Leadership Profile, Vice President for Student Affairs

July 8, 2016

The Role and Opportunities for Leadership

As the chief student affairs officer of Manhattanville College, the Vice President for Student Affairs reports directly to the President and serves as a member of the President’s Cabinet. The VPSA oversees and provides leadership to the following offices and functions: the Dean of Students; Residence Life, Athletics; the Health Center, the Counseling and Wellness Center, Student Activities; International Student Services, the Duchesne Center for Religion and Social Justice (community service and religious life), Disability Services, MAP (student mentoring program), and Student Orientation.

The successful candidate will reside on campus, will oversee judiciary hearings, appeals, disciplinary actions, and grievances, and will oversee the development of the Student Handbook.

The new VPSA will join the College at a key, exciting juncture in its 175-year history—one in which it is poised for its next era of growth and success under the leadership of President, Dr. Michael Geisler. Manhattanville has continually expanded and reinvented its educational programs, extended its capacity to serve students, and enlarged the scope of its impact. Today, the College prepares students from many backgrounds, cultures, and nations to face the challenges of modern times as ethical and socially responsible community and professional leaders. The quality and dedication of the faculty and staff, a deep commitment to academic excellence, a strategic location, and nearly two centuries of experience with liberal and service learning will continue to serve the College well in the coming years. The incoming VPSA will work closely with the President and the administrative, faculty, and student leaders to shape a powerful, personal living/learning environment for an increasingly diverse student body.

Leadership Qualities and Capabilities

The successful candidate must be an experienced and collaborative leader with superior communication, interpersonal, and advocacy skills and a proven ability both to build a strong team within the Office for Student Affairs and to reach out across the College to build alliances and forge strong relationships to ensure student retention and student success. The Vice President should have demonstrated ability to work effectively across the institution—especially with academic affairs—to design and achieve common goals for a high-quality student educational experience. The new leader must understand and enjoy being with students. She or he must be especially knowledgeable and experienced in dealing with the complexities of student stress and learning differences, as well as the critical issues related to inclusion, diversity, and proper enforcement of Title IX. She or he will maintain high standards for performance and accountability and have the capacity to lead the division in shaping a comprehensive vision, establishing strategic and innovative goals, and ensuring continuous quality assessment and improvement. Ideally, the successful candidate will have an earned doctorate in student affairs or in a related field and be familiar and supportive of the values as well as the regulations of Division III Athletics.

Additional qualifications include:

- Seven to ten years of leadership experience in a residential educational setting
- Working knowledge of FERPA and other federal, state, and local regulations that affect student affairs
- Timely attention to issues and ability to work within a fast-paced environment
Leadership Responsibilities

In addition to providing leadership to the division of Student Affairs as noted above, the VPSA will be responsible for addressing four key priorities for action:

- **Collaboration**
  There is an urgent need for the incoming VPSA to continue the good work that has been recently done in building trust and bringing the members of the student affairs staff together to work effectively in mutual respect and common purpose. As this work deepens and bears fruit, it will be equally critical to reach across the divisions to forge similar respectful working relationships with faculty, administrators and staff in other fields. While strong relationships are necessary among all offices, effective work on behalf of students is especially key among student and academic affairs professionals, who share responsibility for student learning and success.

- **Assessment/Continuous Quality Improvement**
  Studies show that retention rates are highly correlated with student satisfaction and success. The new VPSA must establish a comprehensive program of continuous quality assessment and improvement in student programs and services. She or he must ensure that Manhattanville is doing its upmost to establish practices and structures designed to encourage and support creative/interdisciplinary program and service development by the staff. Programs and services for students must be in keeping with the Manhattanville mission and purposes, represent best practice in higher education, and must be highly effective.

- **Advocacy**
  In situations in which resources may be constrained, it is critical for the new VPSA to be both a forceful advocate for the needs and interests of the Student Affairs Division and a true and respectful team player among her or his leadership colleagues. Whether the situation calls for building more understanding and respect for the profession of student affairs or competing for resources, the VPSA must be able to be articulate and firm, while also listening carefully and working constructively to find solutions that “raise all boats” and achieve compromise when required.

- **Future Planning**
  As the student population becomes increasingly diverse, the challenges and approaches for serving them well require constant, refreshed, long-range, strategic thinking. The new VPSA must inform and lead in exploring emerging needs, such as services to engage and support growing numbers of graduate students, an expanding international student population, more and more first-generation college students, and students who learn differently.