice President will drive revenue and ensure philanthropic success through the creation of a multi-year fundraising and engagement strategy, and through the prioritization, qualification, cultivation, and solicitation of prospective donors with an affinity for the mission and programs of Bennington College. In these efforts, the Senior Vice President will work collaboratively and transparently with the President, Board, senior leadership, faculty, staff, students and alumni. They 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, branding, and communications and refining and articulating a unifying case for support.

As part of this work, the Senior Vice President will oversee the execution of an ambitious and comprehensive marketing communications plan that supports the strategic positioning of the College to a wide variety of internal and external audiences, across a range of media formats. The Senior Vice President must approach this work with a consistent and clear focus on the importance of diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the College's communications. The SVP will be a critical thought partner to the President -- a visionary who can collaborate with a range of stakeholders -- to develop a communications and marketing plan that advances the College's national profile, strengthens the intersection of work between communications and the educational framework of the College and conveys Bennington's story in a way that broadens the College's reach to a more diverse audience.

The SVP will be responsible for crafting a robust strategic plan to articulate the College's strengths and ambitions in venues both familiar and new. The SVP oversees all facets of communications including marketing/branding, public relations, social media, print, design and assessment -- keenly focusing on tools that will measure the effectiveness of various communications in meeting the College's strategic goals. The Senior Vice President is expected to be equally nimble navigating long-range

planning as well as crisis communications. The Senior Vice President will oversee two highly engaged teams: Institutional Advancement (team of 18) and Communications (team of 9).

The Senior Vice President will also lead the creation of a vibrant brand strategy that will tell the stories of the college's diverse community, attract prospective students, connecting individuals not only to Bennington's history but also to its ambitious future. They will develop compelling and consistent marketing and communications to all Bennington College audiences through a compelling brand strategy, the redesign of the website and materials. They will create the strategy and manage traditional, digital, and social media channels; public relations and media; design and creative efforts; market analytics; multiple technology platforms; and staff as well as external agencies and partners.

The SVP will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies that enhance awareness of the diversity, excellence, and impact of the College and for executing a plan that increases brand recognition and elevates the reputation of Bennington.

### ***Leadership and Vision***

The Senior Vice President serves in a highly visible leadership role with overall responsibility for a comprehensive and integrated fundraising and alumni engagement program, brand strategy and marketing and communications. Working closely with a dynamic new president and a highly engaged board, the SVP will be a member of Bennington's senior management team. They will set the tone for high achievement, moving the advancement and communications team toward achieving audacious goals that align with Bennington's ethos of innovation and renewal. The SVP will be a creative, ambitious, and dynamic leader with the ability to attract and animate a strong team. They will 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.

### ***Management, Strategy, and Planning***

The Senior Vice President will inspire staff through effective motivation, mentoring, and team building. They will embrace diversity and possess the management acumen to leverage team members' existing capacity while strengthening performance to drive goal-oriented outcomes.



They 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.

The SVP will have deep experience developing and executing long term strategic plans as part of the senior leadership team of nonprofit or educational institutions and the ability to take an institution-wide perspective as well as develop achievable plans for IA, Communications and Marketing and other departments. The SVP will be a partner to the President in strategic choices. They must be analytical, visionary and collaborative, goal oriented and eager to set and accomplish measures of accountability.

### ***Key Qualifications***

The successful candidate will be a strategic, creative leader who is visionary about Bennington's fundraising potential and who can help develop and support the President's entrepreneurial initiatives to maximize results. The SVP will have a proven track record in building, managing, and mentoring a highly effective, diverse team, as well as demonstrated success with major gift fundraising including seven figure gifts. Experience creating new revenue streams that leverage Intellectual property and creative endeavors. They will possess outstanding interpersonal competencies, the ability to effectively engage volunteer leadership, and a deep commitment to instilling practices and a culture within advancement that advance an antiracist organization and reflect Bennington's values. Individuals with experience in all non profit sectors and organization types are encouraged to apply.

## Leadership Competencies and Personal Traits

- Self-starter with a sense of urgency and a clear set of priorities who uses an innovative approach to building and guiding a program in a resource-constrained environment.
- Orientation as a team player and leader with strong management skills.
- A metrics-driven, entrepreneurial mindset that informs strategy and work.
- A partner in our growth towards becoming an anti-racist organization and an advocate for diversity.
- Collaborative, and creative with the vision, drive, and determination to position Bennington's communications strategy as one of the best in the country.
- The ability to succeed in a distinct and dynamic culture.
- A bachelor's degree (master's degree a plus).
- 15+ years of fundraising experience (including principal and major gifts solicitation) and proven success in a comprehensive campaign; experience with communications, brand building and Board relations.
- Very strong verbal and written communication skills, a compelling and creative storyteller.
- Organizational and analytical skills, and project management skills.
- Experience with Board volunteer management and the ability to maintain a high level of diplomacy.
- Ability to work independently as well as part of a team.
- Openness to travel on behalf of the College for donor visits or as the College's representative.
- Ability to adapt in a dynamic institutional setting and the political savvy to navigate a complex and highly participatory academic community with a shared governance model.
- Flexibility and a sense of humor.
- Proficiency in Raiser's Edge, Microsoft Office, and Gmail/Google Docs.
- Confident and adaptable. The ideal candidate is comfortable with complexity, able to embrace working in an environment of ambiguity, and is at ease shifting between immediate needs and longer-term strategic goals.

Please apply with your letter of interest and resume in confidence to: [Human Resources](#). To learn more about Bennington, visit us at [bennington.edu](http://bennington.edu).