

# Position Description

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**Wake Forest University**  
1834 Wake Forest Road  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109  
<https://www.wfu.edu/>



**Wake Forest University** (“Wake Forest” or “University”) has engaged **Major, Lindsey & Africa** on an exclusive basis to conduct a search for a **Vice President & General Counsel** to be located in Winston-Salem, NC. Interested candidates, please submit your resume (in MS Word format) to Deborah Ben-Canaan at [dbencanaan@mlaglobal.com](mailto:dbencanaan@mlaglobal.com), Heather Fine at [hfine@mlaglobal.com](mailto:hfine@mlaglobal.com), and Stephanie Crosse at [scrosse@mlaglobal.com](mailto:scrosse@mlaglobal.com), or to the MLA recruiter who contacted you about this position. Please do not contact the University directly; all resumes sent to Wake Forest will be routed to MLA for handling and will create delays.

## VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL COUNSEL

**Overview:** The Vice President & General Counsel is the principal legal officer for the University, with overall responsibility for the vision and leadership of the University’s legal strategy. As a valued member of the Wake Forest leadership team and the President’s Cabinet, the General Counsel provides advice and counsel to the President, Board of Trustees, and other members of the University community on all significant legal matters. The General Counsel is also responsible for leading and managing the University’s Office of the General Counsel (“OGC”).

**University:** Founded in 1834, Wake Forest is a private research university located in Winston-Salem, NC, with more than 8,000 students and 6,280 full-time faculty and staff. The undergraduate population of more than 5,400 hails from 47 states and more than 45 foreign countries. Wake Forest is a vibrant and diverse academic community in which students pursue learning in one or more of the 45 majors, 60 minors, and additional programs offered within seven colleges and schools. Wake Forest's undergraduate and graduate colleges and schools include the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Law, the School of Divinity, the School of Business, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Medicine, and the School of Professional Studies. In addition to the Winston-Salem historic Reynolda campus, academic activities are also based at Wake Downtown and the Bowman Gray Center for Medical Education in Winston-Salem, at one current and two future locations in Charlotte, NC, at Wake Washington in Washington D.C., and at international locations including Venice, London, and Vienna. In September 2022, U.S. News & World Report ranked Wake Forest as one of the top 30 National Universities for the 27th consecutive year. In addition to the overall standing of 29th place, Wake Forest stands at 21<sup>st</sup> for undergraduate teaching.

**Experience:** The successful candidate will have at least 15 years of legal experience, with a solid and broad-based understanding of matters related to higher education law. Candidates will have extensive experience interacting with senior leadership teams and boards of trustees with varied interests and areas of responsibility. Candidates

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will have the ability to exercise sound judgment on challenging and sophisticated legal issues and to act with the highest ethics, integrity, and professionalism. The successful candidate will be forward-thinking, will move expeditiously and proactively on numerous fronts, will possess a world-class intellect, and will have demonstrated collaborative leadership in their prior roles. Experience in the higher education space is strongly preferred. Experience handling litigation matters is a plus. Familiarity with academic medical issues and college athletics is an advantage.

**Compensation:** Competitive salary and excellent benefits.

**Location:** Winston-Salem, NC. This is an in-office role. Remote candidates will not be considered.

**Relocation:** Yes. This is a national search.

## Key Wake Forest Facts

Founded in 1834, Wake Forest University is a private research university located in Winston-Salem, NC, with more than 8,000 students and 6,280 full-time faculty and staff. The undergraduate population of more than 5,400 hails from 47 states and more than 45 foreign countries. Wake Forest's undergraduate and graduate colleges and schools include the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Law, the School of Divinity, the School of Business, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Medicine and the School of Professional Studies. In addition to the Winston-Salem historic Reynolda campus, academic activities are also based at Wake Downtown and the Bowman Gray Center for Medical Education in Winston-Salem, at one current and two future locations in Charlotte, NC, at Wake Washington in D.C., and at international locations including Venice, London, and Vienna.

The undergraduate College of Arts and Sciences, commonly referred to as “The College”, combines the intimacy of a small liberal arts school with the academic vitality of a research university. More than half of undergraduate classes at Wake Forest have fewer than 20 students, and only 1% of Wake Forest’s classes have more than 50 students, the lowest of any top-30 school. The Wake Forest School of Business undergraduate program was ranked 39th, placing it in the top 10% of schools. The educational experiences across the University are distinguished by a collegiate atmosphere; outstanding faculty of teacher-scholars; and adherence to a values-based education rooted in *Pro Humanitate* (For Humanity). Wake Forest is a vibrant and diverse academic community with the College having 29 academic departments and 16 interdisciplinary programs; overall, students pursue learning in one or more of the 45 majors, 60 minors, and additional programs offered within seven colleges and schools. The Graduate School offers 27 nationally and internationally recognized masters and doctoral programs as well as combined degree programs: a MD/PhD and MD/MS with the School of Medicine; a PhD/MBA with the School of Business; the MDiv/MA with the School of Divinity; and degrees in biomedical engineering through Virginia Tech.

Wake Forest University School of Medicine, through Atrium Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, is the academic core of the newly formed Advocate Health enterprise, an ~\$25B healthcare system headquartered in Charlotte, NC, with a combined footprint across six states (Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, South Carolina, Wisconsin).

Athletics are integral to the university experience with Wake Forest as a founding member of the Atlantic Coast Conference. Competing in the NCAA Division I, Wake Forest teams are consistently among national leaders both athletically and academically. Wake Forest student-athletes graduate at a 96 percent rate according to the most recent NCAA-measured data, released in December 2021.

In September 2022, U.S. News & World Report ranked Wake Forest as one of the top 30 National Universities for the 27th consecutive year. In addition to the overall standing of 29th place, Wake Forest stands at 21<sup>st</sup> for undergraduate teaching. *Forbes* ranked Wake Forest the top employer in North Carolina in its 2022 list of American's Best Employers by State.

Wake Forest's annual operating budget is approximately \$1.7 billion and its endowment is valued at \$1.35 billion. In August 2022, Wake Forest officially launched a strategic framework process to articulate the University's priorities leading up to its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2034.

The Wake Forest motto, *Pro Humanitate*, invigorates and unites the University community in pursuit of its academic mission not only for its own sake, but "For Humanity." *Pro Humanitate* calls and inspires Wake Foresters to use their knowledge, talents, and compassion to better the lives of others.

## About the President – Susan R. Went

Dr. Susan R. Went is Wake Forest University's 14th president and a Distinguished University Professor of Biology and Biochemistry, arriving July 1, 2021.

Throughout her career, Went has established a reputation for thoughtful, future-oriented leadership focused on fostering institutional growth, academic excellence and opportunity for all. From "radical collaboration" to "inclusive excellence," during her first year on campus, she led fruitful and wide-ranging conversations about what is expected of great universities. In her second year, she is leading Wake Forest in the design of a new strategic framework, as the University seeks to fully live out its *pro humanitate* motto in a rapidly changing society.

Went came to Wake Forest from Vanderbilt University where she served as Vanderbilt's provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs beginning in July 2014 and took on the additional role of interim chancellor from August 2019 to June 2020. At Vanderbilt, she advanced the excellence of academic programs and guided the university's response to the pandemic. Went was widely praised for her bold and engaged leadership and for accomplishing a number of firsts, including the appointment of Vanderbilt's first female athletic director and the creation of the university's Office of Inclusive Excellence. Went led Vanderbilt's efforts to launch a new structure for the university and medical center's academic relationship. She also oversaw the development and implementation of Vanderbilt's strategic plan and innovative initiatives to enhance the undergraduate experience and elevate the arts and humanities.

Went holds a doctorate in biochemistry and began her teaching career at Washington University's School of Medicine in 1993. In 2002, she was recruited to Vanderbilt and served as a professor and chair of the department of cell and developmental biology in the School of Medicine. She advanced through the administrative ranks at

Vanderbilt, serving as associate vice chancellor for research and senior associate dean for biomedical sciences, before becoming the university's provost.

As an internationally renowned biomedical scientist, Dr. Wentz has maintained an unwavering commitment to research and teaching. In her own research through 2021, she mentored dozens of students and fellows, published over 100 research articles and served on the editorial boards for leading academic journals in her field. A pioneer of team-based, cross-disciplinary research, Dr. Wentz's cell biology discoveries have laid the foundation for new medicines and treatments, as well as inspiring her distinctive philosophy of leadership.

Wentz earned a Bachelor of Science in biochemistry from the University of Iowa and her Ph.D. in biochemistry at the University of California, Berkeley. She was a postdoctoral fellow at both the Rockefeller University and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Wentz has received many honors and awards for her research, leadership, and community engagement, including the MERIT Award from the National Institutes of Health (2010–2020), the Women in Cell Biology Senior Career Award from the ASCB (2011), the John H. Exton Award for Research Leading to Innovative Biological Concepts (2008), the Kirsch Foundation Investigator Award (2001–2003), and the Beckman Young Investigator Award (1996). She was named a Woman of Influence in the "Trailblazer" category by the Nashville Business Journal (2020). Additionally, she is an elected fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Society for Cell Biology.

## About Winston-Salem

Winston-Salem is a culturally rich mid-size city in the Piedmont Triad area with a metro-area population in excess of 1.6 million, and in one of the nation's most rapidly growing states. With a population of 246,000, Winston-Salem has consistently built resources in the arts, medicine, healthcare research, education, and commerce. Winston-Salem was ranked one of the top 50 best places to live in the United States (U.S. News & World Report, 2021). With a mostly mild climate the town has annual average temperatures ranging from 49 to 70 degrees, and an average of 216 sunny days a year. Winston-Salem offers big-city amenities in a place that's small enough to make one's mark. Its rankings for job growth outlook and safety are among the best nationwide. It is culturally diverse, with great food and a thriving arts scene. Although the city is traditionally Southern in its friendliness, it has an international feel.

## Position Information

The General Counsel serves as the principal legal officer for the University, with overall responsibility for the vision and leadership of the University's legal strategy. Reporting to the President, as a valued member of the leadership team and the President's Cabinet, the General Counsel provides advice and counsel to the President, Board of Trustees, and other members of the University community on all significant legal matters. The General Counsel is also responsible for leading and managing the University's Office of the General Counsel.

The General Counsel will be a broad generalist with deep expertise in a variety of relevant legal areas and have a demonstrated commitment to the mission of higher education. The successful candidate will be a values-based

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leader with a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and will lead from a place of inclusivity, respect, collaboration, and courage, embodying the highest ethics and integrity. The General Counsel will exude calm under pressure while managing the complex issues confronting a university of Wake Forest's scale, size, and prominence. The General Counsel will also value and excel at interacting with various constituencies and instill a sense of confidence throughout the University community. Finally, the General Counsel will be highly intellectually curious, driven, and engaged and understand the complexities the University will face in the coming years as the landscape of higher education changes and evolves.

## Key Duties and Responsibilities

The General Counsel will have the following responsibilities and opportunities:

- Serve as a strategic thought partner and advisor to the President, Board of Trustees, University officers, deans, and administrators on critical legal issues that impact the University and its various constituencies.
- Work closely with the Board of Trustees to advise and counsel on all governance matters and other critical legal issues requiring the Trustees' attention.
- Provide strategic and ethical leadership and direction for all legal matters involving the University, including student, faculty, and staff affairs; regulatory and compliance issues; D-1 athletics; research and financial concerns; as well as all other legal matters that uniquely impact the University.
- Oversee, manage, and advise on a range of litigation matters and on critical contractual obligations, including legal issues raised within contractual relationships.
- Provide oversight, legal advice, and guidance on all matters related to Wake Forest University Health Sciences, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, and Wake Forest University School of Medicine, among others.
- Anticipate issues and risks, sharing pertinent information with the President, senior leadership team, Board of Trustees, and other relevant parties while developing creative solutions to address various legal risks the University may face.
- Lead, manage, and oversee all attorneys and professionals within the OGC with an eye towards maintaining and enhancing the manner in which legal services are provided to ensure high caliber work and alignment with the President's vision for the University.
- Keep abreast of compliance/regulatory related changes and educate University and Wake Forest University Health Sciences constituents on such changes.
- Maintain knowledge and understanding of trends and critical changes in the higher education legal landscape and proactively address the impact of these changes on the University, particularly as it relates to technology, privacy, and cybersecurity.
- Analyze current inventory of legal needs across the University, external legal resources currently in use, and constituents currently engaging with legal counsel.
- Determine when external legal resources will be necessary and retain resources for legal assistance.
- Supervise and manage work performed by outside legal counsel.
- Maintain professional growth and development through seminars, professional affiliations, and other means to keep abreast of developments in legal matters affecting the University's activities and operations.

## Key Qualifications and Skills

Wake Forest seeks an exceptionally accomplished attorney with a distinguished professional record. The successful candidate will thrive in a complex environment with the ability to juggle numerous legal matters and possess a high degree of ethics, integrity, judgement, and discretion required for a leader in a prominent university environment.

Personal and professional alignment within the University's culture is of paramount importance. The successful candidate must be self-motivated and exhibit a passion for understanding the University, its mission, and serving as its attorney, as well as contributing in a meaningful way to legal strategy and long-term goals. In addition to possessing the requisite legal and technical skills, the successful candidate must approach the role as an experienced leader and demonstrate a high degree of strategic, conceptual, and analytical thinking capabilities. The successful candidate will possess an understanding of and appreciation for an academic environment, the roles and relationships of faculty, staff, and students, and the unique mission-orientation of Wake Forest.

## Qualifications and Skills

- J.D. from an accredited law school.
- Admission in good standing to the North Carolina Bar or eligibility for admission within six (6) months.
- At least 15 years of progressively responsible legal experience.
- Experience in higher education is strongly preferred.
- Experience serving in a prominent leadership role and working effectively with various constituencies is a clear advantage.
- Familiarity with academic medical issues, D-1 college athletics, and litigation are a plus.
- Demonstrated understanding of matters related to higher education including: Labor and Employment Law; Risk Management; Non-discrimination and Affirmative Action; Compliance (ADA, VAWA, FERPA, Title IX and Clery); Contract Administration; Privacy and Information Security; Litigation and Investigations; Intellectual Property; Environmental Health and Safety; Construction and Real Estate; New Ventures; Faculty Appointment and Tenure; Research; Athletics; Student Affairs; and Academic Affairs, among other areas is an advantage.
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and a strong track record of promoting and supporting DEI efforts within an organization.
- Outstanding executive leadership and management skills in all aspects of a legal and/or university environment with a proven ability to advise a successful, advancing organization.
- Ability to work proactively, collaboratively, cooperatively, and as a member of a team, while empowering internal clients and colleagues and emphasizing accountability.
- A professional history of maintaining objectivity while driving appropriate outcomes, managing multiple stakeholder agendas, and promoting high client service standards.
- Intellectually curious, conceptually nimble, and creative with the ability to analyze, interpret, present, and communicate complex ideas and concepts in a clear, concise fashion.
- Demonstrated leadership and management experience with professionals and support staff, including a successful track record in management and people leadership with the capacity to lead and motivate colleagues and other leaders confronting change and increased expectations in a highly visible organization.



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- Superior intellect, with the ability to think critically and effectively communicate well-reasoned decisions.
- Exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate (both orally and in written form) and interact effectively, presenting to large and small audiences, significant decision makers, Boards, and employees.
- Embodiment of Wake Forest's motto, "Pro Humanitate", For Humanity.
- High ethical standards, a strong moral compass, integrity, courage, and perseverance.

**WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND ENCOURAGES DIVERSE CANDIDATES TO APPLY.**

## Process

Please submit a resume in Microsoft Word format addressed to:

**Deborah Ben-Canaan**

*Partner and Senior Practice Leader*

In-House Counsel Recruiting

[dbencanaan@mlaglobal.com](mailto:dbencanaan@mlaglobal.com)

**Heather Fine**

*Partner*

In-House Counsel Recruiting

[hfine@mlaglobal.com](mailto:hfine@mlaglobal.com)

**Stephanie Crosse**

*Director*

In-House Counsel Recruiting

[scrosse@mlaglobal.com](mailto:scrosse@mlaglobal.com)

**Komal Patel**

*Senior Administrator*

In-House Counsel Recruiting

[kopatel@mlaglobal.com](mailto:kopatel@mlaglobal.com)

No calls please. Additional information can be found on [www.mlaglobal.com](http://www.mlaglobal.com). You will be required to complete additional documents to be considered for this position.