Vice President

For

Finance & Administration
The Opportunity

Fisk University, located in Nashville, Tennessee, seeks an experienced and highly qualified financial and operational leader to assume the role of Vice President for Finance & Administration (VPFA). Fisk University is engaged in a significant expansion and is undergoing a major Renaissance. The Vice President reports directly to the University President, Dr. H. James Williams, and will manage a multi-faceted division, while serving as a key member of the University’s executive leadership team. Ideally, the new Vice President will assume responsibilities in the Spring Semester of 2015.

The University

Founded in 1866, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Fisk University is a historically black university, and is the oldest institution of higher learning in Nashville, Tennessee. The school was named in honor of General Clinton B. Fisk of the Tennessee Freedmen's Bureau, who provided the new institution with facilities in former Union Army barracks near the present site of Nashville's Union Station. The work of Fisk's founders was sponsored by the American Missionary Association — later part of the United Church of Christ — with which Fisk retains an affiliation today.

The tradition of excellence at Fisk has developed out of a history marked by struggle and uncertainty. The University’s world-famous Fisk Jubilee Singers® originated as a group of traveling students who set out from Nashville on October 6, 1871, taking the entire contents of the University treasury with them for travel expenses, praying that through their music they could somehow raise enough money to keep open the doors of their debt-ridden school. To this day, each October 6th, Fisk pauses to observe the anniversary of the singers' departure from campus in 1871. The contemporary Fisk Jubilee Singers® perform in a University convocation — and conclude the day’s celebration with a pilgrimage to the gravesites of the original singers, where once again, the old songs are sung at the burial places of their first performers.

In 1930, Fisk became the first African-American institution to gain accreditation by a regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). It was also the first
such institution to be placed on the approved lists of the Association of American Universities (1933) and the American Association of University Women (1948). One of the outstanding achievements in the history of the University occurred in 1953, when The Phi Beta Kappa Society granted a charter to Fisk University and, by this action, Fisk became the host of the first chapter of The Phi Beta Kappa Society on a predominantly black campus. In fact, today, Fisk is one of only four Historically Black Colleges or Universities that has a chapter of The Phi Beta Kappa Society.

From its earliest days, Fisk has played a leadership role in the education of African Americans. Fisk faculty and alumni have been among America's intellectual, artistic, and civic leaders in every generation since the University's beginnings. Among them have been the following luminaries.

- **W.E.B. Du Bois** (Fisk class of 1888), the great social critic and co-founder of the NAACP.
- **Booker T. Washington**, the great educator who was Du Bois's famous philosophical adversary as well as the founder of Tuskegee University, who served on Fisk's Board of Trustees, married a Fisk alumna, and sent his children to Fisk.
- **John Hope Franklin**, renowned African American historian and distinguished author.
- **Ida B. Wells-Barnett**, the crusading journalist, attended Fisk.
- **Charles Spurgeon Johnson**, Fisk's first black president, helped to conceive the modern science of sociology.
- The distinguished Harlem Renaissance artist **Aaron Douglas**, who founded the Art Department and served on the Fisk faculty for many years, was honored, in 2013, with a new set of U.S. Postal Service stamps commemorating his art work. His murals decorate the walls of the University's Erastus Milo Cravath Hall.

The University continues to attract outstanding students and produce successful graduates. The following leaders are among those on the list of distinguished alumni.

- **Carolyn Reid-Wallace**, scholar and author, former Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, and former and first female president of Fisk University.
- **Hazel R. O'Leary**, first female and seventh U.S Secretary of Energy, and past president of Fisk University.
- **Johnetta Betsch Cole**, former president of Spelman College and Bennett College for Women.
• Niara Sudarkasa, former and only female president of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

• Judith Jamison, acclaimed dancer, choreographer, and Artistic Director of the Alvin Alley American Dance Theater.

• Rel Dowdell, acclaimed filmmaker and producer.

• John Bluford III, former CEO of Truman Medical Center and past president of the American Hospital Association.

• Alma Powell, author and co-founder of America's Promise Alliance.

Today, Fisk University is in a period of what can best be described as a renaissance. Under the leadership of President H. James Williams, the University is experiencing significant growth in enrollment and a continuation of quality in each new class. Enrollment in 2012 was 620, which was a 16 percent increase over the previous year and the enrollment continues to increase, with 645 students in 2013, and 773 students enrolled in 2014.

The Mission of the University

Fisk University’s mission continues to focus on producing graduates from diverse backgrounds with the integrity and intellect required for substantive contributions to society. The curriculum is grounded in the liberal arts and the faculty and administrators emphasize the discovery and advancement of knowledge through research in the natural and social sciences, business, and the humanities. Finally, the University is committed to the success of scholars and leaders who possess global perspectives.

This commitment and all decisions are guided by the following values:

• Diversity;
• Excellence;
• Teamwork;
• Accountability;
• Integrity;
• Leadership; and
• Service.
The Academic Programs

From its founding in 1866, academic excellence has been the hallmark of Fisk University, one of the foremost research and teaching universities in the United States. Fisk offers its students an exceptional curriculum with dynamic learning and mentoring experiences by an award-winning, professionally renowned faculty.

The undergraduate programs are built around two schools, The School of Humanities and Social Sciences and The School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Business. In addition, The School of Graduate Studies offers MA degrees in the Natural Science Disciplines of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, and also in Clinical and General Psychology. Fisk is also engaged in multiple partnerships with other institutions to link the Master’s trainees with Ph.D. programs in their fields of interest. A prime example of these programs is the Fisk-Vanderbilt Master’s-to-Ph.D. Bridge Program in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology.

The Fisk-Vanderbilt Master’s-to-Ph.D. Program has been very successful, with twelve graduates in the past four years, all in physics, astronomy, and materials science. This perpetuates the legacy of excellence that is evident in the University’s undergraduate and graduate STEM programs.

The School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Business consists of the departments of Business Administration, Life and Physical Sciences, and Mathematics & Computer Science. These three departments offer a wide range of programs. The Department of Business Administration offers a major in business administration for the Bachelor of Science degree. Within the major, students may choose a specialized concentration in accounting, financial economics, international business relations, and management. Students may also pursue a joint baccalaureate degree and Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) degree in conjunction with the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University. A concentration is available in Music Business through a partnership with Belmont University. The Department of Life and Physical Sciences is considered a multidisciplinary program. It has integrated the
natural science departments to provide students with an environment that fosters interdisciplinary thinking.

The School of Humanities and Behavioral Social Sciences focuses on the disciplines of education, psychology, and sociology that comprise the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Education. Psychology and Sociology share a common focus—human behavior. Inspired by the success of its graduates and a distinguished faculty, the Department of Arts and Languages offers majors in Art, English, Modern Foreign Languages, and Music.

The students are supported by a strong faculty who are scholars, practitioners, and leaders in their disciplines.

**The Campus and Student Life**

Fisk University's vibrant campus life helps students develop leadership skills, character, and discipline. As part of the University’s commitment to cultivating leaders and scholars, students are provided a place to grow as individuals and learn to become accountable for their actions.

There's always something going on at Fisk University. Every week the Office of Student Engagement offers lectures, movies, sports, volunteer opportunities, and more.

There are more than 50 student groups and organizations on campus, and that number continues to expand because students are encouraged to start new clubs and organizations.
every year. Campus life at Fisk is a great way to explore individual interests, make friends, have fun, and make the most of the “Fisk Experience.”

The Fisk Jubilee Singers® is a tradition and part of the rich history of the University. It continues to be a part of the vibrant student life and following annual auditions, a small group is selected to become members of the internationally renowned a capella group and serve the University.

Fisk University Athletics offers fifteen sports that provide its student athletes with a positive environment in which to learn, live, practice, and compete. The programs participate as independent members of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The Ladies of R.A.G.E. Dance Team is one of the opportunities in the Athletics Department, along with the traditional sports of Men’s and Women’s
basketball, cross country, tennis, golf, and track and field; in addition, the University offers women’s soccer, softball, and volleyball.

The Office of Student Engagement oversees all activities related to the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and Greek Letter Organizations. The eleven fraternities and sororities at Fisk University promote a balance of academics, leadership, community service/philanthropy, and social events.

A high percentage of the 773 students at Fisk University lives on campus. The Residence Life Department maintains a healthy living and learning campus environment that respects and appreciates the uniqueness of each individual, while encouraging personal growth, integrity, ethical leadership development, and student learning.

**The Community**

The University is located in a vibrant section of Nashville, near West End. This sector of the city is the home of a number of educational institutions that are nationally known for excellence in education. Fisk University is located adjacent to Meharry Medical College and is in close proximity to Tennessee State University, as well as to Vanderbilt University and Belmont University, all of which jointly host graduate programs with Fisk University.

The city of Nashville provides many opportunities for the students, faculty, staff, and administration at Fisk University. Known for its music tradition and expertise, Fisk developed a business degree with a concentration in Music Business and, as a result, the University has access to various sectors of that industry. In addition, the city is known as the home of outstanding schools of medicine and other health-related economic drivers that interact with the University.

The economic development, educational, cultural, and environmental opportunities in Nashville provide services and opportunities for the student population to build upon, and are supportive of, the historic role that Fisk University has played in the community.

**The Points of Distinction**

The historic significance of Fisk University is seen in the continuation of the heritage that fosters success. Many factors cultivate and sustain the culture of excellence, including those that follow.
• Recognition of the University as being the first historically black college or university to be selected to host a chapter of The Phi Beta Kappa Society (Fisk’s 2014 graduating class included eight students who were inducted into The Phi Beta Kappa Society).
• In Forbes magazine’s 2014 rankings of the 650 Top Colleges, Fisk University ranks #256 overall, #186 among private colleges, and #54 in the South. Fisk was the fourth highest ranked institution in Tennessee. Fisk is the highest ranked historically black college/university on the list.
• The 2014 U.S. News & World Report's "Best Colleges and Universities" ranked Fisk in Tier One, at #165 of more than 1,400 Liberal Arts Institutions in the United States. Only four HBCUs are ranked in Tier One. Fisk maintained its status as the top coed institution and the top “university” in the separate HBCU rankings. Fisk is ranked #7 on the list of "The Best Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)."
• Fisk University continues to be consistently ranked among the top 246 of the liberal arts college in the nation, according to The Washington Monthly’s “2014 Best Liberal Arts Colleges” edition. Fisk’s overall placement is #1 in Tennessee, #5 in the South and #55 in the U.S. A substantial gain this year was in the Social Mobility category, where Fisk is ranked 47th in the nation. In the categories of research expenditures and bachelor-to-PhD transition, Fisk ranks 3rd in the South.
• For the 22nd consecutive year, the Princeton Review included Fisk on its 2014 list of "The Best Southeastern Colleges."
• Fisk’s Fall-to-Fall persistence rate is 82 percent. The national average persistence rate for private non-profit institutions is 80 percent, and the average persistence rate at other Tennessee institutions is 75.4 percent.
• Fisk’s six-year graduation rate is 52 percent. The national graduation rate was 59 percent in 2012, which is the latest available number from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.
• Over 17 percent of Fisk students are selected for internships, which is above the 9 percent national average for internship placements on college campuses.
• Sixty-one percent of students who earn a Fisk degree enter graduate or professional school within one year of their graduation, well ahead of the national average of 23 percent.
Fisk remains the only historically black college or university ever to win the prestigious *R&D 100 Award* (known as the “Oscars of Innovation”), and to date has won four.

In 2012, NSF ranked Fisk’s research in physical sciences in the top 3% in the nation.

**The University’s Finances**

Over the last few years Fisk University has addressed various issues related to the financial strength of the University. With the arrival of new President Dr. H. James Williams in February 2013 and the reorganization and strengthening of the Board during the spring of that year, the University made major steps toward establishing a solid financial foundation for future growth – in terms of both the numbers of students and the quality of the financial well-being of the University. Progress was made in the recruitment and retention of students, with an increase in student numbers from 533 in 2011 to 773 in 2014. Stronger recruitment efforts contributed to these results but equally important was an 82% retention rate for the class of 2013. Additionally, over a period of seven years leading up to 2014, the University alumni support of *THE FISK FUND* annual giving program exceeded the national average by accounting for more than $9.6 million. In addition to the vigor of alumni giving, the Board of Trustees contributed more than 18% of the giving over the past two years.

In a 2013 report to The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the community, President Williams noted the following factors relating to the financial strength of the University.

- The Board oversaw a budget that led to the University’s finishing the 2012-2013 Fiscal Year with a surplus of more than $330,000 and the Board approved a balanced budget for 2013-2014.
- The balance sheet is strong: total net assets are up; the total restricted cash is up; accounts and accrued payables are down, significantly; notes payables are down; and Unrestricted Net Assets Exclusive of Plant and Plant Related Debt exceeds a healthy $8.8 million.
- The University’s total net assets in 2013 was $82,043,150, which was an increase of approximately $300,000 over the previous year.
- The new President issued a special challenge to the Office of Institutional Advancement to raise an additional $2 million between March 1 and June 30, 2013. The Development Team raised $5,172,510 of unrestricted resources during the year including $3,624,529 during the timeframe of the four-month challenge.
The President led the University in a revision of budget planning and implementation that aligned the core expenditures with core revenues, with revenues of $26,445,779 and expenditures of $25,817,137 for the 2014 fiscal year.

The growth of the student body impacted the financial picture significantly. The plan for an increase in students calls for the University to have 870 on campus students and 300 online students by 2016.

The financial stability of the University is based on strong leadership and an evolving strategic plan that will guide the development of subsequent budgets for Fisk University.

**The VPFA Leadership Opportunities and Challenges**

The VPFA at Fisk University has an expansive opportunity that includes working with President Williams, who is finishing his second year as President, and his leadership team. The new Vice President will be a part of the team that addresses important strategic issues that strongly position Fisk for continued growth in numbers, academic quality, and financial stability. Reporting to this Vice President are the Controller, Facilities Management, Campus Safety, and Information Technologies.

The expectation is that this leader will work with the President’s senior leadership team, the Board of Trustees, the faculty, the staff, and the students to accomplish the following important outcomes.

- Maintain the existing strengths of the University, while working with the community to assist in shaping the future initiatives and implementing initiatives in the new Strategic Plan.
- Using the existing budget model to develop further and support a functional Strategic Plan, which will provide guidance for managing the finances of the University, and for assuring continued program and physical plant development consistent with the institutional mission and goals.
- As a key member of the President’s senior leadership team, bring a crucial financial perspective to issues that affect the entire institution.
- Create positive working relationships with the leadership team and general community by consistently practicing candor, authenticity, mutual respect, flexibility, and collaboration.
- Serve the various beneficiaries of the finance and administrative units in the division.
- Work with the senior leadership team to communicate effectively with the internal and external communities and, in doing so, build a high level of mutual trust.
The VPFA will work with the President’s Senior Leadership Team, Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff to move the University forward in the following ways.

- **Sustain Existing Strengths of the University**—the VPFA will work with the entire community to establish effectively the priorities for the financial and physical support of the University’s programs. The distinctive features of the University must be retained and continually strengthened.

- **Assist in Shaping the Vision for Future Initiatives**—an important responsibility of the VPFA is to assist the University in the implementation of strategic initiatives that are fundable within the scope of the work of the institution. Using the Strategic Plan as the guide for allocating the financial resources of the University will assure continued program and physical plant development that is consistent with the institutional mission and goals.

- **Serve the Community**—as a key member of the President’s Senior Leadership Team, the VPFA will contribute directly to the Team’s efforts and bring a crucial financial perspective to issues that affect the entire institution. Creating positive working relationships with this team will require candor, authenticity, mutual respect, and collaboration.

The VPFA has many responsibilities relating to the management of the financial and administrative operations of the University. To provide effective leadership, the VPFA must focus strategically and with energy to achieve eight basic goals:

- to enhance the long-term financial health of Fisk University;
- to ensure that resource allocation is aligned with the University’s strategic priorities;
- to provide a financially sustainable, competitive, safe, and contemporary teaching, learning, and living environment;
- to mitigate institutional risk and preserve University assets;
- to commit to allocating fiscal resources to support student achievement and the distinctive features of learning within a residential campus setting;
- to facilitate and monitor a competitive salary and benefits package for faculty and staff, as well as to identify avenues for continuous improvement and professional development;
- to assure that adequate and quality facilities supportive of the academic, student life, and athletic programs are provided and maintained; and
- to work effectively with the Trustees, senior leadership, faculty, staff, and students in providing visionary leadership for the future of the University.
The Desired Attributes for the VPFA

To provide the leadership required in this position, the VPFA should possess an effective combination of personal qualities and professional experience. She/he should possess a **high level of energy, deep integrity, a sense of humor, and an outstanding work ethic.** It is preferred that the candidate **has at least a master’s degree** and preference will be given to candidates with a CPA. Also, **preference will be given to candidates with experience in higher education; however, candidates from other areas of financial management will be considered.** The new VPFA will have a **proven track record of strategic decision-making, management, and leadership as well as knowledge of endowment management, facilities planning and management, risk management, debt management, and budgeting.** In addition the VPFA should possess the following attributes:

- a recognition of the benefits of an HBCU experience, with a passion for the liberal arts educational experience;
- an appreciation and respect for the heritage of Fisk University and the role the University plays in the higher education community, regionally and nationally;
- superior skills that reflect an understanding of the accounting, financial management, technology, human resources, and facilities areas of the University (ideally, these skills will have been attained through extensive experience in a financial administrative role, preferably in higher education);
- a comprehensive/collaborative leadership style that generates trust and displays a commitment to team-work with Trustees, the University leadership, faculty, staff, and students;
- a demonstrated ability to communicate transparently to all constituents, with the focus on assuring a clear understanding of the financial affairs of the University;
- a sensitivity to human issues and knowledge of the role and responsibilities of the Office of Human Resources;
- visionary thinking that supports effective contributions to strategic planning and a commitment to using the Strategic Plan to establish priorities;
- an understanding of the marketing, financial modeling, and campus environmental factors that influence enrollment management;
- a demonstrated commitment to diversity in the University community;
- a visible, accessible campus leader who acts with integrity and demonstrates flexibility in problem solving, including recognizing an appropriate balance of the risks and opportunities inherent in a residential University;
- a working knowledge of Information Technology with a focus on systems applications; and
- a hands-on approach to work that includes being approachable and an ability to interact with all sectors of the community.
The Nomination and Application Process

The Vice President for Finance & Administration search committee will begin reviewing applications in January, with the goal of developing a list of finalists by the end of February. Applications will be received and considered until the position is filled; however, for full consideration, applications should be received by February 6, 2015. Applications must include a letter of interest, resume, and five professional references, with email and telephone numbers (references will not be contacted without prior authorization from the applicant). Applications and nominations should be sent electronically (MS Word preferred) to the following address:

fiskfinance@agbsearch.com

The search is being assisted by

Oscar C. Page, Ph.D.
Senior Consultant, AGB Search
ocp@agbsearch.com
903 870 8303

Fisk University is an AA/EO employer. In keeping with the University’s historic commitment to equality, men, women, and members of all racial and ethnic groups are encouraged to apply.