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The Board of Trustees at Houghton College invites applications and nominations for the position of President. Houghton College, an independent, not-for-profit institution, is one of five colleges sponsored by The Wesleyan Church. The College offers programs at its main campus in Houghton, NY, as well as online offerings and those delivered at sites in Buffalo and Utica. Houghton serves both undergraduate and graduate populations, offering Associate, Bachelor, and Masters degrees. Curricular offerings are rooted in the liberal arts, and the importance of Christ-centered education permeates curricular and co-curricular offerings.

This profile provides background information for candidates who may potentially be interested in this unique opportunity; nominations are also invited. The new President will take office June 1, 2021.
Houghton College is a nationally ranked Christian college of the liberal arts and sciences with locations in Buffalo, Utica and the scenic Genesee Valley of western New York State, as well as fully online degree programs. Nearly 1,000 diverse and deeply curious students – from 40 states, 16 countries, and 45 Christian denominations – are enrolled in over 40 majors and programs designed to equip them to lead and serve a changing world.

Houghton’s residential campus is located in rural western New York. Fifteen miles to the north are the Genesee’s magnificent Portage Falls and Letchworth State Park, voted the #1 State Park in the United States. On all sides is the scenic beauty of the rolling hills and northern hardwood forests of Western New York State. Allegany County, with extensive state forest land, abundant wildlife, and cross-country and downhill ski trails, is rapidly developing into a leading recreation area of Western New York.

Since its founding in 1883, Houghton College has been helping women and men translate their unique blend of interests, talents and abilities into meaningful work that impacts the world for Christ. Willard J. Houghton, the school’s founder, believed that a high-quality, Christ-centered education could transform the region, which had become known as one of the roughest ports along the Genesee Valley Canal. He recognized that the combination of faith and knowledge could alter a student’s life trajectory, a vision that the College continues today.

Coeducational from its founding, Houghton operated as a secondary school for its first 15 years under the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. While early principals were Wesleyan Methodist pastors willing to accept the job, in 1908, Houghton acquired its first academically trained president, James S. Luckey, who served until his death in 1937. Houghton College awarded its first 19 baccalaureate degrees in 1925 and received accreditation by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges in 1935.

Under the College’s second president, Stephen W. Paine, the College expanded from about 300 students to 1,200, necessitating new buildings, and the percentage of faculty holding earned doctorates tripled. Daniel R. Chamberlain, president from 1976, oversaw several other major campus buildings and an extensive adult degree-completion program.

In 2006, the College named Dr. Shirley Mullen as the fifth president of Houghton College. Among many accomplishments, Mullen led the improvement of curricular and co-curricular programs, the move to NCAA Division III Athletics, and an expansion of campus facilities to include the Kerr-Pegula Athletic Complex, Equestrian Event Center and 11-Acre Solar Panel Array. Under her leadership, the College also strengthened the Advancement and External Engagement programs, recently completing the $70 million IMPACT Campaign for Greater Houghton. Most recently Houghton implemented a dramatic change to the tuition pricing model and has begun to become more innovative in curricular offerings and delivery.

In October 2020—following fifteen years of distinguished, exemplary service to her alma mater and the completion of the capital campaign—Dr. Mullen announced her retirement effective at the end of the 2020-21 academic year.
STRATEGIC PLAN
These recent accomplishments provide Houghton College with a strong point of departure for pursuing the next level of excellence. The Board of Trustees recently affirmed a strategic plan titled *Houghton College 2020-23: The Arc Toward Our Future*. This plan is built upon the College’s mission and its vision. Three priorities have been identified: distinctive Christian identity, flexible and transformational learning opportunities across different delivery modalities, and increasing accessibility and market interest in Houghton. Projects have been articulated and are underway in pursuit of these goals, which the new president will have the opportunity to influence upon his/her arrival.

MISSION
Houghton College provides an academically challenging, Christ-centered education in the liberal arts and sciences to students from diverse traditions and economic backgrounds and equips them to lead and labor as scholar-servants in a changing world.

VISION
Houghton College will be a leader in customized, relational Christian education generating joyful and courageous graduates who change the world for the good of others.

THE HOUGHTON COLLEGE COMMUNITY
Houghton College provides an experiential and transformative learning experience within a close-knit, highly relational Christian community. For a school of its size, Houghton’s student body is surprisingly diverse, which is one reason students and campus visitors find life at Houghton so special. For traditional undergraduate students, the College’s location fosters deep reflection, close connections with people and with nature, and an ideal environment for learning.

Enrollment at Houghton College is nearly 1000 students. Approximately three quarters of those students are traditional students attending the residential campus, with the balance enrolled in graduate and undergraduate programs offered online and in Buffalo and Utica. Nearly eighty students are undergraduates taking courses completely online. Houghton College attracts academically prepared students who are seeking to develop academically, spiritually, and professionally. The average grade point average for entering freshmen is over 3.5, with higher than average test scores (over 1100 SAT, 25 ACT) as well. That preparation and the quality of a Houghton education are reflected in very strong cohort retention and graduation rates: the one-year retention rate is over 88%, the four-year graduation rate is nearly 60%, and a six-year graduation rate is approximately 75%. Each of those figures exceeds the national average, a signal that students at Houghton are receiving an exceptional educational experience.

This is validated by external recognition Houghton has earned in recent years. Houghton College ranked third among CCCU national liberal arts colleges in the country in most recent *U.S News and World Reports* ranking. That same report recognized Houghton as the top CCCU institution—and tenth in the nation—in social mobility, a sign of Houghton’s success with students across the socioeconomic spectrum. Houghton was also included in the top 30 in the country—and the top 3 among CCCU schools—in the “A+ schools for B students” category, affirmation that the College is helping high performing students find new heights.

That high level of student success is facilitated by skilled and committed faculty and staff. A Houghton education is often described as “relational”—based on deep, meaningful relationships—which means that exceptional student achievement relies on exceptional people. Houghton employs nearly 200 individuals across academic and administrative departments, including many who express their passion for the College through many years of dedicated service. Faculty are recognized experts in their field, with 94% possessing terminal degrees in their field and nearly 50% possessing tenure. Faculty and staff participate in the college’s worship life and serve as Christ-like leaders to the community, fostering an environment that is safe, welcoming, positive, and distinctly Christian.
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Houghton has a well-deserved reputation for academic excellence, helping its students become the scholar servants described in the College’s mission. Programs with greatest enrollment include business administration, biology, psychology, inclusive childhood education, and communication. The Honors program at Houghton is highly regarded for its blend of challenge, interdisciplinarity, community, and experience. A number of centers and institutes complement the traditional mix of academic programs, providing enhanced learning opportunities in areas like data science analytics, sustainability, and faith, justice, and global engagement. Nearly half of Houghton’s students experience the world through off-campus study, which includes opportunities both within the United States and worldwide.

In addition, Houghton offers several unique academic programs. For example, the Equestrian Studies program gives students the opportunity to pursue five equine disciplines as well as the ability to train with credentialed clinicians and compete in U.S. Equestrian Federation events. A Data Science program has been developed in response to the rapid emergence of this need. A bachelor’s in Music Industry supplements artistic and musical excellence with recording and production techniques and current industry practices.

Houghton College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the Regents of the University of the State of New York. In addition, programs in music (National Association of Schools of Music) and teacher education (Teacher Education Accreditation Council) are also accredited by national bodies.

CHRISTIAN FAITH IN COMMUNITY
Perhaps the most distinctive part of the Houghton College curriculum is the way academic and spiritual development come together, an expression of the College’s commitment to the Christian liberal arts. Professors integrate faith into classes, mentoring sessions, and informal interactions. Chapel services pull together academics, community, and faith. Houghton College explores contemporary issues through a variety of lenses, including the Wesleyan tradition and teachings, Scripture, and the broader Christian tradition in addition to disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Students, along with faculty and staff, commit to a set of behavioral expectations intentionally designed to cultivate a learning community that is safe, welcoming, positive, and distinctly Christian.

CO-CURRICULAR LEARNING AND INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS
Students have the opportunity to engage in over 35 campus organizations, including over 20 clubs, Student Government Association, and the Campus Activities Board. In the Randall Student Engagement Community, students have the chance to intentionally engage in deep learning with peers. Students contribute greatly to the learning experience of their peers at Houghton College; in fact, Houghton was named one of the top 10 “Schools Where Students are Most Inspired by Their Peers” by the Wall Street Journal in 2018.

Houghton College is a Division III member of the NCAA, participating in the Empire 8 conference. Houghton offers 18 athletic programs, eight for men and ten for women. Approximately one third of the College’s students participate in intercollegiate athletics, which means athletic programs are an important part of the learning experience for students and an essential piece of the College’s enrollment. The Kerr-Pegula Athletic Complex (KPAC), opened in 2014, took Highlander athletics to the next level with a new baseball stadium, a new softball stadium, and a field house with space for track & field and tennis along with space for outdoor sports to practice and offices for the athletic department.
The College is governed by a Board of Trustees composed of between 25-30 members, including the president who is a voting member. The Board has strong alumni representation, along with Wesleyan and non-Wesleyan members; two-thirds of trustees are to be members of the Wesleyan church. All trustees are approved by the General Board of The Wesleyan Church. The Board meets three times annually. Standing committees include Academic, Advancement, Audit, Enrollment, Executive, Finance, Investment, Student Life, and Trusteeship.

The President of Houghton College is also an ex officio member of the General Board of The Wesleyan Church and a participant in the Wesleyan Education Council, comprised of the presidents and Board Chairs of the five colleges that are ministries of The Wesleyan Church along with the General Superintendent and Executive Director of Education and Clergy Development of The Wesleyan Church. The Wesleyan Church has established standards that apply to all of its educational institutions, articulating the ways in which institutions are expected to apply its beliefs in doctrine, personal lifestyle, and religious practices.

FINANCES AND AFFORDABILITY

Houghton College has sustained both sound institutional financial health and affordability for students across the socioeconomic spectrum, a very difficult balance to manage. In addition to the many honors described above, Houghton has also been recognized as an unusually strong value for its cost by organizations like College Factual and Money magazine. Houghton has reaffirmed this commitment through innovative price resets beginning in 2021.

While delivering on its promise and advancing access, Houghton has maintained financial stability. The typical annual operating budget (including institutional financial aid) approximates $45 million, with nearly $14 million in net tuition revenue. The College has for many years maintained cash flows sufficient to navigate the fiscal year. Houghton’s balance sheet is sound, with over $116 million in assets and approximately $32 million in liabilities (largely held by a church-related financial institution) resulting in a net asset base of $84 million. The endowment stands at approximately $58 million.

The recently completed $70 million capital campaign has strengthened the College in numerous respects. Over $41 million was raised toward affordability and access, with more than 90 endowed scholarships resulting from the generosity of benefactors. Support for campus enhancements allowed for completion of three capital projects: the Kerr-Pegula Athletic Complex, the Equestrian Event Center, and extensive renovations throughout the Paine Center for Science. In addition, over $5 million was raised toward endowing programs and professorships as well as extending the global and regional reach of Houghton College.
THE OPPORTUNITY

The next president at Houghton College will have the unique opportunity to lead Houghton College to its next level of excellence. This leader will build on Houghton College’s clear mission and identity, strong institutional reputation, sound financial position, talented and committed faculty and staff, and the momentum generated by a recently completed $70 million capital campaign. The Houghton College community recognizes that the next president will not be called upon to continue the status quo but rather to leverage those strengths in a changing and challenging environment. This next leader must be adept at engaging with the campus community, articulating a clear vision for the future, galvanizing the campus and local community in support of that vision, and allocating resources to achieve the vision. Higher education is a very dynamic environment, and for Houghton to thrive it will be essential for this leader to cultivate a culture of strategic thinking, innovation, and execution. The next president at Houghton College will be a person of deep faith whose beliefs and behaviors personify the teachings of The Wesleyan Church and who is a passionate advocate for the Christian liberal arts.

A wide variety of stakeholders—including faculty, students, staff, alumni, The Wesleyan Church, and Trustees—engaged in opportunities to define the agenda for leadership as well as the characteristics, skills, and requirements of the new president. That agenda and the characteristics of the ideal candidate to bring it about follow.
The agenda for leadership is best understood as a set of interrelated topics rather than a series of separate tasks, as the ability to advance any one of these areas has an impact on the others. The leadership agenda consists of the following: strengthen enrollment, enhance financial sustainability, continue to articulate and pursue Houghton’s distinctive mission and identity, advance a culture of strategy, innovation, and execution, and lead in a manner that exemplifies the College’s Wesleyan identity.

STRENGTHEN ENROLLMENT
Like many institutions in the northeast, Houghton College has experienced declining enrollments in recent years. Houghton does not attempt to appeal to all students, but rather those who seek spiritual and personal development and academic excellence within a Christian and Wesleyan learning environment. The student body is drawn from a variety of religious backgrounds who share that commitment. Within this context, Houghton views as part of its mission to serve “students from diverse traditions and economic backgrounds,” and this is evident from steps that are being pursued to bolster enrollment. Recently, Houghton announced a substantial pricing reset—a clear signal that Houghton College is an affordable option for families across the socioeconomic spectrum. There is a desire among the campus community to serve a more ethnically diverse student body, an expression of this mission and a proven way to improve the quality of the learning environment for all students. In addition to its main campus, Houghton College also offers programs in Buffalo and Utica that serve students in those communities who seek the Christian liberal arts education it offers. Like many institutions, Houghton has begun to deliver more educational programs online.

The ideal candidate will work on multiple dimensions to achieve enrollment growth. Working with academic leaders, the academic portfolio will be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to express Houghton’s mission and meets the needs of today’s college students. The next leader will identify the desired mix of students and optimal modes of delivery, including the ability for students to move from one format to another. In partnership with marketing and enrollment management leaders, he or she will pursue promising practices to allow Houghton’s message to cut through the noise in a cluttered marketplace to reach those students who would benefit from and be attracted to a Houghton education. The next president will be a champion
for student success, consistently advocating efforts to ensure that students from a wide variety of backgrounds develop academically, personally, and spiritually and that they graduate with an excellent education that equips them to do God’s work. In addition, he or she will be open to exploring partnerships with other colleges and universities to improve access, efficiency, enrollment, and student success.

**ENHANCE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Houghton College has appropriately engaged in many steps to manage its financial situation, and its financial footing remains sound as evidenced by federal ratings, financial statements, et al. Continued effort is required to ensure this present stability is translated into long-term sustainability. In an environment where competition for students is increasingly fierce, it will be necessary to pursue paths to financial sustainability beyond increasing enrollment. In particular, stewardship of existing resources and attracting continued support from benefactors are essential to securing financial sustainability.

The next President must be adept at financial management, capable of making the most of limited resources. The successful leader must reconcile among competing priorities, requiring a strategic approach designed to optimize progress toward the College’s vision. Areas like faculty and staff salaries, facilities maintenance, strengthening the technology infrastructure, and funding for promising new initiatives are among potential investments. The successful candidate will be a skilled steward who develops a strategic approach to both generating and allocating resources in a manner that sustains—and builds—the institution’s financial capacity.

The College’s revenue model depends largely on two sources—enrollment income and funds provided by benefactors. Houghton College is blessed to have capable and generous supporters, as evidenced by the recent completion of a $70 million capital campaign. The next president will continue to cultivate relationships with those whose generosity made this campaign successful, and to expand the circle of those who share a passion for Houghton College and the work it does—including individuals, families, foundations, grantmakers, et al. This will require effective relationship building as well as the ability to generate ideas that are compelling to potential benefactors.

**CONTINUE TO ARTICULATE, PURSUE, AND LIVE HOUGHTON’S UNIQUE IDENTITY**

Houghton is a distinctive learning community because of its shared commitment to the centrality of a Christ-centered education, expressed in an educational environment that is grounded in the Christian liberal arts. The importance of the liberal arts demonstrates a reflection that God’s creation is revealed in many ways, an appreciation for the study of multiple ways to discover Him, and a sign of an intellectually curious environment in which serious inquiry is prized. As a result of this shared commitment, the College focuses on the spiritual development of its students as well as upholding its well-deserved reputation for academic excellence. In addition to strengthening the existing academic portfolio, the next president must therefore also ensure the strength and vitality of the College’s support of students’ spiritual development.
Houghton’s values and beliefs are central not only to members of the College community; they are also the primary way through which the College is and becomes known by students, benefactors, et al. The College has intentionally chosen to pursue a delicate balance—to place emphasis on the teachings of the Bible and The Wesleyan Church and to advocate for positions accordingly, and to do so without partisanship. Houghton welcomes students and employees from a wide range of Christian traditions, and its graduates learn to express their faith and Christian vision for life in a winsome manner amidst a deeply divided culture. The next leader will continue to express Houghton’s mission and core values with pride and without apology, and in a manner that heals rather than exacerbates social divides.

ADVANCE A CULTURE OF STRATEGY, INNOVATION, AND EXECUTION
The Board of Trustees has affirmed a strategic plan to guide Houghton College through 2023, providing an ideal timeline for a new leader to contribute to that plan’s refinement and execution while getting more deeply acquainted with the institution. As a result, the new president will have the time to listen and engage around a vision for the next generation of Houghton College, and to begin to identify how that vision might be pursued in the future. The new president will listen widely and effectively, engaging many stakeholders in developing a sophisticated understanding of Houghton College.

Higher education is in the midst of a transformational period, and Houghton College is no exception to the trends—both long (demographics, technology) and short-term (impact of COVID-19)—that are having such a fundamental impact. Since March, students, faculty, and staff have engaged in responsible behaviors, utilized technology tools, and made the adjustments required to successfully navigate the pandemic, reducing the potential for more significant disruption to the campus community. The next president has the opportunity to bring a fresh perspective to the role, with the possibility that such a new perspective holds. He or she will welcome creative ways to imagine and pursue the path forward, and will cultivate an environment of both continuous, incremental improvement and of innovation that carries the potential for even more profound effect.

Houghton College has embarked on a number of promising initiatives in curriculum, pricing, and delivery in response to the rapidly changing external environment. The successful candidate will take a strategic approach to innovation—to have a well-designed process for identification, vetting, pursuit, and evaluation of such ideas that builds upon the innovations that have recently been launched. The next president will support execution, not just generating a series of new ideas but committing to sound implementation of emerging and current initiatives. Perhaps most importantly, the successful leader will continue to accelerate the pace of the College’s journey into the future.

LEAD IN A MANNER THAT EXEMPLIFIES THE VALUES OF THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY
Perhaps the word used to most frequently describe the College by those who know it best is “community.” Effective leadership in this context occurs from within the community—as a member of the community whose responsibilities extend across it—not from above it. Students expect a president who is personable, approachable, and can engage effectively and comfortably with students of a diverse variety of backgrounds. Faculty and staff seek an inspirational leader who share their passion for the Christian liberal arts who listens widely and openly and brings joy and energy to their work. Traits like courage, humility, persistence, and integrity are among the descriptors sought by all in Houghton’s next leader. Without question, the next president must practice a strong Christian faith in a manner consistent with Wesleyan ideals and teachings.
THE IDEAL CANDIDATE
Advancing this leadership agenda requires a candidate with a unique set of talents and personal characteristics. The ideal candidate would bring the following gifts (listed alphabetically, not in priority order) to the role of President at Houghton College—and, perhaps more importantly, will feel a calling to do so:

SKILLS
- Ability to communicate effectively in multiple settings (writing, speaking, social media, et al)
- Ability to cultivate and express an inspiring shared vision, and to sustain the enthusiasm required to bring that vision to life
- Ability to navigate difficult, sometimes contentious, issues through collaborating with others to reach sound decisions and timely action
- Demonstrated financial acumen and stewardship in strategic investment of resources
- Demonstrated skill in administering and leading a complex, diverse organization
- Demonstrated success in fundraising and building relationships with external stakeholders
- Knowledge, abilities, and skills to work effectively with people of diverse backgrounds (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.)
- Skills of a servant leader, one who can build an effective team and possesses the appropriate blend of courage and humility
- Willingness and ability to utilize data effectively to inform decisions, facilitate process improvements, and improve student success

CHARACTERISTICS
- A “Holy discontent”: a healthy urgency to move from the status quo to the desired future
- A deep understanding of and appreciation for the Christian liberal arts and its future
- A mindset that invites entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, creativity, and lifelong learning
- A well developed network of contacts (particularly within Christian higher education, and also including federal and state agencies, higher education leaders, accrediting bodies, etc.) and an engaging, collaborative approach to this work
- A joyful and energetic member of the campus community who engages deeply in the life of the college and who a diverse student body finds accessible, visible, and approachable
- An open-minded, forward-looking thinker who seeks and listens well to the counsel of others
- The resiliency, determination, and willingness to learn and lead in the environment of ambiguity, paradox, and change that describes both higher education and Houghton College.

REQUIREMENTS
Candidates must satisfy the following requirements to be considered for serving as the next president at Houghton College:

- A sense of calling to serve in this role at this institution at this time, including the willingness to live in Houghton and be an active member of the local community
- A willingness to be a member of The Wesleyan Church if selected, agreeing with the core beliefs of the Church and committing to live in accordance with the leadership commitments of the Church and lifestyle commitments of the campus.
- Master’s degree required; an earned doctorate or terminal degree preferred
- At least seven years of leadership experience; experience in higher education preferred, particularly in the context of the Christian liberal arts
Academic Search is assisting Houghton College in this national search. Confidential conversations may be arranged by contacting the Scott Flanagan, Senior Consultant, at scott.flanagan@academicsearch.org.

Nominations and applications should be sent to HoughtonPresident@academicsearch.org.

Applications should consist of a detailed letter of interest that describes the candidate’s interest and alignment with the agenda for leadership, a current curriculum vitae, and a list of five professional references with current contact information. References will not be contacted without the permission of the candidate.

For full consideration, applications should be submitted no later than February 1, 2021.

Houghton College is a Christian college of the liberal arts and sciences, sponsored by The Wesleyan Church. Houghton asserts its right to employ persons who subscribe to the intent, mission, Statement of Faith, and Community Responsibilities of the College. The College complies with all federal, state and local nondiscrimination in employment laws and encourages the application of females and under-represented populations.
ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting Houghton College in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services to higher education institutions, associations, and related organizations. Academic Search was founded by higher education leaders on the principle that we provide the most value to partner institutions by combining best practices with our deep knowledge and experience. Our mission today is to enhance institutional capacity by providing outstanding executive recruitment services, executive coaching, and transition support, in partnership with our parent organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute. For more information, visit www.academicsearch.org.