



CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT

EXECUTIVE POSITION PROFILE
JUNE 2026

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

The Opportunity

Kansas State University seeks a strategic, trusted, and highly effective leader to serve as Chief of Staff to the President. Reporting directly to the President, the Chief of Staff serves as a senior advisor and essential partner responsible for advancing institutional priorities, enhancing organizational alignment, and ensuring the effective execution of presidential initiatives.

This is a pivotal role at a dynamic, forward-moving land-grant, Tier 1 research university that is committed to transforming lives through teaching, research, and engagement. The Chief of Staff will operate at the center of institutional leadership, helping to translate the President's vision into action while ensuring that the President's time, attention, and influence are focused on the university's highest-impact opportunities.

Serving as a close strategic partner and day-to-day collaborator, the Chief of Staff will provide counsel on complex issues, anticipate emerging challenges and opportunities, and prepare the President for successful engagement across a wide range of internal and external settings. This individual will play a critical role in coordinating across senior leadership, fostering alignment, and ensuring follow-through on key institutional priorities and commitments.

The Chief of Staff will also lead special projects and institutional initiatives on behalf of the President, bringing structure, accountability, and momentum to efforts that span multiple units and stakeholders. In doing so, the Chief of Staff will help advance a culture of collaboration, clarity, and results.

Additionally, the role serves as a key connector between the President and the broader university and external community. The Chief of Staff will strengthen relationships with faculty, staff, students, governing boards, community partners, and public officials, and will represent the President as appropriate.

This opportunity comes at an important moment for Kansas State University, as the institution continues to build momentum, enhance its national profile, and further define and strengthen the Chief of Staff function within a fast-paced, collaborative leadership environment. The successful candidate will bring strategic acumen, exceptional judgment, and a deep commitment to institutional mission to help the university continue its upward trajectory.

To apply for this position, please see the [Search Process Overview](#).



Key Responsibilities

Strategic Advisory and Presidential Support

- Briefs the president on important issues impacting the university.
- Serves as a trusted advisor and thought partner to the president on institutional priorities, emerging issues, opportunities and risks.
- Provides strategic context, analysis and recommendations to support informed decision-making.
- Anticipates challenges and prepares the president with relevant briefings, options and background materials.
- Supports the development of presidential messaging, narratives and strategic framing related to institutional priorities, initiatives and decision-making.
- Translates complex institutional strategy, data and issues into clear executive-level materials to support presidential leadership and action.
- Exercises sound judgment, discretion and confidentiality in all matters.

Executive Coordination and Institutional Alignment

- Facilitates coordination across the president's cabinet, senior leadership, affiliated organizations and select units involved in presidential or key university initiatives.
- Plays a collaborative role with the executive assistant to the president in cabinet agenda-setting and other key leadership meetings, ensuring meetings are aligned with strategic priorities and decision needs.
- Tracks progress on presidential priorities, strategic initiatives and commitments to governing boards and stakeholders.
- Identifies misalignment, gaps or execution barriers and works with leaders to resolve them.

Presidential Representation, Communication Coordination and Stakeholder Engagement

- Represents the president internally and externally as delegated, serving as an extension of the president's leadership and values.
- Builds and maintains effective relationships with internal leaders, governing bodies, community partners, public officials and other stakeholders.
- Coordinates presidential communications, in partnership with the executive communicator to the president and the Division of Communications and Marketing, by collaborating on strategic messaging, presentations, briefing materials, talking points and executive narratives aligned with institutional priorities and governance considerations.
- Prepares the president for high-visibility meetings, board sessions, speeches and external engagements, ensuring clear, consistent articulation of institutional positions and strategic objectives.
- Attends key meetings with the president to capture priorities, decisions, and commitments, and ensures timely follow-up on action items, communications and stakeholder engagement.

Executive Operations, Institutional Projects and Follow-through

- Manages the flow of issues, information and requests to the president to ensure focus on the highest-impact priorities.
- Coordinates with the president's executive assistant to align scheduling, preparation and follow-up.
- Leads and manages complex, cross-functional institutional projects on behalf of the president.
- Ensures presidential decisions are clearly communicated, implemented and monitored for timely completion.
- Establishes systems to track commitments, deadlines and outcomes, bringing forward issues requiring escalation.

Leadership in High-Level Initiatives/Programs Initiated by the President

- Chairs the university Crisis Management Team and facilitates communications and decision-making concerning potential campus crisis.
- Chairs the Landon Lecture series and manages the selection, coordination and logistics for bringing nationally and internationally recognized speakers to campus.
- Manages the process for identification and prioritization of fundraising initiatives and state/federal support for university programs and groups and coordinates these priorities with the KSU Foundation, provost, deans and state/federal support staff.
- Represents the president and university in the community by serving on various community boards and engaging in various community initiatives that are relevant to the university
- Provides direct supervision to the deputy chief of staff, director of McCain Auditorium, director of Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, director of Military Affairs and director of the K-State Gardens.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

Serve as a Close Strategic Partner and Presidential “Right Hand”

Act as a trusted advisor and day-to-day partner to President Rich Linton, providing counsel on institutional priorities, emerging issues, and complex decisions. Operate as a “side-by-side” collaborator who informs, protects, and advises the President, helping him navigate competing demands while advancing the university’s strategic trajectory.

Enable Presidential Effectiveness in a Fast-Paced, Forward-Moving Environment

Ensure the President is fully prepared for every engagement through proactive briefing, strategic framing, and disciplined prioritization. Anticipate needs, manage competing requests, and serve as a trusted “handler” who thoughtfully guides commitments—allowing the President to focus time and attention on the university’s highest-impact opportunities.

Maintain Real-Time Awareness of Institutional Activity and Surface What Matters Most

Develop and sustain a comprehensive understanding of activity across the university, ensuring the President remains fully informed of critical developments. Distill complex information into clear insights, identify emerging risks and opportunities, and elevate issues that require presidential awareness or decision-making.

Advance Presidential Priorities Through Special Projects and Targeted Initiatives

Lead and execute special projects on behalf of the President, translating priorities into action and ensuring timely progress. Bring structure, momentum, and accountability to initiatives that require coordination across units, while adapting to the evolving needs of a dynamic and growing institution.

Strengthen Relationships with Internal and External Constituencies

Build and maintain strong, trust-based relationships with faculty, staff, students, and external partners. Serve as a key connector between the President and the broader community, supporting local engagement with organizations such as chambers of commerce and community foundations while reinforcing a collegial and collaborative culture. Provide strategic oversight for a defined portfolio, including the K-State Gardens, McCain Performance Auditorium, Beach Museum of Art, and Veterans Affairs. Leverage these areas to enhance community connection, institutional visibility, and the President’s engagement.

Coordinate and Counsel the President for High-Impact Events

Ensure all elements of the President’s schedule—from major events to informal campus interactions—are thoughtfully organized and executed. Confirm logistics, coordinate messaging, and identify meaningful stakeholder engagement opportunities to ensure seamless, high-impact experiences, whether at formal events, community gatherings, or campus traditions.

Support Institutional Alignment During a Period of Structural Transition

Play a key role in redefining and stabilizing the Chief of Staff function as responsibilities are separated from a previously broader portfolio. Partner closely with the Deputy Chief of Staff and staff within the President’s Office to coordinate work and ensure alignment. Operate as a central integrator across a newly evolving structure, fostering clarity, continuity, and collaboration. Help establish clear focus for the role—centered on day-to-day presidential support, special projects, and community relationships. Contribute to a fast-paced, forward-looking leadership culture characterized by collaboration, trust, and shared purpose. Engage with an energized leadership team, supporting a culture that values strong relationships, strategic thinking, and effective execution.

Requirements

The successful candidate will bring a combination of strategic leadership experience, operational excellence, and interpersonal effectiveness that enables them to serve as a highly trusted advisor and integrator within a complex university environment.

Minimum Qualifications

Bachelor's degree and 10 years of experience providing senior-level strategic, operational and advisory support with demonstrated experience supporting executive leadership, managing complex initiatives, coordinating across multiple leaders or units and exercising sound judgment in sensitive or confidential matters.

The bachelor's degree requirement is necessary to ensure the foundational analytical, communication and organizational competencies required to support executive decision-making, interpret complex institutional issues and operate effectively within the governance, policy and stakeholder environments of a comprehensive public university. These competencies are typically developed and rigorously validated only through the comprehensive curriculum and intensive experiential learning inherent in a formal degree program.

Preferred Qualifications

- Advanced degree (e.g., master's, doctorate or equivalent terminal degree).
- Senior leadership experience in higher education, particularly in a public, land-grant or research-intensive institution.
- Prior experience working directly with a president, chancellor, governing board or cabinet-level executive.
- Demonstrated success managing cross-functional, institution-wide projects with multiple stakeholders and competing priorities.
- Experience with cabinet coordination and executive agenda development.
- Experience representing executive leadership with internal and external stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, alumni, donors or military partners.
- Strong understanding of shared governance, board relations and public accountability environments.
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, including experience supporting speeches, briefings and executive correspondence.
- Demonstrated political and organizational acumen, with the ability to navigate complex institutional dynamics.
- Experience coordinating executive-level communications across units or in partnership with a central communications function.



Search process

This search is led by Zach Smith, Sandra Chu, and Kim Migoya of WittKieffer. Nominations and inquiries may be directed to Sandra Chu (schu@wittkieffer.com) and Kim Migoya (kmigoya@wittkieffer.com).

To receive the fullest consideration, candidate materials should be submitted through the [WittKieffer Candidate Portal](#) by July 31, 2026.

Applicants should submit, as separate documents, a CV or résumé and a letter of interest that addresses the themes outlined in this document.

Kansas State University is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, national origin, disability or status as a protected veteran.

Upon acceptance of a contingent offer of employment, a candidate may be subject to a background check per [K-State's background check policy](#).

Applicants must be currently authorized to work in the United States at the time of employment.

About the institution

Founded in 1863 as the nation's first operational land-grant university, Kansas State is a Tier 1 research university with more than 21,000 students, 1,300 faculty members, 3,000 staff members and three physical campuses: the main campus in Manhattan; the Kansas State Salina campus, home to aviation and technology programs; and K-State Olathe, which serves the industry and workforce needs of Greater Kansas City.

K-State has nine colleges, Graduate School and K-State Online and offers more than 400 degrees and options, from bachelor's to doctoral degrees. K-State Extension also serves the citizenry with a presence in every county throughout Kansas..

K-State has an annual budget of more than \$900 million. Private giving to the university exceeds more than \$200 million per year, and the KSU Foundation ended fiscal year 2025 with an investment pool and endowment of \$1.072 billion, with a goal to hit \$2 billion by 2030.

K-State is known for the passion and pride of its alumni. With more than 200,000 living graduates, the K-State Alumni Association ranks No. 1 in the Big 12 Conference and No. 4 among Power Five conferences nationally for the percentage of graduates who are members.

The Princeton Review recognizes the university as one of the nation's best colleges. Kansas State also has been designated as an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and is recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution. Commonly referred to as K-State, the university is proud of its welcoming environment.





University Mission, Vision and Values

Kansas State's mission is to foster excellent teaching, research and service that develop the highly skilled and educated citizenry necessary to advancing the well-being of Kansas, the nation and the international community.

K-State's vision is to lead the nation as a next-generation land-grant university – setting the standard for inspiring learning, creativity, discovery and engagement that positively impacts society and transforms lives in Kansas and around the world. The university Values and Principles of Community guide how the community lives out its mission. For more information about Kansas State, visit our [University Profile](#).

K-State provides access to high-quality education for those who desire to earn in-demand degrees. By fostering an environment where all can thrive, learn and grow, our university is home to students, faculty and staff who bring a variety of unique perspectives, viewpoints and experiences to our learning and working environments, enriching and deepening the connections we have with each other and all who engage with our university. Learn more about our mission and the values that drive us at k-state.edu/about/values-and-mission.



The Community

Situated in the heart of northeast Kansas' scenic Flint Hills, Manhattan's 56,000 citizens enjoy a dynamic community with shopping, dining, entertainment and nightlife. Manhattan is affectionately known as the "Little Apple," a nod to its East Coast namesake, but has a vibrant culture all its own.

Here is just a sampling of what residents look forward to year-round:

- Shopping, dining and socializing in Aggieville, a local entertainment district with a fun, energetic vibe.
- A vibrant, revitalized downtown area with fine-dining options and local boutiques.
- The Flint Hills Discovery Center, featuring exhibits about the beautiful surrounding region.
- Beautiful outdoor life at Sunset Zoo and the Gardens at K-State.
- Recreation opportunities at the Konza Prairie, Tuttle Creek State Park, Linear Park Trail and more.
- The university's McCain Performance Series, which hosts acclaimed Broadway musicals, comedians, musicians and other entertainers.
- Exciting Big 12 athletic events. (Faculty and staff are eligible for discounted tickets.)
- Colbert Hills Golf Course, ranked as the top public golf course in Kansas.
- Excellent K-12 education. Manhattan High School ranks among the top 5 percent of U.S. high schools, and the school district is home to several Kansas Master Teachers.

Learn more about the Manhattan community at manhattan.org or madeformanhattan.org.



KANSAS STATE --- UNIVERSITY

