



Vice President of Philanthropy and External Engagement

"The most important thing is to believe in your mission and your vision and to tell a compelling, effective story. I have no doubt, given the fact that Baldwin Wallace has always been a crown jewel among Ohio's institutions of higher education, that I can tell a very compelling story of a small, distinctive university that punches well above its weight and makes a huge impact not just on Northeast Ohio, but even the nation."

Lee Fisher, President-Designate

Office of the President

PRESIDENT LEE FISHER

275 Eastland Road | Berea OH 44017

LEIGH MARS

Sr. Consultant, Executive Search

216.952.4192

lmars@ratliffandcompany.com

BETH SWEENEY

President

440.667.9333

bsweeney@ratliffandcompany.com



OUR CLIENT:

Founded in 1845, Baldwin Wallace University (BW) is an independent, liberal arts & sciences university located in Berea, Ohio, offering bachelor's and master's degrees, certificates, and professional education programs. Baldwin Wallace University strives to fulfill its enduring purpose by being a diverse, innovative, and caring educational community that empowers and accompanies each individual as they realize their potential for a life well-lived.



For thirty consecutive years, U.S. News & World Report has ranked BW among the Midwest's Best Universities. The rankings recognize BW for undergraduate teaching, innovation, social mobility, and value.

Baldwin Wallace recently named former Ohio Lt. Governor and Attorney General Lee Fisher as the University's 10th President effective July 1, 2025. Fisher, who has served as dean of the Cleveland State University College of Law for the past nine years, is a prominent and widely respected Ohio leader whose accomplished career spans the public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors.

One of President Fisher's immediate priorities is to launch a search for a Vice President for Philanthropy and External Engagement.

Please visit their website for more information: [Website Link](#)

ABOUT THE POSITION:

Reporting directly to the President and serving as a key member of the senior leadership team, the Vice President of Philanthropy and External Engagement is a visionary and strategic leader responsible for advancing Baldwin Wallace University's external engagement strategy.

The Vice President will focus on building and leading a high-functioning advancement operation, including robust support for major gifts and gift officers, gift processing, donor stewardship, and campaign management. The core priority is operational excellence in philanthropy and external engagement. This leader will maintain flexibility to explore additional strategic partnerships or revenue-generating initiatives as opportunities arise and will collaborate with other campus partners on initiatives such as camps, conferences, and engagement programs, ensuring these are well-supported operationally and aligned with the advancement strategy.

This position emphasizes operational leadership of the University's advancement functions, ensuring efficient, effective processes while building and supporting a growing team of major gift officers to achieve ambitious fundraising goals. The VP provides strategic oversight and operational guidance, enabling the team to execute campaigns and donor engagement with excellence.

The Vice President will have at least three direct reports who are leaders of the key functions of the team each overseeing the operations, engagement, and other external affairs functions of the team. The VP will provide direct guidance to major gift officers, ensuring clear priorities, structured donor pipelines, and consistent coaching to maximize fundraising impact. The team structure may evolve to include additional



operational support roles, such as advancement operations managers or a dedicated AVP of Strategic Partnerships, to strengthen execution capacity.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Core Advancement Leadership (Primary focus – operations & major gift support)

- Lead and execute a transformative fundraising strategy aligned with institutional priorities and campaign goals
- Provide direct oversight and support for development roles and major gift officers, ensuring they have resources, coaching, and strategic guidance to secure high-value gifts
- Provide strategic oversight of advancement budget and operational effectiveness
- Oversee alumni engagement strategy, strengthening lifelong connections and fostering advocacy and philanthropic support
- Collaborate with internal stakeholders to create efficient, scalable engagement processes for alumni and donors
- Use data-driven insights to inform fundraising strategies, measure impact, and ensure sustainable growth through operational excellence
- Champion BW's mission and impact, inspiring stakeholders to invest in the University's future

Strategic Innovation & Opportunistic Growth (Secondary focus)

- Provide operational oversight for new initiatives, ensuring they are implementable and sustainable before scaling
- Support development of initiatives such as conferences and engagement programs with a focus on operational feasibility and integration into advancement workflows
- Work collaboratively with senior leadership to pilot and refine programs, balancing innovation with operational capacity

Leadership & Collaboration

- Lead a high-performing, operationally efficient team with a culture of accountability, innovation, and results
- Foster a collaborative team environment that prioritizes professional development, clear communication, and shared success
- Collaborate with the President, Board of Trustees, academic leadership, and administrative colleagues to align external affairs with institutional strategy
- Engage the Board of Trustees as philanthropic partners and strategic advocates
- Benchmark against industry best practices to ensure excellence in external engagement
- Ensure major gift officers and advancement staff have clear operational priorities, support, and professional development to maximize fundraising outcomes

LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES:

- Visionary leadership with the ability to integrate diverse external functions into a unified strategy
- Inclusive and transparent leadership style that fosters trust and collaboration
- Strong cross-functional collaboration and stakeholder engagement skills
- Proven ability to inspire and develop high-performing teams with a focus on operational effectiveness

Ratliff

executive search

- Strategic agility and adaptability in a dynamic higher education landscape
- Strong operational leadership skills with experience optimizing advancement systems, processes, and staff performance
- Entrepreneurial mindset with the ability to innovate and expand the University's advancement impact over time

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred
- Executive-level experience in advancement, external affairs, or related fields
- Demonstrated success in securing major gifts and building strategic partnerships
- Experience managing and supporting major gift officers, with a track record of operationalizing fundraising strategies
- Proven ability to oversee advancement operations, including donor tracking, gift processing, and reporting systems
- Deep understanding of higher education fundraising and alumni engagement
- Strong leadership and management experience with a record of team development and cross-functional success
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills
- Commitment to ethical standards and professional integrity
- Flexibility to work evenings and weekends and travel as needed

2025 Rankings

Schools are ranked according to their performance across a set of widely accepted indicators of excellence. Read more about [how we rank schools](#).

🏆 #10 in Regional Universities Midwest

🏆 #20 in Best Value Schools

🏆 #223 in Engineering Programs (no doctorate) (tie)

COMPENSATION:

Competitive salary plus a comprehensive benefits package that includes health and dental insurance, 12 days paid sick leave, 4 weeks paid vacation, 15 paid holidays, employer-paid long and short-term disability plans, 403 (b) retirement plan, university-paid life insurance and tuition remission benefits for employees and family.

CONTACT:

Leigh Mars | Sr. Consultant Executive Search | 216-952-4192 | lmars@ratliffandcompany.com



Graduate Enrollment	499
Total Enrollment	3,308
Full-Time Degree-Seeking Undergraduates	2,687