Dean, College of Aviation
Position Profile

Western Michigan University seeks an experienced and accomplished leader to serve as Dean of the College of Aviation. Reporting to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the dean is responsible for providing visionary and innovative leadership and effective administration, while advancing the mission of the College.

The University

Western Michigan University (WMU) is an institution on the move. Located in Southwest Michigan, WMU is a vibrant, nationally recognized student-centered research institution with an enrollment of over 19,000. WMU delivers high-quality undergraduate instruction, has a strong graduate division, and fosters significant research activities.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classifies WMU as a doctoral university and one of just 185 public universities in the nation conducting research at a high level. U.S. News & World Report has named WMU among the country’s best national universities since 1991. Western Michigan University is a globally engaged university that promotes success for learners at all levels and stands out among America’s more than 4,600 public and private degree-granting colleges and universities. WMU offers nearly 250 academic programs to students pursuing degrees through the doctoral level, with more than 20 percent of students enrolled in graduate work.

Visionary Western Michigan University graduates made history in June 2021 by donating $550 million to the WMU Foundation, the largest gift for a public institution of higher education in U.S. history. The contribution is being called the Empowering Futures Gift. President Edward Montgomery indicated a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion was at the center of the donors’ wishes, and they believe that inclusive education empowers people and communities to create bright futures for all. The gift will fund scholarships, advance medical education and research, support faculty expertise, and advance student-centered initiatives.
Throughout the 2021-22 academic year, the WMU community had the opportunity to provide input on the future of the University though a strategic planning process. This process included revisiting the vision, mission, and values of the University. The strategic plan is expected to be finalized and launched during Fall 2022. The plan will embed diversity, equity, belonging, and social justice as core values of the institution.

WMU is re-imagining the southern portion of the main campus. A new apartment complex, Arcadia Flats, opened in January 2021 as part of a revitalization of the University’s Hilltop Village, and a new student center is slated to open in 2023.

Founded as a Normal School in 1903, WMU has undergone dramatic growth in size and stature during its nearly 120 years of service, with regional locations in Grand Rapids, Battle Creek, and Metro Detroit. The main campus is based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on lands historically occupied by the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadmi nations. WMU has created a land acknowledgement statement asking the WMU community to take a moment to acknowledge and honor the ancestral land of the Three Fires Confederacy.

The Community

Kalamazoo Michigan is located only two and a half hours by car from Chicago and Detroit and only 45 minutes from the beaches of Lake Michigan. It is located in one of Michigan’s designated research corridors, maintaining a strong life sciences/biotech presence and supporting two leading medical centers. With 265,000 people in the greater Kalamazoo area, the community offers an array of cultural events, entertainment, and all-season recreation. The city supports a nationally recognized symphony and has earned a reputation for a vibrant community theatre and visual arts scene. Kalamazoo is committed to social justice, community development and the elimination of generational poverty through its Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo initiative, with structural budgetary support provided by the City of Kalamazoo’s Foundation for Excellence program. Kalamazoo also is the home of the Kalamazoo Promise, a scholarship program offered to all Kalamazoo Public School students that covers up to 100 percent of tuition and mandatory fees to any Michigan public (and many private) institution of higher learning.

Battle Creek, Michigan, just a short distance from Kalamazoo, is home to the Battle Creek Executive Airport at Kellogg Field. College of Aviation students take classes in both Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. The Battle Creek area offers a zoo, art center, museums, parks, arboretum, and a variety of unique festivals, including the World’s Longest Breakfast Table, The Taste of Battle Creek, The Battle Creek Field of Flight Entertainment Festival, and the International Festival of Lights.
The College

The College of Aviation at Western Michigan University is located in Battle Creek, Michigan, and offers the only comprehensive aviation program at a public university in Michigan. The College offers undergraduate programs in aviation flight science, aviation technical operations, and aviation management and operations. With just over 1,100 undergraduate students it is one of the largest aviation programs in the nation. In fall 2021, the College dedicated its new 22-million-dollar Aviation Education Center to address current and future enrollment needs, putting the University ahead of the pack to meet growing industry demand. Backed by 80 years of aviation experience and an excellent industry reputation, which includes partnerships for pilot career development initiatives with both Delta’s Propel and United Airlines’ Aviate, and aviation maintenance technology partnership with AAR EAGLE Career Pathway Program and Delta Tech Ops, the WMU College of Aviation is a powerful force in the future of aviation training.

Aviation Flight Science - The Aviation Flight Science program emphasizes intellectual as well as technical competencies. The program is geared toward educating future captains and managers—not just training pilots. In the program, students study general education subjects, the basic sciences, aircraft systems, crew concepts, and resource management, advanced aerodynamics, professional flight, airline operations, management and administration, global navigation, and international flight. The program also features crew concept in the flight training environment, Crew Resource Management—CRM, the use of state-of-the-art simulators and Line Oriented Flight Crew Simulations, computer-based training, and the most advanced flight training equipment with glass cockpit technology including the Avidyne R9, Garmin G1000 Nxi avionics suite, and the DFC-100 advanced autopilot. The flight training fleet consists of 43 aircraft including Cirrus, Piper, Cessna, and American Champion aircraft.

Aviation Technical Operations - The Aviation Technical Operations (Tech Ops) program is a Bachelor of Science program that prepares students to enter aircraft maintenance, repair,
manufacturing, and other positions in the aerospace industry. The curriculum focuses on aircraft structures, power plants, avionics, system design, testing, and inspection. The skills and knowledge coupled with a solid academic foundation prepares students for employment in a wide range of aircraft maintenance, manufacturing, and aviation support careers. The Bachelor of Science degree prepares graduates for leadership and management roles further in their career. Western Michigan University graduates are among managers, directors, and executives of aerospace companies worldwide. Students receive hands-on experience with a variety of aircraft at the College of Aviation. Western Michigan University has multiple aircraft used for maintenance training, including a Beechcraft Baron and King Air B90, Cessna 172 and 182, Mooney M20F, and a Boeing 727. With the opening of the Aviation Education Center, the technical operations program added a paint lab capable of accommodating small business jets, making it one of a few facilities in the country where students can experience the entire process of painting an aircraft.

Aviation Management and Operations - The Aviation Management and Operations Program (AMOJ) focuses on the business and managerial aspects of the aviation industry. Students will complete coursework in general education, aviation topics, and business courses including economics, finance, accountancy, and marketing. Aviation courses include aerodynamics, aviation safety, aircraft systems, meteorology, airline management, airport operations and management, and international aviation. The program curriculum is designed to prepare students for meaningful employment in a multitude of areas within the aviation industry. It is closely aligned with a general business minor from the WMU Haworth College of Business. Students need to take one additional course to complete a general business minor. Students can also utilize these program courses to complete minors in a variety of areas such as data analytics and supply chain management. Students that complete the Aviation Management and Operations Program have completed the prerequisites for the Master of Business Administration graduate degree at Western Michigan University and allows for a smooth transition for individuals wanting to pursue an advanced degree.

In addition to the three bachelor’s degree programs, the College of Aviation offers three minors that students can elect to participate in: Aviation Science, Military Leadership and Aviation Studies, and Professional Aviation Preparation. The Air Force ROTC, housed in the College of Aviation, is offered in collaboration with Michigan State University. The educational program is designed for students to become an Air Force or Space Force officer while earning a degree.

One of the College’s continuing goals is to establish and maintain the most advanced training fleet and equipment available in collegiate aviation, complementing a world-class professional aviation program consistently viewed as one of the best in the world. The College continuously examines its pedagogy, pioneering revolutionary new methods of instruction designed to improve communication skills necessary in all fields of aviation: management, maintenance, and flight. The College produces graduates who think critically, communicate effectively, and participate meaningfully and ethically in the dynamic field of aviation. The College of Aviation degree programs are accredited by the Aviation Accreditation Board International.
Instruction is provided by 14 tenured, 10 tenure track, and one non-tenure track faculty, with additional instruction provided by six part-time faculty, two chief instructors, 80 temp and student flight instructors. Additionally, the College is supported by a staff of 38 comprised of Administrative Assistants, Aviation Maintenance technicians and inspectors, facility supervisor and technician, academic advisors, simulator technician, pilot standards, assistant chief, student progress specialist, recruitment and outreach, dispatch/scheduling, business and budget personnel, and student employees. Direct reports to the Dean include an Associate Dean; Faculty Chair; Executive Director Flight Operations; Director of Aircraft Maintenance; Director of Information Technology; Business Manager; Budget Analyst; Director of Advising; Supervisor of Aviation Facilities; and Recruitment, Marketing, and Outreach Manager.

The College of Aviation and its predecessor aviation programs have approximately 5,000 alumni, nearly 1,100 of whom have provided support to the College since its founding in 1998. The College also maintains strong relationships within the aviation industry.

During the 2021-22 academic year, WMU implemented a Strategic Resource Management budget model. The revenue for the College includes tuition, state appropriations, and flight fees with the College contributing to the overall operation of the University. The budget for the College is $25 million.

The highly competitive Aviation Flight Science program is often capped due to high demand. Student success and individualized attention is an important part of the College of Aviation student experience. First year retention for the College is 75 percent and the graduation rate is 65.9 percent.

The Position

Western Michigan University seeks an experienced and accomplished leader to serve as Dean of the College of Aviation. The dean will have responsibility for developing a collegial environment and will recognize the importance of consensus building, interdisciplinary collaboration, partnerships, student success, alumni relations, and external funding in defining the College’s role in the broader mission of the University. The dean reports to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and is responsible for visionary, innovative leadership, and effective administration of the College. The dean also serves on the Provost’s Council, which is engaged in university-wide policy and planning.

The Dean of the College of Aviation advances the mission of the College and University. The dean is responsible for overseeing undergraduate education and research; enrollment management; academic and strategic planning; and inclusive faculty, staff, and student development. Other essential responsibilities include development and alumni relations, facilitating and incentivizing grant and other external funding opportunities, pursuing collaborations with external partners,
and continuing quality improvement of the College’s programs and management. The dean works with faculty and staff to provide support for curricular improvement to achieve a balanced vision for undergraduate programs while advancing the profile and position of the College. The dean will actively engage in fundraising and development activities to support the vision and mission of the College. The successful candidate will be positive, forward-thinking, creative, and committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Required Qualifications**

- Appropriate, earned degree from a regionally accredited institution, combined with industry experience
- Demonstrated experience in a field related to aviation
- Record of excellence in leadership
- Professional career activities demonstrating the highest ethical standard
- Demonstrated commitment in the areas of personnel engagement and success
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Record of administrative experiences, including management of budgets and personnel
- Demonstrated ability to foster interdisciplinary community and industry partnerships and programs to advance organizational goals
- Demonstrated record of enhancing the domestic image and reputation of an entity
- Excellent analytical, written, presentation, and interpersonal communication skills that are adaptable to a diverse range of audiences

**Desired Qualifications**

- A graduate degree in an appropriate discipline
- Experience with one or several of the programs offered within the College of Aviation
- Familiarity with FAA regulations
- Experience in aviation, aviation related industries (including but not limited to manufacturing), and/or military aviation experience
- Demonstrated record of enhancing the global image and reputation of an entity
- Demonstrated ability to form collaborative relationships with faculty and staff in an atmosphere of shared governance
- Demonstrated commitment to student engagement and success
- Demonstrated success with alumni relations
- Demonstrated fund-raising ability and success in securing external funding and resources
- Record of excellence in education, scholarship, and research
- Demonstrated ability to lead effectively in an academic collective bargaining environment
- Record of administrative experiences in a university or college setting, including management of budgets, personnel, and curriculum
Applications and Nominations

Confidential applications and nominations will be accepted until the position is filled. Candidate screening will begin immediately. For best consideration, please submit application materials by September 15. An application should include a letter describing relevant experiences and interest in the position; a curriculum vitae; and the names of five references with titles, addresses, business telephone numbers, and email addresses included. Applications, nominations, and inquiries should be directed to:

Steve Leo, Managing Director
Vicki Henderson, Senior Associate
Storbeck Search
610-572-4296
WMUDeanAviation@storbecksearch.com

For more information on Western Michigan University, please visit http://www.wmich.edu

WMU is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Minorities, women, protected veterans, individuals with disabilities and all other qualified individuals are encouraged to apply.