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The Board of Trustees has begun a search for the 26th president of LaGrange College and encourages expressions of interest in this unusual opportunity for leadership. The search begins following 11 years of outstanding leadership by Dan McAlexander who has announced his retirement. In succeeding Dr. McAlexander, the next president has an opportunity to lead LaGrange to new levels of institutional achievement and distinction, in part by building on existing strengths and accomplishments. LaGrange has recently been named by U.S. News & World Report as a top five “Southern Baccalaureate College” and as a “Best Value” college. A new president will be expected to accept this assignment on or about July 1, 2020. As the college has just successfully completed a 10-year strategic plan and a 71 million comprehensive campaign, this is an uncommonly opportune moment in the life of this fine United Methodist college.
For more than 189 years, the LaGrange College mission has been to challenge students’ minds and inspire their souls. Founded in 1831 as a women’s academy, LaGrange is the oldest private college in Georgia. It has been co-educational since 1953. Throughout its history, the college has retained close ties with the United Methodist Church (UMC), and today LaGrange enjoys a distinguished reputation within the 117-member National Association of Schools and Colleges of the United Methodist Church (NASCUMC). Owned by the North Georgia Conference of its church affiliation, this relationship helps to define the college’s commitment to the uninhibited pursuit of truth and freedom of expression for faculty, students, and all members of the LaGrange community.

With degree programs firmly grounded in the liberal arts, LaGrange also offers a variety of pre-professional and professional opportunities through a day and evening schedule, both of which are fully accessible to traditional-aged and adult student learners. The Bachelor of Arts degree, the Bachelor of Science degree, the Bachelor of Business Administration degree, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, and the Bachelor of Music degree. Masters degrees are offered in education, clinical mental health counseling, and strength and conditioning. Day classes are offered on the 4-1-4 calendar and LaGrange offers the flexibility of a “Jan Term.” The January Interim Term provides a month-long opportunity for intensive focus on innovative subject matter in a single course or the enrichment of study off-campus and/or abroad. Evening college is transitioning to an online Bachelor of Arts in Business (Professional Selling) degree.
LAGRANGE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Within this framework, focused initiatives help to illustrate some of the distinctive qualities of the LaGrange academic experience:

Widely respected offerings in the arts encourage students in music, theatre, and art and design to expand their creativity through classroom study, in the studio, and on the stage. Superior facilities, including the impressive Lamar Dodd Art Center, Callaway Auditorium, and Price and Black Box theaters, help to showcase this renowned portion of the college program.

Global Engagement at LaGrange College is designed to help students develop proficiency in interaction with people of other cultures, gain a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of global economics and politics, and develop a comfort level with extended travel while they solve problems of language, lodging, navigation, and finances.

With over 400 approved study away programs, LaGrange College students have the opportunity to study abroad in over 45 countries or here in the U.S. for a full academic year, a semester, summer session, May Away or during the Interim in January. Study Away is an integral part of the LaGrange College experience and made accessible to every student through providing travel vouchers of up to $2,500 to students who meet the criteria.

The Wilkinson Family Servant Scholars Program prepares the next generation of servant-leaders by linking the college’s brightest students with community leaders and mentors so they can study local needs—and decide how to best meet them. The group lives in the newly renovated Broad Street Apartments, located midway between campus and the downtown square, the perfect home to link campus and community with scholarly service.

Each year, 12 juniors are chosen to start their two-year journey in the groundbreaking program. While living as a community, each student is engaged in active learning and service through individual internships at local agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, Circles of Troup County, Enoch Callaway Cancer Clinic, LaGrange-Troup County Humane Society, Boys and Girls Club of West Georgia, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and Harmony House.

The Servant Scholars’ senior year involves a collaborative capstone project addressing a need the group identifies from their junior-year service. The capstone project culminates in a Servant Scholars Colloquium presented to the campus and community near the end of the program’s second year.
Our Daily Bread, weekly student-run soup kitchen launched by the Scholars, has operated continuously since February 2013.

Servant Scholar graduates have moved on to impressive master’s and doctoral programs that will launch careers of influence—spreading the impact and philosophy of servant-leadership across the nation and world.

**Undergraduate research** has been shown to be a high impact best practice, which is associated with increased student success. The LaGrange College faculty are committed to working with students in a variety of forms and disciplines. Groups of students may come together to explore a particular research question or research experiences may be accomplished by single students in independent projects. The projects are often developed by the students based on their future career paths or current areas of interest. Regardless of discipline, environment, or method, undergraduate research has been shown to elevate a student’s intellectual ability, reading comprehension, and problem-solving skills. Overall, LaGrange’s 70 academic and preprofessional programs (**LaGrange Majors**) are implemented with great effectiveness. In assessing the learning environment and the engagement of students, multiple measures are employed (**LaGrange Student Achievement Information**).

LaGrange is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) to award associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees. Teacher education programs are accredited by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the nursing program by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), and the undergraduate program in business administration by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).
AN ENGAGED FACULTY

LaGrange College faculty members are committed to enhancing the learning environment of the college through their work as teachers, advisors, and mentors. In an extension of the classroom, faculty are involved with individual students on independent research projects, artistic interpretation, social service and civic projects, internships, and learning opportunities abroad. Regardless of the level of academic preparation of incoming students, faculty members remain proudest of their impact on students’ learning outcomes and the changes students experience through their intellectual growth and personal development during their time at LaGrange. LaGrange’s 82 full-time faculty members create an intensely intimate educational experience for students at LaGrange, where the faculty-to-student ratio is 1:11. Of the full-time teaching faculty, approximately 86 percent hold the highest academic degree offered in their respective field and 45 percent have tenure. All faculty continue to serve with a common commitment to the college’s overarching mission of teaching and service, and the more recently hired faculty have brought a heightened interest in individual scholarship and other professional activity.

STUDENT CENTERED PROGRAMMING

About 1,000 students are enrolled at LaGrange, representing 16 states and 9 countries, with more than half from the state of Georgia. A rich diversity distinguishes the student body in which 28 percent are from under-represented groups (22 percent African American). Fifty-four percent are women; 46 percent are men. Average high school GPA is 3.5 and SAT scores range from 950 to 1140 in the mid-fifty percentile range. Ninety-nine percent of all students receive some form of financial assistance and more than $10 million is awarded annually. Educating the “whole student” is vital to the overall objective of the college’s program. As a result, a robust co-curriculum and a comprehensive student-life program are integral to the LaGrange academic experience. Fifty-seven percent of undergraduates live on the campus. The fabric of the living-learning program is highlighted by an active Student Government Association, over 40 student clubs and organizations, active Greek and independent living arrangements, and the prominence of two-character building initiatives:

- **The Honor Code** – LaGrange students’ significant recognition of personal integrity was underscored in 1999 by the establishment of an Honor Code. This code has become the responsibility of every student, faculty, and staff member at LaGrange and it is widely supported. Student members of the Honor Council seek to educate the community on principles of academic integrity and to enforce the Honor Code.

- **The Social Code** – Like the Honor Code, this code is the responsibility of all constituencies as it attempts to instill a sense of moral and community responsibility across the campus. Students on the Social Council are responsible for interpreting behavioral standards for students and for taking action when these policies are violated.

NCAA DIVISION III ATHLETICS

LaGrange College is a NCAA Division III member, competing in the USA South Atlantic Conference. The College features 18 intercollegiate sports (9 for men and women), forty-six percent of undergraduates participating in varsity athletics. Men’s lacrosse and beach volleyball began during the 2019-20 academic year. Among the best in the region, our athletic facilities include a $2 million baseball stadium, softball complex, a state-of-the-art training facility and natatorium.

LaGrange athletic teams excelled during the 2018-19 academic year. The Panther baseball team won the USA South tournament title for the third straight year, reaching the NCAA Birmingham Regional. Men’s soccer, volleyball, men’s and women’s basketball and tennis, softball, and golf all qualified for USA South Tournaments. LaGrange athletic teams had 80 student-athletes earn USA South Academic All-Conference recognition. The Panthers had 24 athletes earn various USA South All-Conference honors.
SPIRITUAL LIFE

Reflecting its close affiliation with the UMC, LaGrange provides many opportunities to celebrate spiritual life. A full-time chaplain serves as spiritual advisor to students, faculty, and staff. Religious life activities are available for all students regardless of their faith tradition, and the spiritual fabric of the campus community is vibrant.

A DISTINCTIVE PLACE

The sense of “place” for LaGrange, identified by its identity as a value centered environment is apparent in many aspects. Located about 65 miles southwest of Atlanta, this stunningly beautiful campus of over 125 acres is situated on the highest geographical point in the city of LaGrange. Today’s campus has little deferred maintenance and is sustained in immaculate fashion. Newest among the stellar facilities is the Hudson Lab Sciences Building, with its state-of-the-art laboratories and welcoming spaces. It has become a popular place for science students to gather and explore. Opened in 2017, the $17 million facility is the home of biology, ecology, anatomy/physiology, chemistry and immunology. It includes student research areas, a special projects lab, an ecology lab and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance equipment. Throughout the building, “soft” learning locations encourage students to meet, collaborate on projects and interact with professors, inspiring connections beyond the classroom.

The Frank and Laura Lewis Library opened 11 years ago and quickly became the academic heart of the campus. Situated at the center of the campus in proximity to the dining hall, dorms and classrooms, the $16.9 million facility includes a coffee shop, 24-hour study area, individual and group study rooms, media lounge and state-of-the-art audio-visual technologies. It also has 45,000 square feet of approximately 336,000 print and electronic books, an extensive reference collection, a large DVD and CD collection and about 200 full-text databases for all academic discipline relationships built on mutual respect, compassion, and civility, all of which are expressed among and between all constituent groups.

A discussion about the LaGrange community is not complete without including the historic city of LaGrange (pop. 30,000). The college has intentionally extended, through word and action, its expression of connection throughout the larger community. In return, it has been embraced by the people, activity, and resources of the region. Notable in this regard is the longstanding and historic support of the Callaway Foundation (LaGrange) and the Pitts Foundation (Atlanta), both of which have made a substantive difference in the strength of the LaGrange program. As a result of the college’s effort to take a leadership role in local social, economic, recreational, and cultural issues, few town/gown relationships are as healthy as those that exist at LaGrange. Additional information about LaGrange people and programs may be found at www.visitlagrange.com. The beauty of the surrounding region is also impressive, highlighted by West Point Lake, a 25,000-acre reservoir created by the Chattahoochee River, with 525 miles of shoreline.
THE AGENDA FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

The next president will join the LaGrange College community at an opportune time to lead the college to new achievements and distinction. The LaGrange opportunity offers many assets to achieve new heights of success. While protecting the traditions of the college, the new president will be challenged to find creative opportunities for growth. The next president should be prepared to embrace the best of the campus’s commitment to core values while pursuing dynamic transformation by accepting an ambitious agenda to include:

• LEADING THE LAGRANGE COMMUNITY IN ENVISIONING A STRONG FUTURE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

In the fall of 2009 campus leaders, led by President Dan McAlexander, developed a strategic plan, Vision 2020, which guided the college through 10 years of achievements. Many accomplishments grew out of the plan including the opening of the Hudson Lab Sciences building, the successful completion of the “Promise to Prominence” campaign, the launching of Global Engagement, which provides travel vouchers for qualifying students, addition of new programs and sports, growth in undergraduate research, and establishment of the Servant Scholars program. These achievements provide a strong foundation for the new president to lead the college as it envisions its future though a new phase of planning.

• INSPIRING THE CAMPUS TO IMPLEMENT DYNAMIC PROGRAMS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN 21ST CENTURY STUDENTS

The next president will be charged with exploring new opportunities for offering attractive academic programs that prepare students for success in a changing world. As the landscape of higher education grows increasingly competitive, leaders must be prepared to maximize institutional resources by assuring that the programs delivered continue to be those that meet student needs. As LaGrange College approaches its bicentennial, it must develop creative programming to assure growth in net tuition revenues.

• PROVIDING THE LEADERSHIP TO CREATE A CULTURE OF UNDERSTANDING BOTH OF LAGRANGE COLLEGE’S PRESENT REALITIES AND OF ITS FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

For LaGrange College, as for most American liberal arts colleges, realities are complicated and often troubling. It is important for the president to seek ideas from the campus and to be transparent in conversations with the faculty and staff to help them have a realistic understanding of current challenges. At the same time, a successful president will envision and communicate opportunities for addressing those realities in ways that transform its future.
• CONTINUING TO FOSTER THE STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON THE CAMPUS AND BETWEEN THE COLLEGE, THE CITY OF LAGRANGE, AND THE CHURCH

LaGrange College has an extraordinary sense of community and commitment to student success. The next president must embrace the ethical and caring way the campus interacts by enthusiastically and authentically engaging on campus—and in the greater community. The college enjoys a very close, positive connection with the town of LaGrange through engagement of community members in programs like 3D Journeys and involvement of students through Servant Scholars. Likewise, the college’s ties to the United Methodist Church are deep and longstanding. These church and town/gown relationships are strong, and they are vital to the college’s continued success.

• LEADING THE CAMPUS IN CREATIVE PRACTICES TO ENHANCE ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

In addition to new programs, the next president should be successful in implementing best practices to strengthen enrollment and retention. From fostering student academic success to creating enhanced social and residential programming to maximizing resources for best results, the president must support programming to create an environment for overall enrollment growth and stability.

• ENRICHING THE COLLEGE’S RESOURCE BASE BY BUILDING ON ITS STRONG FUNDRAISING HISTORY

Despite having just completed a successful campaign, the college’s annual dependence on tuition, fees, and gifts means that the new president must provide engaged leadership in all areas of resource development. Continuing to raise rates of alumni giving and to cultivate new donors will be important. It is expected that the new president will serve as the college’s chief fundraiser and take a central role in enhancing the LaGrange College philanthropic culture.

• MAINTAINING FISCAL STABILITY THROUGH STRONG FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

A modest endowment of $53 million and dependence on tuition revenues require that the president provide engaged financial stewardship for current operations as well as future plans. The college is committed to maintaining a balanced annual operating budget ($45 million) and to adhering to sound business practices. The new president will be expected to assess, and if necessary, adjust the current business model in order to assure a stable financial position.

• INVESTING IN THE FACULTY AND STAFF

The LaGrange College faculty and staff are extraordinarily dedicated to the success of their students and of the college. They donate tremendous energy and countless hours to the work of the campus. Through challenging financial times, their compensation has lagged behind that of their peers on other campuses. The new president will be charged with finding resources to address the challenges of appropriately rewarding current faculty and staff, as well as, attracting and retaining new employees.

• ENHANCING LAGRANGE BY REPRESENTING ITS MANY ASSETS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO CONSTITUENTS BEYOND THE CAMPUS

The new president should be prepared to extend the college’s visibility by representing LaGrange College through professional associations, within the political system, throughout the United Methodist Church, and in other public and professional venues to promote the institution’s many accomplishments and increase its visibility.
DESIRED ATTRIBUTES FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

The next LaGrange College president will embody integrity in every aspect of his or her personal and professional life. The new leader must be a person of high energy, strong work ethic, and deep spiritual grounding. The successful candidate must bring impressive academic credentials as well as a comprehensive understanding of and commitment to academic values. The new president must be:

• An energetic innovator who can be a valuable resource in helping the college develop attractive new programs;

• An engaged communicator committed to open, transparent leadership;

• A visionary leader, whose creative outlook will balance the liberal arts foundation with its application to areas of professional education;

• A person with a commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity, who understands the importance of inclusion to this college community;

• An enthusiastic advocate for the role of the independent, residential, church-related college;

• A person who understands the fundamental value of the United Methodist/LaGrange relationship and is eager to embrace an engaged relationship between the college and the church;

• A leader who will comfortably engage the college community in thoughtful conversation about its future;

• A president who will be visible and approachable, participating in activities on campus and in the local community;

• A strategic thinker, able to lead the college in visualizing and implementing dynamic priorities;

• An eager and experienced fundraiser who can build on the college’s positive culture of philanthropy;

• A person knowledgeable about the major issues facing higher education including enrollment management, accreditation, technology, and academic best practices;

• A strong executive who has a solid understanding of financial and personnel matters.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The LaGrange College search committee will begin reviewing application materials in February and will continue until early in March. Although application materials will be accepted until the time that a new president is selected, candidates should submit materials by February 21 for the most favorable consideration. The new president will be expected to begin work on or about July 1, 2020. Dr. Caroline Whitson and Dr. Stuart Dorsey of Academic Search, Inc., are assisting with this search. Nominators or prospective candidates may contact them at caroline.whitson@academicsearch.org or stuart.dorsey@academicsearch.org.

Applications should include a letter of candidacy that responds to the agenda for new leadership at LaGrange and the desired attributes for a new president; a complete resume or vita; and the name and contact information (phone and e-mail) of three references, none of whom will be contacted without the formal permission of the candidate. All applications will be considered in full confidence and should be submitted to LaGrangePres@academicsearch.org.

LaGrange College does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race or color, or national or ethnic origin.
ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search, Inc. is assisting LaGrange College in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services exclusively to institutions of higher education. Academic Search was founded on the principle of strengthening higher education leadership through professional search services. We are the only search firm in the nation with a formal relationship to a premier leadership development program. As the subsidiary of the American Academic Leadership Institute (AALI), Academic Search provides substantial financial support to a number of leadership identification, development, and support programs across all sectors of public and private higher education. For more information, visit http://www.academicsearch.org/.

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