Associate Vice President for Culture and Belonging

Kent State University seeks a strategic leader to serve as Associate Vice President for Culture and Belonging. Reporting to Vice President Amoaba Gooden, the Associate Vice President for Culture and Belonging will provide executive-level leadership for several units within the Division of People, Culture and Belonging.

Kent State is deeply committed to creating a diverse and inclusive community for faculty, staff and students. In September 2023, the divisions of Human Resources and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) merged to create the new Division of People, Culture and Belonging. Under the leadership of Vice President Amoaba Gooden, the division enhances Kent State’s focus on inclusive excellence and the well-being of people and organizational culture. The Division of People, Culture and Belonging strengthens efforts geared toward Kent State’s institutional mission and vision and advances the university’s commitment to demonstrate a culture of care, kindness and respect. The division develops leading practices to aid in increasing the recruitment and retention of underrepresented and/or underserved faculty and staff at Kent State University and works to foster a welcoming, equitable and inclusive campus community.

Kent State University is highly ranked as a top employer. In September 2022, the university was recognized as a “Great College to Work For” by the Chronicle of Higher Education. Over the 11 years of receiving this award, Kent State has consistently been recognized in the Compensation and Benefits category.

For six consecutive years, Kent State University has been named one of the Best Employers for Women in a nationwide ranking by Forbes and marketing research firm Statista. Among the 400 companies and organizations recognized on the Best Employers for Women 2023 list, Kent State ranks No. 183 in the country. Kent State employs nearly 3,400 women, making up 58% of the university’s workforce.

Kent State University commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion has been recognized with the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. The annual award recognizes U.S. colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. Kent State has received the HEED Award for the past 11 years.

Kent State has also been named to Campus Pride’s annual Best of the Best Colleges and Universities for LGBTQ+ students in the United States. Recognized as one of the nation’s top universities for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff, Kent State is the only institution in northern Ohio to receive the honor for the past three years.
The Role of Associate Vice President for Culture and Belonging

The successful candidate will:

- Provide executive-level leadership for several units within the Division of People, Culture and Belonging.
- Provide direct support to the Vice President for People, Culture and Belonging.
- Promote an inclusive and authentic approach to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.
- Assist with university responses related to internal and external diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging matters.
- Oversee and promote the University Climate survey and other related climate and belonging surveys with a university-wide team.
- Consult with campus partners on survey results and lead climate and belonging change efforts.
- Drive equity-related strategic planning efforts across the university and consult with units on implementation.
- Lead the University Diversity Action Council (UDAC) in collaboration with other division staff.
- Support the division in developing, promoting and producing diversity, equity and inclusion education and research areas across the university.
- Steer efforts to secure diversity-related funding and grants.
- Serve as a resource for recruitment, retention and graduation efforts.
- Assist with the development and approval of departmental budgets and expenditures; maximize existing resources and make strategic planning recommendations.
- Lead the development, implementation, maintenance, enforcement and evaluation of policies, processes and best practices.
- Manage the development and implementation of division mission, goals and objectives.
• May serve as the Vice President for People, Culture and Belonging in the absence of the vice president.

• Chair, convene or serve on various department, division and University committees.

**Desired Qualifications and Characteristics**

A master’s degree in a relevant field from an accredited institution. A minimum of eight years of progressively responsible management experience including three years of experience with qualitative and/or quantitative research and diversity. A Ph.D. in a relevant field with a minimum of five years of diversity administration experience is preferred.

Desired qualifications and characteristics of the ideal candidate include the following:

• Record of success in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

• Ability to articulate a compelling vision that motivates others and sets clear, challenging, and measurable goals.

• Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with various internal and external constituencies and work with a culturally diverse population.

• Regularly scans the environment to seize opportunities and mitigate risk; uses data to make prudent decisions and evaluate results.

• Willingness to tackle challenging issues and engage in difficult conversations.

• Demonstrated success as a unit leader who develops and engages others through coaching, feedback, exposure and stretch opportunities; recognizes employee accomplishments.

• Ability to connect with varied audiences and disciplines through an authentic communication style.

• Actively listens and considers the perspectives of others.

**The Division of People, Culture and Belonging**

The Division of People, Culture and Belonging consists of the following primary units of functions:
Employee Benefits
Employee Benefits oversees Kent State University’s comprehensive and award-winning benefits program. In addition to annual open enrollment, Employee Benefits is responsible for the university’s medical and dental insurance programs, prescription drug and vision coverage, life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and long-term disability insurance. In addition, this unit oversees FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) and paid parental leave programs, workers compensation, health and flexible spending accounts, public student loan forgiveness, and total compensation.

Employee Wellness
The Employee Wellness team provides services and resources to support Kent State faculty and staff physically, mentally and emotionally. Wellness partners include an outstanding employee assistance program, IMPACT Solutions, a physician-owned wellness partner, Be Well Solutions, and excellent collaborative relationships across the university system. Employee Wellness oversees the Wellness Your Way rewards program that encourages healthy lifestyle activities through wellness reward dollars earned through participation in healthy lifestyle activities. Other programs and responsibilities include biometric health screenings, healthy coaching programs, mobile mammograms, chronic condition management, flexible and telecommuting work arrangements, and meditation across campus.

Compensation
Compensation is responsible for the development, implementation and administration of compensation programs and practices that attract, retain and develop a diverse workforce in support of the university’s mission. The unit is responsible for the management of pay policies and programs for all non-faculty university employees. This includes the administration of position reviews and evaluation, pay increases and supplemental pay. The unit is responsible for ensuring accurate job descriptions, working with wage and salary data, conducting wage and salary surveys, and assisting units with hiring independent contractors.

Talent Acquisition
The Talent Acquisition unit administers employment processes for Kent State University, which was recognized by Forbes as one of America’s Best-in-State Employers for 2022. The team provides guidance to units across the system with requesting and posting positions in Kent State’s online applicant tracking system (Page Up), as well as creating and placing advertising in external publications. As units move through the employment process, Talent Acquisition oversees the interviewing process, answers questions regarding applications and resumes, and conducts background/degree verifications and any required testing of potential candidates. When a candidate is chosen, Talent Acquisition helps with offer letters and employment agreements and assists units with onboarding new employees.
**Compliance, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action**

The mission of the Office of Compliance, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action is to ensure equal access to employment and educational opportunities in support of the university’s commitment to equal opportunity, affirmation and diversity. The office is responsible for the Kent State’s Affirmative Action Plan, ADA disability accommodations, Title IX sexual assault/misconduct, and Title IX and athletics. The department provides information, consultation, guidance, training workshops and confidential counseling to the university community on affirmative action, equal opportunity, harassment prevention and discrimination matters. Finally, the Office of Compliance, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action provides oversight of and support for the university’s compliance with equal opportunity and affirmative action laws and regulations.

**Employee and Labor Relations**

Employee Relations works with managers and employees to enhance the working environment for Kent State employees. This includes change management, turnover reduction and improved employee relations. Employee Relations also helps coach, mentor, and train supervisors and managers in employee management, performance reviews and disciplinary actions.

Labor Relations oversees all aspects of labor relations activities for AFSCME-represented employees at Kent State. The goal of the department is to create and sustain a collaborative work environment for collective bargaining members, unrepresented classified employees and professional leadership. The office oversees pre-disciplinary hearings for classified, unrepresented university employees.

**Training and Development**

Kent State University and the Division of People, Culture and Belonging understand that continual learning is a vital part of employment at the university. Training and Development conducts various learning experiences that contribute to personal and professional development. This includes webinars, online learning, and Safe Colleges training for faculty, staff and students. The unit participates in new hire orientation and offers customized education for individuals, supervisors and managers, leadership and teams.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Education and Training Lab aims to foster and develop diversity and cultural capacity through awareness, knowledge and skills. The Lab’s team combines diverse expertise to help address issues ranging from unintentional biases to recruitment, promotion and strategies for creating a more inclusive workplace. The Lab’s training team facilitates dialogues to foster awareness of barriers that may impact climate, diversity and inclusion. In addition to working with Kent State faculty, staff and students, the DEI Education and Training Lab partners with community-based organizations and corporations to extend the benefits of research, evidence-based practices and shared expertise into the greater community.
**Records**
The mission of the Records unit is to advance the overall strategic goals of the university through timely payment and accurate personnel record-keeping for the staff of Kent State University. Records aims to do this by offering quality customer service and guidance in the administration of university policies and procedures. In addition to maintaining personnel records, the Records unit ensures that employee leaves of absence are processed. This includes sick leave, vacation, family medical leave, military leave, educational leave, childcare leave and personal leave. In addition, Records processes classified and unclassified personnel actions including new hires; changes in employee class, title, pay grade, funding, FTE (Full Time Equivalent) and supervisors; and renewals of temporary appointments and separations.

**Recruitment, Retention and Inclusion Success**
Working with multiple units across the division and the university, Recruitment, Retention and Inclusion Success develops, implements and maintains strategic initiatives to recruit, retain and develop faculty and staff. In addition, the unit serves as a liaison with Employee Resource Groups and Kent State’s Staff Council.

**Equity Research and Assessment**
Equity Research and Assessment creates and manages data assessments for division programming and leads the university-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategic planning process. The department writes research papers and reports, award and grant applications and works closely with other data areas across campus to collaborate on initiatives including the STEMM Equity Achievement (SEA) Change initiative and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) task force. The department also serves as a consultant to external constituents.

**Operations, Strategy and Special Projects**
The division is home to multiple professionals who manage the daily operations of the Division of People, Culture and Belonging. This includes communications, project management, staffing, and oversight of division budgets. This area organizes and leads efforts out of the vice president’s office including university-wide conferences and a variety of university-wide equity related strategic efforts.

**Kent State University Overview**
With eight campuses across Northeast Ohio, the College of Podiatric Medicine, Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, Twinsburg Academic Center, and academic sites in major world cities including New York City, Geneva, and Florence, Kent State is a major educational, economic, and cultural resource far beyond the Northeast Ohio region it has served since 1910. Kent State comprises eight campuses that produce 10,000 career-ready graduates each year:

- [Kent Campus](#)
- [Kent State University at Ashtabula](#)
Kent State University has a comprehensive, renowned educational and research enterprise extending across 11 colleges and eight campuses throughout Northeast Ohio. Evidencing the far-reaching array of disciplines are its academic colleges:

- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Aeronautics and Engineering
- College of Architecture and Environmental Design
- College of the Arts
- Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship
- College of Communication and Information
- College of Education, Health, and Human Services
- College of Nursing
- College of Public Health
- College of Podiatric Medicine
- College of Applied and Technical Studies

Kent State University is home to nearly 33,000 students across the eight-campus system. With a thriving residential population, the university’s Kent Campus is on a beautiful 953-acre campus in Kent, Ohio, a city of 30,000 in the greater Cleveland-Akron metropolitan area. The campus provides the intellectual, scientific, social, economic, and artistic resources of a major research university in a safe and serene campus setting. In 2018, the Kent Campus launched a 10-year, $1-billion facilities master plan to better serve the needs of students and the entire Kent State community. The plan enhances the welcoming feeling of the university’s iconic Front Campus and genuine sense of place, elevates inclusive healthy living-learning environments, links a campus-wide series of spaces focused on innovation and expands the dynamic synergy with the city of Kent.

Kent State University’s seven regional campuses draw full- and part-time students primarily from their local communities across Northeast Ohio. Like the Kent Campus, each regional campus is thoroughly engaged in its surrounding community, making available the rich resources of a comprehensive and diverse university, significantly impacting that area’s economic well-being and quality of life. Each campus has the flexibility to meet wide-ranging local needs through associate and selected baccalaureate programs; continuing education and training; research/technology parks; and facilities for advanced technology, manufacturing, and the performing arts.
Application Process
Candidates should apply through Kent State’s employment system and include a cover letter describing relevant experiences and interest in this position; curriculum vitae/resume; and names, titles and contact information for five references. To assure full consideration, application materials should be received by December 31, 2023. Documents submitted to Kent State University for employment opportunities are subject to disclosure under the Ohio Public Records law. Kent State University values diversity and is committed to equal opportunity for all persons regardless of age, color, disability, ethnicity, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other status protected by law.

Questions, requests for information, and nominations may be directed to the search coordinator, Brianna Molitor, Project Director, Division of People, Culture and Belonging via email at bmolitor@kent.edu.